Redwire in partnership with the Burnaby Art Gallery Present Our Remembering an exhibition of new works and featuring works on paper from the Gallery Collections at the Burnaby Art Gallery Sept 24 to Oct 31. for more info peter@redwiremag.com

Redwire Native Youth Media Society is a media and arts organization dedicated to Native youth expression.

Redwire incorporated as an independent Aboriginal youth society in November of 2002 under the name Redwire Native Youth Media Society.

Redwire Magazine published its first issue in April '97 with the support of the Native Youth Movement, a grass roots Native youth group and The Environmental Youth Alliance. Redwire, published by Redwire Native Youth Media Society, is the first-ever Native youth run magazine in Canada and continues to stay committed to operating with Native youth staff, writers, artists and publishers.

Redwire Native Youth Media's mandate is to provide Native youth with an uncensored forum for discussion, in order to help youth find their own voice.

The opinions and perspectives expressed in Redwire Magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions and perspectives of Redwire Native youth Media Society.

Redwire is funded through the generous support of Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal youth Centers (UMAYC) from the Department of Heritage Canada.

Redwire Magazine is a publication of Redwire Native Youth Media Society

Mail
Po Box 2042
Station main Terminal
Vancouver, BC
V6B 3R6
ph 604-602-7226
fax 604-602-7276

Staff
Tania Willard, Manager
Joanna Recalma, Editor
Peter Morin, Arts Director
Simon Reece, Writer


Cover Artist
Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Coast Salish. “Yuxweluptun’s strategy is to document and promote change in contemporary Canadian history in large-scale paintings, using Coast Salish cosmology, Northwest Coast formal design elements, and the Western landscape tradition. His painted works explore political, environmental, and cultural issues.”

What we will do for you
We need your input to help us create this cool and current website to help youth access existing resources and services, find employment and education opportunities, and gain valuable hands-on technical and business experience.

Members of our Youth Advisory Council (our YAC’s) are gathering contact names, links, and info., but you can help!

Schools - send us your program details, youth-focused activities and event announcements
Aboriginal Youth - share your voice about events, opportunities, stories, successes & challenges
Businesses - send us job postings & tips 4 success
Organizations - promote your services & workshops
Conference & Event Planners - keep us up 2 date

We want to hear from you
Our RedWay BC Project team at First Nations Employment Society is working with Aboriginal web designers ID+ to create an interactive, youth-driven website. Our goal is to provide Urban Aboriginal Youth with an easy to use website to access information necessary to survive and thrive in Greater Vancouver.

Upon its launch on March 31st, 2004 this website will be the most comprehensive guide - a one-stop info shop for our growing Urban Aboriginal Youth population.
Decolonization is no fun. This is the brick wall that kept me from sitting down to do this editor’s note. No matter what you call it, “unlearning,” “de - schooling” or “decolonizing,” it all smells like a depressing chore. But Myrtle Alice Morin has some fun and interesting ways of decolonizing on page 33.

But, there are creative ways to decolonize. Like my grampa setting fire to his residential school and getting expelled. Each time he told us that hilarious story, he was “deconstructing” residential schools. The best part about this story is the action. I remember feeling the bliss and guilty pleasure of lighting that match and the satisfaction of watching the flames devour a powerful symbol.

This is what I crave, the point of action. The point where there is no more discussion about the source of the problem, or people in our community who have sold out. The point where if something is wrong, something is done. I am sure my grampa did not have a meeting where other students pass resolutions, and then nominate someone to carry out the action, and then vote on the best way to get the message to the brother’s who ran the school. He got access to matches and followed his instincts.

Just like the Warrior Women piece on page 34 tells us, the action did not come out of a conference with honorariums, and travel was not paid for, it was simply fed-up women gathered around a fire who decided that discussing the thing was not enough. The next day the Department of Indian Affairs in B.C. was shut down due to the occupation.

For the record, I do not totally discount conferences and strategy meetings; I know they can be places of inspiration and connection. The Title and Rights Alliance is a solid example of “de-colonizing” action as the direct result of a conference. It must have been terrifying for the government to look out the window and see Nations against the British Columbia Treaty Commission (B.C.T.C.) united with Nations participating in the B.C.T.C. on the legislature steps.

Decolonization does not have to be a profound planned act. It could be decorating those colonial tourist road signs — Gold Rush Town — with a can of spray paint so they are more historically accurate. Or it could simply be canoeing down the Nimpkish River, the same river my great grandparents used to paddle on. These are the fun, livelier examples of decolonizing I choose now, over those angry essays I used to write for Canadian history class.

“Decolonization” is anything really that connects my voice to my heart and results with a physical action of my choice. The action basically reinforces the idea that white supremacy did not kill us and is fundamentally a subtle, hateful Canadian value to be rejected.

I like to use the term white supremacy, thanks to Bell Hooks. She wrote that many words used to replace this one sweeten and mask the mixture of fear, ignorance and hate at the root, words like; racism, reverse racism, discrimination and prejudice.

I like the image of my grampa, Old Pop, striking that match and writing his ticket home. This is one of many stories tattooed in my subconscious, which grounds me in the possibilities of hope, intuition and action. Hope you enjoy the issue! If not, we will seriously consider our “letters to the editor” section logo.

Sincerely,
Joanna Cranmer Recalma

IT'S TIME TO STAND UP & TAKE BACK WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS!
Dear Brothers & Sister(s),
I may happen to be 43 year old, I don't care if your Mag is just for the youth, I happen to be a youth @ Heart, Mind & Spirit! That's why I had to join up w/ your Web Site! What you have to say in it, ROCK ON BLOODS! I happen to be a very left wing Advocate-Activist! In other words, IT'S TIME TO STAND UP & TAKE BACK WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS! I love the picture of you three in a line up & the picture it says, "Gilty Party".

Letters to the editor
One time two cops asked me if I had broken any laws, I said yes. The cop said what? I said being born a 2 Spirit Metis. But when I went to the Aboriginal Fest this year, I was proud to be one. THANX RED WIRE! Although I happen to a white Metis, because of the story about Barbie Dolls, beads & Blankets, tears of joy & Great Pride are running down my cheeks! I love your new editor! I happen to be 1/2 Viking & Haida myself!
WE ARE THE ONES WHO WILL NEVER TAKE SHIT FROM NO ONE! You guys have healed the infected wound w/ in me! ALL MY RELATIONS! Black Thunder Eagle 2 Spirit. HO!
Cool It Redwire!!!

I noticed that some of your writers sound really angry. I am a Mom, Auntie, Grandmother, and Teacher. I wouldn’t allow my children or students to talk the way some of your writers write. They sound like a dumb rap song that needs to be turned off. They sound like an ugly black rapper rather than a native person.

To the young Simon Reece picking on the Cherokees, don’t pick on anybody until you know what you are talking about. I don’t mind those people being part Cherokee and saying it! Loretta Lynn is also part Creek or something from both side of her parents. Tina Turner is Black Navahoe and Black Pablo. Pappa John Phillips(Mommmas and the Pappas) is half Cherokee from Oklahoma. Connie Stevens is part Apache.

Even Prime Minister Trudeau was part Huron/mostly French. Sir Winston Churchill was part Nativ, not sure which kind, he was the leader (Prime Minister) in England. As far as some us goes, I am St’at’imc and my youngest daughter is St’at’imc/Ojiway/Cree/French/Scottish. And my older daughter from my ex-husband’s side is St’at’imc/1/16 English.

I am proud of our Great-Grandfather John Currie (Scottish). They named Mt. Currie after him. He really loved our Great-grandmother. Some of our relatives look white, but they are part St’at’imc. Some of us are St’at’imc, but part white. I am writing to you because it embarrasses us to hear young people now, they don’t know who they are.

Learn your language, we don’t have swear words in our language.

Sincerely, Nacw t’u7, Marie Abraham

Cool It? We’re just getting started!

Hello Marie,

Redwire does not censor any of our writers submissions for anger or explicit language, this has been one of our philosophies since the birth of Redwire. Anger is a natural response to all the social problems that stem from colonization and we also feel that anger is a gift just like the rest of all our emotions given to us at birth.

Many native youth feel pain, anger, sadness, they choose to express themselves in lots of different ways. I think we all know about the negative ways to express anger or shame; suicides, abuse and substance use. Whatever they may be going through at that time in their lives we provide a safe place for them to express their emotions and Redwire serves Native youth by not censoring each other.

The GRAVEL ROAD GANGSTAZ article was meant to poke fun and encourage our young people to laugh at themselves. The whole complete article was fake and was produced because so many Native youth are adopting the gangster American hip-hop culture and stabbing and beat-
Goodbye to Hollywood Indians: Young Aboriginal Men Reflect on Media Images of Themselves

By Shylo Summers

In a recent UBC practicum placement with Redwire I interviewed eight young aboriginal guys, coming together at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre (BYRC) and the Aries Project to discuss their views on media images of Aboriginal men with a DV camera and me. I planned on getting into how representations of Aboriginal men make them feel, who their role models are, and most importantly if they see themselves in the media they watch, read, and see. This project was an opportunity for youth to finally express their thoughts on the media and think more critically about this powerful communications tool.

The young men I interviewed don’t look to the media for advice, support, or direction. They didn’t have role models constructed from media images. They all recognized though that the way the media continues to depict aboriginal men and identify them is negative.

When Redwire asked me to study the portrayal of Aboriginal men in mainstream media and the impact it has on young Aboriginal men, a ‘North of 60’ icon immediately came to mind, Teevee, the young, uneducated troublemaker who is constantly telling people to screw themselves, played by Dakota House on the popular series ‘North of 60’, (how come I seem to be the only person who hasn’t met Dakota House at a Pow Wow or conference).

This to me is the stereotypical image of the young Aboriginal man, an image the media continues to perpetuate and has not yet looked back to evaluate. But this project was not about my reflections, but the views of young Aboriginal men in Vancouver on the portrayal of Aboriginal men in mainstream media.

Of course North of 60 was wrought with stereotypes about Aboriginal people, and making the lives of fictional Aboriginal people ultra-dramatic is not too reflective of some First Nations values. Where am I going with this? The lack of media representation of Aboriginal men didn’t matter to these guys and whatever representation that may exist, the youth identify it as mostly negative and falsely reflective of the many Aboriginal men they actually look up to. Few of the participants have role models in the media; they prefer to look up to their family and friends.

Many of the young men not only wish for increased media representation of Aboriginal people but a more multicultural and reflective representation overall. After talking with all eight participants, my impression was that these guys do not have much reaction to newspapers, magazines and advertising and do not consider it practical into their daily decisions and lives.

But while the media is not too significant to the male Aboriginal youth I met, it is rather fundamental to many others. We should be aware of the Teevees being broadcast out to the less informed and use this tool to portray what we want to reveal about ourselves, balancing harmful stereotypes with positive realities.

After this project I learned that youth can take an active role in changing the media. The youth in this project already began to identify some of the problems of stereotypes and the fact that they don’t use this important tool to help shape their identity may indicate that something is wrong with the media. The media is capable of many things and so youth can find a way to use it to positively influence other youth on what is real.
Songhees Pictorial: A History of the Songhees People as seen by Outsiders, 1790-1912

By Peter Morin

It's quite a clever title. It almost had me fooled. The beginning for the books starts, "The Songhees pictorial, as seen by outsiders, 1790 – 1912." Perhaps, it should have been titled, "The Songhees Pictorial, as seen by outsider, 1790 – 2004." This book is just like every other coffee table book written about a Native group by a non-Native author, it is beautiful, well written and well researched but is missing the Native perspective.

The author (outsider) is Grant Keddie, a non-native researcher and writer who spent time at the Royal BC Museum with their collections and the Songhees themselves. But why should I be such a stickler for details, the title says it all, this book is written from the perspective of the colonizer, who tries to present an informed opinion, using photographic records, newspaper accounts and recorded testimonials from the Songhees to re-create the narrative of early Victoria for the reader or tourist.

I guess I just wanted voices from the people themselves, and not voices mostly mediated through Grant Keddie. I read these words as culturally biased, like those turn-of-the-century photographs used to illustrate this work. It is still a non-Native person writing about Natives and is not the whole story.

Which makes me think that I am not the intended audience for this book about the Songhees. Are the Songhees part of the intended audience? So why was it important to include Indians at all, why not just "Victoria Pictorial: as seen by outsiders 1790 – 1912." Oh, sorry, "Victoria Pictorial: as seen by insiders 1790 – 1912." Shit, "Victoria: a history told in photographs."

The words are always the problem. I will always read the words as a Native person whose family histories are a part of that collections in the Royal BC Museum, just like some of the Songhees whose families are pictured without names in this book.

This is the part directed towards the authors, future authors and publishers of these books. I’d like to think that if this were a biography then it would read differently. You know, it doesn’t have to be too tawdry, nothing Marilyn or Elvis just something really readable enjoyable and different. Maybe, ‘Songhees Pictorial; The unauthorized biography’, it could work. Just think about it.

If yer Happy and Ya Know it Stomp Your Feet: A Review of Buz’Gem Blues

By Michelle La Flamme

How often do you go to see a Native play and laugh your guts out? As cheesy as it might sound, laughter may in fact be the key to healing. The recent production of Buz-Gem Blues at the Firehall theatre is a situation comedy chock full of one-liners and campy overblown caricatures. As Drew said after the play, seeing this play is like eating a big bowl of ice cream. The play opens with the white Professor introducing his study of the courtship rituals and sex in Native communities. He is a stock comic character: the stuffy white man who makes a career of studying the "Other". This is a thread that is woven throughout the play as "old Whity" attempts to interview all of the characters that have gathered at an Elder’s conference.
Inferno is Fiery New Narrative

By Simon Reece

Chris Bose of the Nlaka’pamux Nation is a multidisciplinary artist, poet, musician and author of soon to be released novel/narrative, 'Somewhere In This Inferno'. His writing style is raw and covers many different issues like family, Indian politics and colonialism from his personal perspective and experience. In reflecting on his Auntie's death from cancer Chris Bose reflects on personal pain and how we deal with it. "Why are we here?...Is it to work full-time have a disposable income and consume material goods" -Somewhere In this Inferno. He gives real insight to the world around us, especially to the unconscious layers we live in. His full-length narrative describes his experiences of trying to find his place in this world and his search to find peace within. This novel was written and published in just over one year. Chris Bose is one of the most exciting emerging native authors. Go to the Chris Bose personal website or the Theytus books Website for all inquiries and info www ulusulu.com, www.theytusbooks.ca

Watch out for Slangblossom’s Debut Album “Convulsions”

By Lee-Anne Minifie

Released on Arbor Records in Toronto, featuring Hip Hop artists Daybi, P-nut, Wab and DJ Yann Solo. Slangblossom is going to blow up the Eastcoast hip-hop scene and up the ante for us Westcoast kids when they visit our territory July 21st, 2004. This album is a perfect balance of beauty and darkness. Careful, pretty instrumentation overtop a raw hardcore under tone. This album contains no compromise either lyrically or musically. Yes, there are harsh words and serious dark lyrics that speak the truth about our urban Native experience. Along with their tight rhymes these boys play a lot of instruments and they play them well and thoughtfully. Paired with well-laid samples, loops, live recordings and programming, you end up with a tight album that’s dark but woven with a lining of inspiration and hope. I don’t come across many albums I like as a whole, this record is one of those as-a-whole things. Any rap kids who buy this album regardless of race are going to be inspired.

Michelle La Flamme is a doctoral student at UBC who teaches and studies representations of race in Canadian literature and film. She is from Vancouver, has a background as an actor and is a hyper, hybrid with African-Canadian and Metis ancestry who loves a good belly laugh.
A Lesson Learned from “A Thief of Time”
by Peter Morin

Act 1. A boy says to this mother (to be read emphatically and with a lot of passion):

Sorry Mom, but I’ve decided that I want to make movies, like Chris Eyres. He is now my new favorite Indian.
Don’t be sad, it’s probably for the best you know, since these days I haven’t been that good, (in case you didn’t notice), and, well, truly, you’d be better off if I had something to keep me busy. What? Aw Mom, don’t cry.
It’s natural for us young guys to start looking for careers.

What? Why Chris Eyres? Well, I just saw his movie A Thief of Time for WGBH, an American Mystery on PBS, (which will air July 11 at 9pm on PBS and CBS), and was totally mesmerized. I’ve never seen such an entertaining murder mystery staring Indians.

You know, we are usually the ones being investigated and in this movie we are the investigators.

See, Mom, I’ve always been a bit keen on storytelling, not that I don’t think you’re not a great storyteller Mom, you did tell me all those stories about Crow, it’s a very important part of our culture and all. It seems to me that Chris Eyres is the important storyteller, from a new generation you know? Not that I don’t like the old ways Mom, geez, that stuff is way important too. But Chris, to me, seems to combine our older forms of storytelling with this new way.

He is telling our stories in such a way that it can be seen and heard by more of us, in movie theatres and on TV. I’ve decided there is an ancient storyteller inside of him. And hey, making movies could be a good way to make a lot of dough. Also that movie Smoke Signals, you know, the one he did with Sherman Alexie, the one that premiered at Sundance and won all those awards, you thought it was funny.

You need to stop crying Mom, a boy like me needs these influences so that I can become a good man. You know Wes Studi is one of the main actors in this A Thief of Time, the one who kept it real in Dances with Wolves, and Adam Beach is in it too!!! You love Wes Studi, Mom. Remember you said you named Wes after him. Well, anyway, let me tell you, Wes keeps it real in A Thief of Time.

I can’t help it Mom, I like movies, and Mom, Chris has a good eye for visual storytelling. Each scene looks like it was carefully considered, and time was spent making sure every shot was perfect. Mind you, A Thief of Time was filmed in Navaho country, so it was not that hard to find beautiful backdrops.

I look for that when I am watching movies, it is important, the look and the flow of images is important to how a movie is viewed. I think Chris is a good director, and it seems like the actors were having fun and were relaxed in their roles, which means a real good director.

Mom, I believe Chris knows what he is doing and that he is a teacher for a younger person like me. This is what I want; not that I am totally finished with your lessons. Please don’t cry Mom, making movies is an honourable profession these days.

Black Indian connection is documented in new book from Fire This Time

by Simon Reece

There is a connection between black and aboriginal peoples from politics to the music we have adopted as our own. This book offers evidence of that historical connection and interaction between two cultures.

In North and South America there is now a race of people called Black Indians, yes they have been created by colonization just as the Metis were created but for different reasons.

The author Raging Blakkindian Dub offers his 13 years of research to provide a clear message of what happened when two Indigenous peoples collided. It will inspire discussion and raise your own curiosity about your roots and your history.

To purchase or for more info go to ‘http://www.firethisetime.com’
A Baby Eagle Out Of The Nest. It addresses the issue of the responsibility we have to our people and our communities. I think they did keep this in mind when putting the textbook together. I believe everyone in B.C. would benefit by reading this book not just high school students; then we wouldn’t get all those strange and ignorant questions and destroy those stereotypes way before they even start to develop.

Anonymous photo submission of billboard at the intersection of Cambie and Pender in Vancouver, B.C.

Ndn history and studies enter BC’s highschool curriculum

By Lee-Anne Minifie

There is so much information an author could potentially discuss when it comes to First Nations in BC. We are many and diverse, our history is complex, the present even more so. I was skeptical when I heard this book was being put together. What would the result be? Another history book that traps our people in the past as passive noble savages, one that skips over the sordid history of government interference with our practices, land and spirituality and the effects it had and continues to have on us. Well, I am not going to question this anymore as these three authors cover the whole gamut from pre-contact to contact, and contemporary issues. Over two hundred pages from cover to cover, this is courageous to say the least. I did try to find out a few things they missed and skimmed over, but all in all I think is a wonderful book considering it is a first try for our Teachers to tackle such a huge subject and make it accessible to First Nations and Non-First Nations. I would have liked to hear more about our wars as I believe a lot of our cleverness and intelligence are revealed throughout our war stories. I will say that they did mention wars and the capturing of slaves and goods, which they could have shied away from. I'm glad the contemporary social issues, media representation and recent politics in settling treaties were discussed. It could have been just another history of Natives book but they went out of their way to get into the stereotypes and treatment of us in the 21st century. The one thing that brought me to a place of recognizing the importance and milestone status of this textbook is the epilogue written by John Burrows entitled Throwing

Storyeum lets colonists and Indians get along onstage

By Peter Morin

"It's misleading to suppose there's any basic difference between education and entertainment." Herbert Marshall McLuhan (quote on the back of the ticket for Storyeum)

Gastown's newest attraction, Storyeum, means a place of stories and is a tharactical and multi-media tour through the history of Vancouver. At the start of the Storyeum tour you get into an elevator and you travel the woods, then you travel to the longhouse, then you meet James Cook, then you meet some guy who looks like a white guy. He shows up in a Native style canoe, and then we meet a woman who just got off a Bride Ship. Oh, and Billy Barker, a Chinese man who died for the Canadian Pacific Railway, then John A. McDonald, then train 357 the famous train that went across Canada. Storyeum, a 70 minute tour that ended off with a singing number in front of train 357, the fastest train around at that time in BC. Did I learn anything? Um, if you have twenty two dollars, the price of an adult ticket, and are interested in hearing yet another version of history that still doesn't include the voices of people of colour, be my guest. I would say go and support the Native actors who are working at Storeyum, they did hire a few, but you don't even get to talk to them after you watch their scenes. And remember, Storyeum may mean a place of stories but it still is not taking any responsibility with those stories.
March unites treaty and non-treaty groups

Story by Emily Rocalma

Red was the colour theme, and it had absolutely nothing to do with the Calgary Flames. On May 19th, 61 Nations from across BC made history as they filled into Parks Arena in Victoria to attend a Title and Rights Alliance meeting graciously hosted by Chief Robert Sam and the Songhees Nation.

The newly formed Title and Rights Alliance, a coalition between Nations in BC currently engaged in the treaty process along with those who oppose it, met as a result of two unity conferences that took place in the fall of 2003. The meeting and protest was a unified action against the BC provincial government’s refusal to acknowledge First Nations sovereignty within their own territories, and their continued failure to consult Aboriginal people during the process of issuing tenures for First Nations land.

On May 19th, the inspirational meeting was attended by over one thousand people. Representatives from the 61 Nations filled the Parks Arena with an undeniable power to ignite change. Speakers such as First Nations rights lawyer Louise Mandell inspired the crowd, Mandell said that she had “shivers all through her...from the energy and power in this room...We don’t have time for cynical attitudes...we have to be energized and show support now.” President of the Council of the Haida Nation, Guujaaw, encouraged the crowd not to “…go to the Legislature as defeated and frustrated people, but rather [to] go there and celebrate who we are.” Nuu-chah-nulth elder Stanley Sam put the crowds sentiments into words when he said that “there is no such thing as crown land – because you had the crown before them!”

...consultation is unacceptable to First Nations. I don’t want to be consulted, I want to be at the table making the decisions!

Darlene Watts, Tsheshat

Women also held a powerful presence at the meeting, and at the protest the following day. Chief Liz Logan of the Treaty 8 Nations criticized the government for “throwing us crumbs from the feast that [they are] having on our land”. Darlene Watts, Tsheshat, recognized the women in attendance, asking all the women to stand up. “These women are the bearers of our Nations,” stated Watts, adding that women and men must respect and support each other in the work that lies ahead. With regards to government behaviour, Watts stated that even government “consultation” is unacceptable to First Nations. “I don’t want to be consulted,” she thundered, “I want to be at the table making the decisions.”

The protest began with a procession across the Johnson Street Bridge and along the waterfront, with a finale at the steps of the legislature. Chief Robert Sam was asked at the beginning of the protest if the rent had been paid to the Songhees Nation for the land on which the legislature stands. Sam answered that it had not.

Unfortunately, no representatives from inside the legislature acknowledged the presence of 1500 First Nations people on their front lawn. While the protest may not have elicited much of a reaction from those within the provincial legislature, it did much to foster a feeling of unity amongst the Nations present.

The old strategy of divide and conquer is a popular one of both the provincial and federal government, and the best defense is to unite on issues that are critical to the well-being and future of First Nations province and nation-wide. We must continue to be more and more difficult to ignore. We cannot just say this, we have to actually do it; and this protest was a step in that direction. We, as First Nations youth must stop speaking “in general”... and start making a difference.
ABORIGINAL YOUTH AT RISK CONFERENCE HELD IN VANCOUVER

Attacking the causes of high rates of suicide and at-risk activities among First Nations youth was the focus of a national conference held in Vancouver in mid-April.

Part of the conference studied how the new First Nations Youth At Risk (FNYAR) program helped reduce youth crime and substance abuse last year in the Manitoba community of Gods Lake, and how other communities used everything from a boxing program to canoe carving, break-dancing and community theatre.

The goal of the two-year-old program is to encourage youth to make their own choice to avoid at-risk activities or to seek help for existing problems.

FNYAR provided $50,000 in grants to eight First Nations communities to pilot the project. "These communities are often isolated and have limited resources and serious issues to overcome," says Harvey McCue, FNYAR’s founder and president.

The pilot project communities included Pikangikum in Ontario, which a few years ago was dubbed the youth suicide capital of Canada. Native youth suicide rates are as much as eight times that of the general Canadian population, and all levels of at-risk activity are higher.

Visit www.fnyar.ca

One of the women had the courage to speak out when Ramsay ended up presiding over her son’s custody case.

The chief judge’s office placed him on administrative leave in July and Ramsay resigned in October 2002.

REPORT: EDUCATION SYSTEM IS FAILING NATIVE KIDS

On February 5th, the Fraser Institute released the first ever Report Card on Aboriginal Education in British Columbia at a news conference in Vancouver.

The report compares the results of Aboriginal students at 38 elementary schools and 49 secondary schools, both public and private. For each school the Fraser Institute said they would ask, “With respect to its Aboriginal students, how is the school performing academically?”

The result? “British Columbia’s schools are, in general, failing the province’s Aboriginal students miserably,” says Peter Cowley, co-author and the Institute’s director of school performance studies.

In part, the report looked at high failure rates of provincial reading tests; the likelihood of completing high school in the usual time; and the likelihood of taking senior level provincially examinable courses. First Nations groups are critical of the report because it doesn’t look at why aboriginal students are doing so poorly, and it doesn’t make any
suggestions for improvement.

Rather than investigating systemic reasons why Indigenous people do not get the same access to or benefit from education in BC, the report said schools only are to blame and must be held accountable, and focused on a parent’s right to choose which school their children attend.

NEW EVIDENCE IN FRANK PAUL CASE IGNORED BY POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER

In 1998, Vancouver police took Frank Joseph Paul, a Mi’kmaq, from the drunk tank to an alley in the Downtown Eastside and left him in the pouring rain, where he was later found dead. Media reports say that he died either while in police custody, or of hypothermia from exposure.

BC’s first Police Complaints Commissioner recommended a coroner’s inquest into Paul’s death two and a half years ago, but Solicitor General Rich Coleman refused, fearing “racism in the police force might become an issue.”

In January 2003, the current Commissioner, Dirk Rynveld, again recommended a public inquiry. He also discovered two key witnesses, a corrections guard and a police wagon driver, who were never interviewed. Rynveld presented new evidence: a videotape of Paul’s apparently lifeless body being hauled out of the jail; testimony from a forensic pathologist suggesting Paul could have died before he left the paddy wagon; testimony from a guard; and a list of 15 new witnesses.

Rynveld says the case is not an isolated incident, citing the Stonechild inquiry in Saskatoon.

Despite this, Coleman has again rejected the recommendation for a public inquiry.

But the First Nations Summit says Paul’s death continues to raise questions about racism and policing practices in dealing with aboriginals.

And the Union of BC Indian Chiefs is demanding Coleman’s resignation over his handling of the case.

On April 2nd, 2004, First Nations people and their supporters gathered at the police station in the Downtown Eastside, calling for a public inquiry. And weeks later community members again demonstrated, at City Hall, where inside a motion was brought forth to support the call for an inquiry.

KANEHSATAKE UPDATE

In December 2003, ousted Chief James Gabriel signed a secret $900,000 deal with the Federal Solicitor General to take out the local Kahnawake police force and replace them with 60 Native police officers in the Mohawk community of Kanehsatake. The community only learned details of the agreement when an outsider got hold of a copy from Ottawa.

The new force was necessary, said Gabriel, to combat “organized crime” in Kanehsatake. However, the Kahnawake Peacekeepers, who were in charge of policing from January to March, found no evidence of organized crime or bustling drug trade, and observed that Gabriel’s allegations were unwarranted.

Gabriel was kicked out of office over two years ago in a vote of non-confidence. However, the vote was contested because community members who no longer live in Kanehsatake were not allowed to participate. A federal court threw out the vote and reinstated Gabriel as Grand Chief.

Many tribe members attempted, on numerous occasions, to reject the deal and expressed distrust of Gabriel, the band council, and the police force loyal to Gabriel. So, on January 18th community members barricaded the police force inside the Kanehsatake police station for over 24 hours in protest.

That same night, Gabriel’s home was lit on fire. (Nobody was injured in the blaze.) The provincial government then brokered a deal and withdrew the occupying force. Fourteen arrest warrants have been issued in connection with that night.

In March, community members issued a press release saying, “This police force does not have the support of the community and the community is completely opposed to its involvement in their affairs.”

And in mid-April, Mike Stalk, the
spokesman for the police chief in charge of Gabriel’s forces, announced, “We don’t have control of the police station in Kanehsatake at this time.”

On April 28th, the community was told that a mediation process had been arranged for all sides in Kanehsatake to negotiate a peaceable resolution. Mediation came dressed in riot gear the next day. Officers from Gabriel’s force attempted to enter the community, taking up positions at all the entrance points into Kanehsatake in riot gear, and restricted the movements of community members. The people of Kanehsatake resisted this forced entry.

SASKATCHEWAN MP’S RACIST PAMPHLETS MAY FACE TRIBUNAL

In 2002 and 2003, Saskatoon-Humboldt MP Jim Pankiw distributed pamphlets titled “Stop Indian Crime” and “It’s Clear Who the Racists Are.” Pankiw is well known, among many other things, for calling inherent Indigenous fishing and hunting rights “race-based inequality,” and for his response to the fact that Indigenous people are incarcerated at vastly higher rates than non-Natives in Canada: “If you can’t do the time, don’t do the crime.”

In a Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) investigation into complaints about the pamphlets, the investigators recommended that a human rights tribunal be called in. The CHRC found that Pankiw used “gross oversimplification and overgeneralization” and “blatant untruth,” and that the pamphlets discriminate against Aboriginal peoples and incite others to discriminate.

Pankiw denied any inaccuracies in his pamphlets. An investigator found Pankiw’s letter of defence to be “inflammatory, immoderate, uncivil, overstated and [amounting] to a rant saturated with the same sorts of racialized epithets and ideas” as the second pamphlet.

The CHRC will decide whether to request a tribunal at its next meeting, which will probably be this summer. If a tribunal finds a complaint is substantiated, it could order Pankiw to cease the discriminatory practice and pay tens of thousands in compensation for pain and suffering caused by the discrimination.

In December about 40 postal workers protested in Pankiw’s office, saying they didn’t want to distribute the racist and inflammatory pamphlet.

CANADA-WIDE POLICE BRUTALITY AGAINST NATIVES

This spring the Native newspaper First Perspective ran a front-page report on police brutality against Indigenous people in Canada, saying the “contention by many Aboriginal people that police agencies mistreat them” has been confirmed.

Reporter Len Kruzenga pointed first to the Kenora Police Service. The KPS is accused of lying under oath, withholding evidence, and failing to investigate links to another suspect a relative of one of the investigating officers in the 2000 murder of Max Kakegamic. The young North Spirit Lake First Nation member was found beaten to death on the street. The municipal force is now under investigation and Indigenous people and their supporters are demanding an inquiry into why the officers were not suspended.

The report covered the recent revelations of racist comments made by OPP officers during the standoff in Ipperwash in 1995, when police shot and killed Native protester Dudley George. This case has also sparked cries for a public inquiry, which were likewise refused by the provincial government.

Kruzenga also cited the inquiry into the death of Neil Stonechild, who froze to death after being dumped by cops outside the city on a winter night. And finally there was the death of Vancouver Mi’kmaw Frank Joseph Paul while in police care (see FRANK PAUL). First Perspective quoted 29-year-old Alex Woodman, who watched a newscast with videotape of police treatment of Paul, as saying: “It’s not isolated obviously, and the governments and police agencies have to take this situation and acknowledge it for what it is: deadly discrimination.”

ST’AT’IMC WIN AGAINST DFO

Ticwtka (Georgina Nelson), an elder of the Lil’wat of the St’at’imc Nation, has defeated charges laid by the DFO for selling fish to her people on reserve, in what Ticwtk-
wa called a “victory for the whole St’at’imc nation and all Aboriginal Nations across Canada.”

More than three years ago the DFO illegally seized 68 fish and argued that Ticwtkwa had caught salmon under the Fisheries Act, and therefore had illegally sold them on the Mount Currie Indian Reserve.

Ticwtkwa and the St’at’imc people made it clear that they were exercising their sovereign St’at’imc right to fish tsuqwaq (salmon) and that they were protected under the Constitution of Canada. Ticwtkwa received letters of support from the Aboriginal Fisheries Commission and other Indigenous peoples from across BC, Canada and the Americas.

On March 25th the charges were shown to be falsely formulated and therefore illegally laid, and the prosecution was forced to drop the charges.

This case reaffirmed that the DFO cannot simply enter premises of Aboriginal people, obtain evidence under false pretenses and harass Aboriginal families.

Contact Georgina Nelson: 604-894 6498 ticwtkwa@direct.ca or Chief Leonard Andrew: 604-894 6115

The community comes out to welcome and support Peace and Dignity runners at the Vancouver Native Friendship Centre. Photo by Jeremy Sean Williams

PEACE AND DIGNITY TOUR 2004

Peace and Dignity Journeys originated from the First International Indigenous Gathering held at Quito, Ecuador in 1990. At the gathering, “a mandate for the unification of all Indigenous peoples throughout the continent was called under the sacred principles of the Eagle and the Condor.”

This effort, called the Peace and Dignity Journey, has occurred every four years since 1992. It is an Indigenous spiritual run that crosses the entire western hemisphere.

On May 1st, 2004, two groups of runners from Alaska and Argentina began their run across both continents to meet at the Kuna Nation in Panama.

Redwire and KAYA (Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Advocates) hosted the runners during a brief stop in Vancouver. The runners rely on support from communities along the way. Redwire and Kaya also presented the runners with a paddle staff carved by Mike Fraser to be taken on the length of the run and carry prayers for the youth.

The tour “celebrates the strength, survival, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples and the preservation of our languages, cultures, and spirituality for over 500 years.”

Contact Jose Malvido, organizer and runner: joserwalkido@hotmail.com

Or visit: peaceanddignityjourneys2004.net
The Struggle to Retain Culture, Identity and the Right to Dance!

Cairns, Queensland, Australia
International Indigenous Dancers Project
By Carmen Daniels

When I think of the Indigenous struggle we constantly face, the things that come to my mind are land claims, equality, the living effects of residential schools and colonization, the Native Youth Movement, and so on. I can easily draw on these images because they are the ones we have all grown up with. News stories of perpetual injustices done to Native people in Canada flash flood through my brain – Old Man River, Sun Peaks, Oka, Burnt Church, Grassy Narrows, and the struggle is ongoing.

As we Native youth grow up amidst these ongoing injustices committed against our own people, and we start to become aware of how we fit into the cause, we begin to contribute to the collective consciousness, to the fight.

But in this seventh generation of freedom fighters for the Indigenous cause, there is another group of freedom fighters chosen for a different path, just as our ancestors have always ensured, for the preservation of culture and tradition.

They are stick men, traditional dancers, hoop dancers, jingle dancers, grass dancers and fancy dancers. And they are in the struggle as deep as the loudest protestor and pow-wow dancing, I wondered why mainstream society always viewed native cultural dancing as something as superficial as mere 'entertainment.' Mainstream society has often looked at our pow-wow dancers as rich, beautiful tapestries of cultures they don't understand – for the duration of a performance, before retreating back into their normal lives, largely untouched by the daily Indigenous issues that extend beyond their first point of contact.

For me, pow-wows have always been a celebratory display of our rich and lively cultures, but so much more than that as well. Any dancer, when asked why they dance, will tell you – it is just something they do, a part of who they are. For dancers, dancing isn’t a lifestyle choice, it is a part of their make up and dancing is a part of the struggle to keep our traditions and our ancestors alive. The purpose of pow-wows and traditional dancing keeps the connection open to our ancestors, a means to honour and communicate with the other side.

A celebration – yes; 'entertainment' – no.

But how to make the wider community understand that the issues faced by our cultural dancers – the
issues of preserving culture and identity, keeping the connection to our ancestors alive through dancing – are the same social justice issues that motivate some of us to pick up a placard and protest for Indigenous rights and recognition?

Being the only Cree Native person living over here in Cairns, Queensland, Australia for the past three years, I’ve been devising methods to dispel preconceived stereotypes of the general Australian public of the romanticized views of Native people in Canada, while working to maintain a direct connection to my own beautiful culture at home in Canada (Edmonton, Alberta).

One day last February, I stumbled upon the answer. An international social justice youth group called the International Youth Parliament funded me to start an international cross-cultural exchange project for Indigenous Dancers in Canada and Australia to work with two Indigenous dance groups – the White Buffalo Dancers and Drummers Society in Edmonton, Alberta and the Yubba Bimbie Dancers from Yarrabah Aboriginal Community, located 45 minutes south of Cairns here in Australia. The project’s focus was to examine how young Indigenous dancers approach their culture and find their identity through traditional dancing, to connect the two dance groups and give them a means to share their struggle for identity on common ground.

In social justice terms, cultural dancers in Canada and Australia are often not supported for their struggle to preserve culture as a means of survival. The dancers project “Dreaming in the Four Directions” provided an online support network for the two dance groups to meet one another, exchange cultural practices, and to explore their similarities and differences in the areas of traditional dancing and their own individual approaches to culture.

Funded for one year, we started our support network via email exchange, with the humble beginnings of introducing the dancers to one another, exchanging photos, stories and their specific roles in dancing. Each group was in respective awe of the traditional practices of one another. Although the traditional dress, legends and stories behind the dances of each country are vastly different, the dancers of each group began to find a common thread, a connection.

After ten months of communicating via email, the project slowly began to grow from those small connections. The dancers wanted to meet each other, and talk to one another face to face. We planned for a real time online chat between the two dance groups, to be held early this year.

Central to planning the online chat, was my kokum – Christine Daniels. An Elder of SaddleLake First Nation and founder and president of the White Buffalo Dancers since 1975, I wanted her to have the opportunity to tell her story to the Yarrabah youth dancers. And I wanted each dance group to have the opportunity to listen and learn from her wisdom.

When the day of the online chat finally arrived, the Yarrabah Dancers and myself were filled with anticipation. For them, they were going to meet Canadian Native dancers in real time, for the very first time – a living extension to all of our email exchanges spanning ten months. For me, I would get the chance to hear my grandmother speak to the dancers about the reasons why she dances and continues to work with Native youth in Edmonton, teaching them the old ways of pow-wow dancing. So there we were, in two respective countries, set up via web cameras and an online chat program, entering into real time.

Although being from two different Indigenous cultures in Australia and Canada, the Yarrabah Dancers learned they share many similar characteristics with the White Buffalo Dancers in Canada, in traditional dancing, but also in a historical context.

“I felt we had a lot in common with the Canadian Indian dancers,” says Yarrabah dance group leader Bradley Baird. “In our chat, I learned that they have the same health problems as us Aboriginal people in Australia and that their land was also dispossessed. We can learn a lot from each other.”

Facilitating the Canadian end of the chat was the White Buffalo Dancers’ Youth Coordinator, Sokaymoh Frederick. Sokaymoh was surprised by the immediate connection solidified by the two dance groups, once they met in a real time context. “Once we got through the introductions,” she said, “we immediately delved into the deeper connections of our cultures. We shared history, stories and legends. There were no holds
barred after that. The communication flowed really easily, far past the superficial level I had originally expected would happen.”

And the Australian Indigenous dancers equally felt the level of depth exchanged in the conversation. “I was surprised,” Bradley remarked. “Listening to the wisdom of the Elder, it was really awesome. I had never talked to any Indian people before. So what I knew was just what I saw in movies.

“People on this side [of the chat] gained some pride in their identity because the Australian Aboriginal dancers were very interested in learning,” she further explains. “I could feel the cultural pride. It becomes something very different when that cultural sharing can span international borders.”

“The best part of the chat for me, was speaking to the Elder Christine Daniels about how she started her cultural exchange. The Yubba Bimbie Dancers are working to implement their business plan to become a business and eventually wish to travel to Canada.

“We want to work towards meeting the dancers from Canada, by developing and maintaining a strong relationship with them, and other dancers in the future. Because the more we all dance, the more healing will flow for Indigenous people.”

Although the funding for the “Dreaming in the Four Directions” dancers’ project has finished, each dance group has asked to continue the online cultural support network. Plans are underway to hold a more advanced cross-cultural exchange between the two dance groups with a video conference.

For more information on the International Youth Parliament, go to the website at: www.iyp.oxfam.org.

Carmen Daniels is a Cree youth from Edmonton, Alberta living overseas in Cairns, Queensland, Australia. Carmen is the Project Manager for the “Indigenous Dancers” project. Write to: ekosana@yahoo.com.au.

The White Buffalo Dancers expressed how sharing culture with the Australian Indigenous dancers helped to solidify their own approach to culture. Sokaymoh explains, “The chat really made me recognize the importance of our own culture. It really strengthened my belief in our own culture because of the similarities we shared with the Australian Aboriginal dancers.”

During the chat, the Yarrabah dancers honoured our Elder Christine Daniels when she spoke by joining hands together in solidarity and respect for her words.

“It was fantastic to see Australian Indigenous young people honouring our Elder,” Sokaymoh says. “They have their own ways of honouring Elders and being able to share that over the Internet was amazing.

Bradley Baird, Yubba Bimbie dance group leader, age 26, gets ready for performance in Yarrabah community.

dance group, and listening to the young Indian dancers and hearing their stories,” says Bradley.

So what’s next for the White Buffalo Dancers [in Canada] and the Yubba Bimbie Dancers [in Australia]?

Each dance group has big plans! The White Buffalo Dancers are on their way to Korea next month to dance at Korean cultural festivals and start on a new journey of cul-
Random Rants for TV Babies

The winner of the Redwire and Kaya writing contest

by Os12/R. Harris

Stupid mesh caps and pastel clothes are back again?!? Everywhere I go, everywhere I look and everything I listen to is tainted with the poison that this world has developed on its surface like a scummy residue called THE HUMAN RACE!

Silly humans...imagine that this species would manage to plunder almost all of the planet’s resources, and then plunder themselves. There were times in my life when I thought that we would see a brighter day in the future...especially after we made it past Y2K, 911,311, and etc...

Now as we spiral into this abyss of moral infernal darkness, my hopes have lessened with every lesson. The advent of a mechanical dragon is upon us. Nature is on its last stems of ability to recover from its wounds, but still the human race stands by and watches via closed circuits. Our planet has become one of those small towns hiding a dark secret, the murder of a mother. To hide and maintain the dignity of the community the town hides the evidence and the guilty mayor continues his rampage throughout the valley. Metaphorically speaking for all those who need the truth softened with a poetic tainting.

I remember watching my grandfather cheer for Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War, and thinking that he was crazy. During my private school years, (grade one to 6), I was actually really into current events. We had to bring in a current event every Friday to speak about in class. I was so confused during those times, as the opinion that was at school, with the sons and daughters of doctors and lawyers, was that Saddam was evil. Bottom line.

Now I understand that it is the lesser of two evils now, and being a doctor or lawyer would mean that you would be a big tax investor in this war with money waged on the home team. Then I thought about my grandpa, who never worked for anyone, and was always his own boss; as a fisherman with no taxes to pay and no money waged on the home team. If that wasn’t poetic than I don’t know what is anymore.

Dead babies, dead ladies, dead men, dead soldiers, dead flowers, dead water, dead earth. A dead generation that sat back and sniffed coke listening to New Wave, while Reagan set the ground work for the New World Order. The A-Team and the Knight Rider held their attention while the contras and death squads attacked South American countries so George Bush could slang product. Olympics and wrestling held gape mouths open, while the government fed them pills, elixirs, antibiotics and Coca-Cola until their immune systems wouldn’t work with drugs now available. They listened to George Michael and Boy George while an epidemic called crack and heroin spilled over our people like a bucket of cold blood. We laughed at the Bundy’s and the Simpson’s when Canadian Armed Forces stood off with Oka warriors. I was really into AC/DC when the kids kicked my ass for being Indigenous in the 80’s.

Where there’s war there’s opportunity, and right now we’re in the midst of a resource/holy war. Don’t let your mind be distracted by the glamour and the glitz. Don’t let the violence or the sex on TV scare you. This is all a part of a program developed to control you, your family, your friends, your school mates, work colleagues, your enemies, your allies and everyone and everything around you. Take your soul and hold it close, as that one day will be a resource for the cannibals to reap and harvest, after American Idol of course.

Look out for the essay contest winner, Anne Blake and her story about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the next issue of Redwire.

Congratulations to both OS 12 and Anne Blake, each of them will receive $250 dollars courtesy of Knowledgable Aboriginal Youth Advocates.
Join Redwire’s Youth Advisory

You can join Redwire’s youth advisory if you
* Are an Aboriginal, Metis, Inuit youth 14-19 years old
* Have an interest in media
* Are passionate
* Work well with others
* Can meet once a month

You will be giving direction to RedwireMagazine, and our organization.

If you are committed to youth issues, are creative and interested in learning about print media then give us a call:

If you are interested in being on the advisory please contact:
JOnna Recalma, Editor
604-602-7226
tania@redwiremag.com

Tatanka says, "You don’t have to have big muscles to be strong"
Submit your stories and articles of Health and Wellness to the next issue of Redwire

The Indigenous Media Arts Group is seeking applicants for its "Repatriation, Returning Home" project.

Indigenous Media Arts Group Training Program
MEDIA TRAINING PROGRAM FOR YOUTH
starting September 6 to December, 2004.
Deadline: August 15, 2004
The IMAG Multi Media youth training, at Video In Studios, will consist of hands-on training in radio, television, print and new media as well as in-depth video production training. The program will incorporate indigenous principles and values in a well rounded program of activities which will include video production, an introduction to radio programming, new media applications, and research and writing skills. This training program has a focus of repatriation. The significance of repatriation is not simply the return of cultural artefacts stolen from Indigenous Peoples all across Turtle Island, but also the cultural return home for aboriginal peoples. This program will have a mentorship component with more experienced youth mentoring the youth who have no background in the media arts.
Age: 18 (exceptions depends on the individual) to 29 years.
If you are looking for a challenging and inspiring program to enhance your media and communication skills please send the following:

* cover letter explaining your interest in the media arts
* resume with work experience and education
* sample of work – may be writing, art or media related

Address: 1965 Main Street, Vancouver, BC, V5T 3C1
Tel: 604-871-0173  Fax: 604-871-0191
Email: imag@telus.net  Website: www.imag-nation.com
PSYCHOLOGICAL DECOLONIZATION

There are many global examples that can be drawn from when exploring the process of decolonization. However, there remains little to no direct, local examples and/or assertions of decolonial action. Therefore the process, on a domestic level, is strictly hypothetical and still in the stages of development. An effective process would include positive aspects from other decolonial attempts, appropriated to meet the needs of the local Indigenous Peoples. Ultimately, the intentions of dismantling suppressive colonial authority acts as a key decolonial objective.

The most extreme and fundamental flaw within many previous attempts at decolonization have been hindered through the absence of gender equality and recognition of the female spirituality and strength. Prime examples of this fallacy have been evident in the Algerian revolution during the early 1960’s that saw Algerian rebels overcome their French colonizers and more recently the actions taking place in Zimbabwe spearheaded by Robert Mugabe in retaliation to the encroachment of white farmers. These actions have been mainly militaristic and patriarchal in nature and have unfortunately not accumulated to very much in regards to the true emancipation of the Indigenous Peoples of those lands. A secondary flaw to these and other attempts has been the restrictive approach of denying the participation of people of other ethnicities and cultural backgrounds within the process itself, and in some extreme cases the targeting and adversarial labeling of other religions, races and sexes.

Decolonization is not the goal. It is the process of which we use to achieve the goal of self-determination and sovereignty. In essence it is a vehicle that is developed to perpetuate us towards an applicable and
consent of the Indian Nation in whose territory the English want to settle.

1778 - Capt. James Cook is discovered by Nuu-chah-nulth. Exploration of west coast territories and later Northwest and Interior. Spanish (Cortez, Malaspina, Juan de Fuca) trade on west coast, soon fall to British military "muscle".

1792 - Capt. Robert Gray kidnaps a Nuu-chah-nulth (Tla-o-qui-aht) Chief, Tla-o-qui-ahts retaliate and attack Grays Fort. Gray then leads a massacre and total destruction of Tla-o-qui-aht village.

1803 - Maquinna, a Mowachaht chief, attacks and destroys the American Trading Ship "Boston" after Capt. John Salter's men raped two Mowachaht girls - two slaves taken by Maquinna.

1811 - "Tonquin" captured and crew killed in Nuu-chah-nulth territory. Fur trade routes and roads begin developing throughout interior "BC".

1830 - 50's - Jesuit priests and missionaries begin sweeping across "BC" - whites immune "proof" of the superiority of Christ's magic. Vaccine stockpile in Victoria remains untouched.

1847 - 50 - Measles epidemic on west coast, 1600+ spreads to interior. 50% of Indigenous die. Later the number would reach 90% through infested blankets - given as gifts to Indigenous Nations.

1849 - Vancouver Island becomes British colony under Hudson's Bay Company control.

1858 - British Columbia becomes British colony - Fraser River Gold Rush.

1861 - 1st Residential School is opened. Coqualeetza (Chillicwack).

1862 - Smallpox epidemic

The process of decolonization is the reversal and removal of negative colonial effects.

appropriate way of life for Indigenous Nations.

The process of decolonization is the reversal and removal of negative colonial effects. Colonialism is based upon two primary elements; physical occupation of and then the psychological breakdown of the Indigenous inhabitants and territories. Therefore, the natural cycle of decolonization is focused upon the same basic elements and principles, only in reverse order.

Through assimilation and colonial conformity Indigenous Peoples have become displaced from traditional values, teachings, practices and overall way of life. It is vital to recognize this mindset and reconnect the severed roots within our nations before any positive and beneficial attempts can be made to reclaim our territories, inherent title and rights.

So... how do we initiate a decolonial process? First, let's look at the more prominent effects introduced through colonialism. And how they affect the Individual indigenous person.

1. Internal Violence and Aggression

Anger and violence directed towards oneself, one another and family/community. This includes rape, murder, assault, sexual abuse of women and children, drugs, alcohol, suicide, etc. The irrational violence within the colonized Indigenous person results from the oppressed conditions that colonization imposes upon people. (for example; poverty, sickness & disease, loss of identity & breakdown of family and Nation structure) Many of these effects are attributed to specific methods used by the colonizing nation, for example; residential schools, the reserve system, the NDN act, etc.

2. Individualism – Self Interest

With the breakdown of the nation and family structures fragmentation and
1864 - Ahousaht villages destroyed by Royal Navy (Capt. Denman). Chilotin Uprising

Gunboats
Ships had cannons, flares & exploding projectiles. Most of Her Majesty's ships carried Royal Marines who were sent ashore with sailors. They were always well equipped with rifles & other small arms. Two wooden gunboats, 106 ft. in length, Forward & Grapper (1859) put into service to counter Indian "threats". They used coal sometimes dug by Indian labour on the east coast of Vancouver Island. These ships were designed to carry a 68 lb gun, two 32 lb guns, a 24 lb Howitzer, & carried 36-40 crew.

By this time, the British Naval fleet had formed itself as a fierce and threatening presence, world-wide. In order to protect and secure the resources that they wished to take from Our territories, the British deployed gunboats and military exploration of the Interior territories. Many nations from around the world had already felt the impact and destruction from the Royal Navy. The Northwest coast of what has now become known as "BC" was seen as an area that promised strong Indigenous resistance.

As the battles on land & sea continued, the technologies of the British Navy increased rapidly. In 1863 the Forward & Grapper gunboats would be replaced by two gunvessels, Boxer & Rocket, that had superior mobility, speed & gun power. Through the presence and activities of these ships, trade was protected, seas were surveyed, settlement and British colonial law were spread and above all the colonies of Vancouver Island (1849) and BC (1858), united in 1866, were made secure.

Some common experiences during Army and Navy actions on Our territories include; - guns & cannons would shoot at nearby targets - intimidation - seizure of property such as canoes, thereby sealing off any possibilities of escape

competition have quickly replaced the sense of unity, community and togetherness that was once the basis of Indigenous societies.

3. Neglect of Culture – Assimilation
Another key tactic of colonization is to portray the Indigenous culture as negative and/or irrelevant to the rest of society, or, to freeze the Indigenous way of life in an historical context. Once this belief is entrenched within the Indigenous person they have no alternative but to assimilate and conform to the colonialist society.

4. Inferiority Complex – Identity Crisis
The objective of the colonialist is to have the Indigenous person believe that there is little or no positive aspects within the Indigenous culture. Physical and mental domination, constant negative portrayals of Indigenous Peoples and history and euro-centric superiority attitudes play fundamental roles in the creation of the Indigenous inferiority complex. The Indigenous person begins to question their identity and becomes caught between the historical precept of the traditional NDN and the present day reality. "Who am I?" "What does it mean to be an NDN?" The major contributing factors to questions of this nature lie in the curriculum being taught through residential and public educational institutions, the fostering and adoption of Indigenous children, inaccurately depicted accounts of history, centralization in urban areas, loss of language and culture.

5. Abandonment of Traditional Territories
Colonization creates a feeling of Indigenous dependency on colonially established towns (reserves) and cities. In order to benefit from colonial programs and institutes Indigenous People must migrate to these areas and leave their traditional territories. The act of relocating and isolating Indigenous Peoples into reserve parameters also forces our people away from the majority of their territories. This allows the colonial state to assume jurisdiction over lands that were once controlled by Indigenous Nations. It also removes the Indigenous people physically to accommodate the establishment of settler communities and resource extraction. The current BC treaty process is a mechanism used to legally entrench and acquire consent for an agreed upon abandonment and surrender of traditional territories.

Now, let's examine the reversal of these effects - the initiation of decolonization.

1. Raise the consciousness of the oppressive state that Indigenous people live in by exposure to a more realistic account of history and identifying
- chiefs would be taken hostage
- interpreters and police would go into villages and scout out “troubleshooters”
- Indian informants would be used to gain info from villages
- villages would be destroyed
- any Indians that resisted or fought back, when caught, would be hanged before the tribe.

The smoldering ruins of a village and a scattered village tribe were the telling testaments of the process of keeping NorthWest coast Indians “in awe of British power”

Colonialism - Conformity & assimilation of Indigenous Peoples

1867 - Canada is formed

1868 - “Act for the gradual civilization of Indian Peoples” is passed (Indian Act)
- creation of reserves
- puppet band councils established
- Canadian gov’t defines “Indian” - based on blood quantum

1884 - A law prohibiting Feasts, Potlatches, Smokehouses, Sundances, marriage ceremonies, etc. This law was not changed until 1951, 67 years later

1890 - Militarization of Indigenous territories is complete
- Little Big Horn, Lakotas annihilate the U.S. 7th Cavalry - Gen. Custer
- Last gunboats patrol Our coastal territories

1893 - Residential school system put into effect

1900 - Indigenous populations in “North America” are reduced from 15 million to 300 thousand.

Early 1900's - Indigenous way of life goes underground. Indian artifacts, regalia and art are seized by RCMP. To continue traditional ceremonies, people gather in secluded spots.

the perpetrator that's creating and maintaining that oppression. An effective strategy includes counter-action methods such as:

Educating oneself and serving as an example for others, advocating sovereign Indigenous rights, recognizing and identifying traditional territories, and exercising and defending those rights and territories. These activities provide experiences that instill a sense of pride and purpose by involving people in actions that make a positive contribution to their communities and ultimately to their sense of self. Primarily, individual, family, then community/Nation healing must occur. During this healing process, irrational violence and aggression becomes dissolved and a more purposeful facet may be identified to vent negative feelings that remain from colonization.

2. Understanding that you are a people and a Nation sharing the same ancestry. During the early steps of recovery, Unity and Togetherness play a vital role also deteriorate and communal or national Indigenous interests become a key focus as a necessity in the process of decolonization.

3. Revitalization of a sense of Nationality and appreciation of the knowledge and ways of Indigenous ancestry. Traditional philosophies of respect and appreciation for the Earth, Women, Life, oneself and others are positive aspects of Indigenous culture that are still relevant today. An understanding of the negative and positive aspects of the colonial society is important and education on the negative aspects must be emphasized, while positive aspects be utilized. It must be acknowledged that everybody, Indigenous or not, are assimilated to one degree or another, no-one is immune
from colonial influence or assimilation. It should be further understood that Indigenous culture and way of life is not static. If Indigenous people had not undergone the influence of colonialism, they would not exist among the same societies as those that existed during the time of European intervention. It is at this point that the colonized Indigenous person must learn to exist within a colonial environment and parameters with a decolonized mindset.

4. Recognize the strength in Indigenous ways. While undergoing exposure to the truths of history and the current reality, the Indigenous person realizes the fallacies and disinformation that the colonialist society circulates in regards to Indigenous history, culture, traditions and practices. It is important at this stage to broaden the process of decolonization, to begin distributing more accurate and truthful accounts of Indigenous society and pinpointing problem areas within our communities. Firstly, re-education must be directed towards the Indigenous Nations and then focus may be directed towards people of other nationalities. As the Indigenous people as a whole have developed an inferiority complex through the oppressive lifestyle that they have become accustomed towards, their initial reaction may be to overthrow their oppressor and gain control of the colonial reigns. The Indigenous person must understand that the colonial mandate is destructive and the few positive aspects that it does contain are the only beneficial components that can contribute to the process of decolonization. It is not feasible for a colonized Indigenous Nation to return to a totally traditional lifestyle as their mentality and lifestyle has been drastically transformed. However, an incorporation of positive aspects of contemporary society and ancestral Indigenous ways will contribute to overcoming the effects of inferiority and identity crisis.

5. Re-occupying Traditional territory. This includes establishing permanent or semi-permanent camps and communities in areas previously occupied or used by Indigenous Nations that are now abandoned, as well as increasing traditional activities such as; fishing, hunting, food gathering and spiritual practices. A primary goal of such re-occupation would be to eventually establish self-sufficient and independent communities beyond the range and influence of colonial society. From these re-settlements sovereign and free territories could be constructed, ultimately removing Indigenous people from the colonial society – a primary aim of decolonization.
Dig Your Grave

By William Baturin

Rap is the mail-order bride of the white vampire-culture. It's power as a social and political art-form has been co-opted by mainstream culture and consumerism. Hip-hop has become so far removed from its roots in the black communities it grew up from, it no longer represents the voice of the people. Just like country music before it, rap has been transmogrified into a diet-vanilla-low-carb Frankenstein monster that's sold to soccer moms in minivans. Rap is not the language of urban black youth anymore, it's become the soundtrack for mainstream white culture. Hip-hop culture is popular culture, with your favorite artists selling phone-plans and anti-perspi-rant to the white consumer. Now when John and Susie White drive their kids to Disneyland they all sing-along to Jay-Z and Ludacris. "Yo Daddy, can I have a Wu-Tang hoodie for Christmas this year?"

As a young Aboriginal man, I can't relate to the hip-hop scene. The common argument I hear from Indigenous "homeys" is that we share similar experiences with the black community. This doesn't make sense to me. Rap, like the blues and rock n' roll before it, is a form of African/American cultural expression built from a separate history than our own. We have retained our songs, stories, and languages, whereas they have had to re-invent themselves.

I just can't identify with some guy rapping about drug-dealing for nice sneakers and gold chains, or beating-up and pimping women so he can drive a flashy car (yeah, there's something to aspire to, a low-life with no self-respect). I found that I had more in common with the angry and emotionally-honest sound of heavy-metal. The music is a crushing chainsaw-on-steroids, it's like a tumor that grows in your belly, sustains your spirit, and exorcizes your demons with an enema of rage. These metal lords sing about shit I can understand and respect- the hypocrisy of the church, the disease of the government, and the apathy of the mainstream clones, all stomped into a primal and blood-soaked sound.

Metal appeals to me, like all outcasts and those on the fringes of society because it speaks for us no matter where we live or who we are. It's not some yoga-instructor in a fubu tracksuit downloading 50-cent onto his ipod, it's a 250 pound soccer hooligan kicking your head in. You see, heavy-metal's flirtation with popular culture died an ugly death back in 1991 when grunge came on the scene, so the music had to go deeper underground to survive where mediocrity isn't tolerated, and in the process it got better. Its strength partly comes from that it isn't marketable to the masses, otherwise it probably would have sold-out just like hip-hop which compromised its ideals to conform to white society's needs.

Commercial hip-hop has weakened your resistance to the colonizer's brainwashing- it's corrupting your spirit! But it's not too late, those of you who have fallen under the spell of mainstream rap can break out of the suffocating self-mediated fog by checking out heavy metal. Come on over to the dark side Brothers and Sisters, and de-colonize. It's not too late to escape the trap.
We must start eating fish, wild game if possible, and drink water instead of pop, and drop alcohol, one of the main tools of the colonizers. We must start exercising regularly and avoid smoking.

No! I am who I am. An indigenous person. A person who’s blood line goes back to a strong Nation. A Nation of strong intelligent people. Not the savage barbarians that the colonizers claim us to be. We cultivated vegetables leading to healthy lives while the colonizers lived poorly off of meat, bread, and milk.

We took baths regularly while they doused their filthy bodies in perfume every day to mask their smell. We were mathematicians, philosophers, astronomers, and agriculturists who knew how to live off the land. We are the people who lived here for thousands of years in harmony while the colonizers have ruined this land in only 500 years.
To decolonize ourselves we must remember all this. Keep in mind what the Elders teach us; know who you are, where you come from, where you’re at, and where you’re going.

While attending a talk led by Taiaiake Alfred—a member of the Mohawk Nation—at the University of Toronto, I was exposed to a new concept of decolonization that I quote often when talking of the subject. He said we must “decolonize our diets.” For a person who eats healthy I jumped for joy internally. Yes! Someone who understands me, who knows what I’m talking about.

Decolonizing our diets means going back to eating our traditional foods, such as the Three Sisters soup of the Iroquois, consisting of corn, beans, and squash. To many Nations across the Americas corn is their mother. We must start eating fish, wild game if possible, and drink water instead of pop, and drop alcohol, one of the main tools of the colonizers.

We must start exercising regularly and avoid smoking, which is a bastardization of tobacco, one of our sacred medicines. If we are to decolonize, the body is an essential step.

Before 1492 the indigenous Nations of the Americas were spiritually strong. We had our own ways of honouring the Creator, our own stories, teachings, ceremonies, and medicines.

These words were like poetry. Before this when I was asked by people why I didn’t eat junk food, white flour, refined sugar, pop, or drink alcohol, I would go into long discussions about health and the body and so on. Now I just respond that “I’ve decolonized my diet.”

Time and time again I see my Indigenous brothers and sisters eating crap. Canadian settler crap! Coca-Cola and Kraft come to mind immediately. Indigenous people have the highest rate of diabetes in North America, yet they love Coke. Coke, the company that kills its Indigenous employees down south and has no health benefits whatsoever is getting richer everyday and killing our people at the same time.

To be strong Nations we must be health conscious. Therefore, one aspect of decolonization is to go back to our old eating habits.

We were some of the healthiest Nations on earth before the colonizers came and spread disease. Now they eat healthy organic foods and we are eating crap.

Through colonization much has been lost. Nations were decimated in the name of a white God. A God they made white with blue eyes. Homeboy ain’t white. Anyway, the spirituality that we have left we must absorb.

We must go back to our roots, our foundation. In order to stand strong we must have a solid foundation. This is the key to decolonizing. Attend ceremonies, learn your language, visit Elders, recognize your blood.

This was a short attempt at describing the process of decolonization. Diet, new ways of thinking, and spiritual practices. Geography for example; do people have access to the resources to change their minds, bodies and spirits?

Decolonization is not easy. Hell, the colonizers didn’t come here for you to decolonize. We must do the best we can with what we have. Start with remembering who you are and where you came from. Meegwetch.
Education or Assimilation

By Jusquan

Go to school, get an education, they say. What about education at home, within your family, within your community? There needs to be a balance among Indigenous youth, a focus to not only finish grade 12 and “go to university,” but to also stay at home and learn from those in the community willing to teach to gather food, to weave, to carve, to lead, to speak our languages.

Sure, I went to university, and there are benefits. I was going to send in an article I wrote while attending school, where I trash the institution and the experience as one thinly veiled attempt to assimilate us. Although my opinion has only slightly changed, I now recognize the skills and opportunity offered by going away to school. Yeah, blah blah experience, blah blah new ideas, blah blah blah widened worldview and better writing ability. Pat on the back, degree to hang up on the wall. Hurray, another so-called “educated” Indian.

Educated in what? Educated in the colonial system. Once through the institution, the student understands and can converse within the Canadian system, be it history or political science or marine biology. The boundaries of the system are then recognized in the minds of the student, they become the boundaries of thought. Once in place it becomes difficult to remove and think outside of them.

Problems then arise; such as former University students unable to find work in their own communities, only able to work effectively in city centers where government institutions offer “Aboriginal liaison” positions and the like.

Think about it. If Universities, funded by governments and mandated to enhance Canadian society, were to teach ways of working against and breaking apart the system that created and supports them, they would self-destruct. From the beginning Canada has focused on weakening and swallowing up Indigenous societies so that it can prosper on the lands and resources rightfully owned by those societies. Canada would not benefit by teaching Indigenous peoples effective ways to reverse the colonial process.

Where, then do we as Indigenous youth learn to reverse this destructive cycle? By staying at home, gaining strength from the land, learning from the elders, and raising our children so they too can do the same thing. We need to recognize that going away to University is not the be all and end all in education, that providing knowledge at home is the answer to bettering our communities and lifestyle. Learning history from the books, written by and for non-Indigenous peoples, isn’t enough. Communities need to focus on teaching children our version of history.

Yes, many of us will go away to University. We will learn the ins and outs of written history. From that map of events, we will learn how to fight the legal battles to have rightful Aboriginal title to our lands. We will create friendships and change minds of the non-Indigenous peoples there.

But we must not get caught in the trap of thinking that there is “nothing for us” at home, just because we now have an “education.” We need to create a new cycle, where our children will not have to leave home to go to University, they will be able to gain the knowledge at home, in learning centers of our own, where we can teach the necessary skills to succeed in our rightful place along side the Canadian society that has for so long claimed us as their own.
I love this guy,
Taiaiake Alfred
(or at least I like him a lot)

Redwire staff writer, Simon Reece, talks with accomplished, author, activist and educator Taiaiake Alfred.

What is your perspective on the war in Iraq?

It is another in the long line of wars the US has fought to secure its dominance of the world economy. And there is not much else to say about the rationale for the war. That’s what it is. There are a lot of details you can talk about; there are a lot of justifications that have been put out. Most people have been arguing about that, about the justifications that have been put out.

And nobody really looks at the whole history of the US and the basic foundation of the US and how it needs to keep expanding its economy in order to survive. More importantly at this point to secure the lifeblood of its economy, which is oil. They say, “no blood for oil” eh? But for the US oil is blood. It’s the thing the body survives on. I was in the US marines and at the time I did not realize it fully, and I probably wouldn’t have even changed if I did know it at that time.

But it’s clear from that experience that the US military power is there not for justice, freedom or anything like that. It’s there to stabilize the countries that need to be stabilized, so the US can access the resources that are there in those countries. Or to control the governments of those countries, so they are co-operative with the economic interests of the US. it’s that simple.

What is your perspective on the war here at home?

The war here at home is on a smaller scale, the same thing. Because if you think about it, the Canadian economy only survives by sucking the blood out of our people, and out of the earth. So there is no justice when it comes to Canadian policy. Justice is a secondary concern to the primary imperative, being to continue to take resources to feed their economy so that this society can continue to function the way it functions. And those resources that people talk about, those are our trees, our rocks, everything. And when it comes to that, the only difference, really, is that our people are not resisting. And the people in Iraq are resisting. So our people resisted the same way the people of Iraq are resisting, 200 years ago, 300, 400 years ago.

But for a number of reasons our people have stopped, and have become more co-operative. And I think it is the same level of injustice and the same kind of injustice happening. But we seem to be benefiting more out of the colonialism that we complain about. So therefore there is not as much of an incentive for us to stand up and resist like in other countries. But I don’t think any Canadian should imagine that the basic relationship is different from between the US and Iraq.

Do you condone the use of violence, and if you do to what extent?

No, I do not condone the use of violence. If we hated the outside society and wanted to destroy it, then it would make sense to use violence. Because that’s what it would do, it would consume them and destroy
them. But we say, according to our teaching’s, that we’re supposed to have coexistence. And if we have coexistence as our goal we cannot use violence at the end. It’s a part of our struggle, but I separate the use of violence from self-defense. So if another person, family, and or Nation bring violence upon you in order to extinguish your life or your connection to your land, you are justified in defending yourself. That is my theory of violence.

Could you maybe expand on what you mean by coexistence?

I would say the coexistence we’re talking about is in the treaties, like the ancient treaties, when the first white man came to this continent. They were very clear and the classic one that we always refer to is the two row wampum treaty. All it said, in a basic way, is that we are all now in the same territory and we are all going to live here as neighbors, but we can only have peace and friendship as long as there is sharing, and there can only be sharing as long as there is respect, and there can only be respect as long as you recognize the fact that we are tied together now, but you also at the same time recognize the fact that we are separate and distinct. And that we are going to continue in this relationship, and we are always going to have peace, friendship and, respect.

But if you ever disregard one of those two and if you don’t think that we are separate, and you don’t want to help and turn your back on us, then that is going to cause problems. And if you think that we are too close and that we are one in the same and we are not separate, and if you don’t honour the differences between us, then there is going to be problems. That’s like the native view of what coexistence is.

And our ancestors put that forward, they fought for that, they died for that, they protected it and then, in the recent years, we have given it away for free, basically. And you have the elders, the real old people that talk about the treaties, and you got this generation of people here who are in charge today who are mainly brainwashed out of that by residential school. And by loss of language and by these sorts of things, they don’t understand these treaties. That’s why they go for the watered down assimilationist ideas that are put in front of them, because they don’t understand the true history and what they are fighting for.

So our job is to connect the youth with the elders and then we will have power again. And we will be able to force the Canadian society to be of coexistence.

Where do indigenous nations fit in to the scheme of things in concern to NAFTA, WTO and so on?

I think the role that we play is to remind people of an alternative way of life, opposed to a total materialist, consumer, and capitalist greed, which is the foundation of this society we live in. Our societies and our culture talks about a different way of life, one that’s more natural, a healthier one that’s more in touch with what every one else says they are looking for, which is peace and harmony, all those things. So our ways are in touch with that and they’re a very powerful alternative to the ways of the people living out here. And that’s really our contribution. It’s like an idea or concept or a way of living. And we really need to bring that forward. And I think that first of all we need to remind our people of how important it is not to give that up. Once we are confident again, we can bring that vision forward. I think that’s the real power of the indigenous people.

Do you think the concept of unity from the pacifist anti-war era is a dead issue?

Well I don’t think that unity and pacifism is necessarily the same thing. I mean unity is standing together and seeing the same thing in some one else’s eyes that you feel inside. So unity is the source of power, really; pacifism is a strategy, to me anyways. Pacifism means that you don’t believe in violence. But I don’t believe in turning the other cheek. I like to be prepared if some one doesn’t share the same views.

So you would never label yourself a pacifist?

No, but I would label myself as non-violent. But as one of Mahatma Ghandi’s assistants said, I believe in non-violence but I train in the martial arts just in case non-violence does not believe in me.

But I think unity is still the key. And it was never achieved, but it can be achieved in the future. And it
has to be the goal, it’s ironic. And the key point to realize that you can never unify the whole world, but we can never stop trying. Because if you stop trying, you are giving up the central struggle. So unity, you may not achieve total unity, but on the way you will achieve enough unity to have power to make change. So I don’t get discouraged when I don’t see all native people unified. I would love to see that happening. But at the same time, on the way to that goal we will probably get enough people together to do some damage.

Do you see a comparison between black and red movements and struggles?

I think that tactically and strategically, yeah, there are some lessons to be learned there. But we have to remember the goal of the black people at that point was assimilation. They wanted to be assimilated, they wanted fairness and equality and fair treatment as Americans. And that’s not our goal.

Because if we had the goal of assimilation, then we would have everybody on our side. And the government would be giving us all kinds of money and help because that is the governments goal too. So we have to look more in terms of other peoples struggles in other parts of the world.

I think that anti-colonial struggles are the models we should be looking at. Each one of them are different and I think there are lessons to be learned from all of them, but ours is unique, just like the rest of them. And if we think we can just sort of adopt one and just use that one model, then I think we are not doing our work. They are like a tool box and we have to pick our tools, but in the end we have to do the work.

How do you see white people playing a role in indigenous movements and governance?

I don’t believe in white people playing any role in our government; it’s our government. As far as the movement goes? I think that alliances are very important and crucial, and support is very crucial, and in the end we’re never going to be very successful to any degree unless we have people in the larger Canadian society who agree with us and who are willing to work with us.

That’s how I see white people’s role: to change their own society, not necessarily working to help us but to help themselves free themselves from those ideas that keep them tied to these old ways of thinking and colonialism. Sort of working within their own families and their own communities. And make changes that are consistent with our own. And then of course if it turns violent or physical hopefully they will be there to stand with our people.

Do you believe in white guilt generated from colonization can help in the process of decolonization?

“When I was a Cold Warrior, back in the day”

photo courtesy www.taiaiake.com

30.
The hatred that white people feel towards Natives comes from white people feeling guilty for what they have done. But to use that guilt? I don’t think it makes any sense for us to rub it in their faces. It gives them more of an excuse to hate you. But if you understand them and if you give them a way out of that guilt, which they can never think of. You are the only one that can forgive them, or help them out, right? That’s the power you hold over them. You will have to be able to say either, “I forgive you,” or “Here is what you can do to free yourself from being a colonizer and guilty.” That is what we need to do, is to give people the chance to transcend their colonial nature and become a decolonized person. Most people are trying to forget it, but if we give them a chance to think about it differently then we get a possibility for coexistence. Most of our political leaders are into shaming them and getting more money out of the guilt process and that has not gotten us anywhere.

What do you think is an effective alternative to the treaty process?

Political struggle. So that the Canadian government recalculates the position it has taken in regards to our lands and our rights. So right now the so-called treaty process is founded on the idea that the Canadian government policy is right, and that Canada is legitimate, and that its title is secure, and that Aboriginal rights are a concept that need to be accommodated within the way Canada has been built up so far. So when I say political struggle, what I mean is to create conditions where the Canadian government has to take a step back and say, “It’s going to cost us more to push this assimilation agenda than to give in to the Indigenous peoples demands”.

And that means getting involved in all of the different types of struggles we have talked about here. The non-violent struggles. Its contentious and it’s disruptive, but it draws people into the struggle.

to the government. I am not saying that we can get to the position of where they would be willing to give everything back.

We’re not there yet. We neither have the numbers or the power for that yet, but we can certainly organize better than we have been so far.

give a shit about the native problem. They just want it to go away as long as the Canadian government does not screw it up. And the average Native person doesn’t do a single thing about their problem either, right? They don’t resist, they don’t organize, they don’t stand up. If that changed, and if Native people organized and stood up for what’s right, the government would not just be able to sit back and push this assimilation agenda. They would have to negotiate on a more honourable basis. But in order to get there it’s going to cause trouble, it takes work and somebody is going to have to sacrifice something, time, energy, money, all those things in order to put us into a stronger position relative

PRISON JUSTICE DAY
AUGUST 10th

For events this year go to WWW.PRISONJUSTICE.CA

redwire magazine
Honouring Those Gone Before Us
Aboriginal Repatriation Conference in Haida Gwaii

By Amanda Bedard

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anthropologists and collectors traveled the Northwest Coast desperate to record and salvage the remains of what they saw as disappearing cultures. Part of that drive included the collecting of bones, human bones, from graveyards. Those bones of our ancestors are housed in museums throughout North America and Europe.

Nations are at work getting those remains back, so they can be reburied and honoured in their proper resting place. The Haida Repatriation Effort has been successful since its birth nearly a decade ago. Lucille Bell is a founder of the Haida Repatriation Effort and key organizer of the Repatriation conference, held in May of this year in Massett.

She spoke to me about the experience and expressed the mandate of the conference as helping other Indigenous Nations and museums to work positively together on repatriation. She says that goal was accomplished, and “people came to the conference and were making connections for the first time.”

Over one hundred people gathered in Masset from all over Canada and from as far away as Sweden and Japan. “We get a lot of people asking us for help because they’re starting with repatriation and they want to know how we did it,” says Bell of the motives driving the event. Indeed, the weekend was filled with informative sessions with Indigenous nations as well as museum representatives sharing experiences and knowledge.

The Raindance Film Festival ran throughout the conference in the evenings. The international premier of Stolen Spirits of Haida Gwaii, a film documenting the Haida repatriation committee’s journey to the Chicago Museum to repatriate Haida remains, was shown to a packed hall the first evening. The film marked the highlight of the conference for Bell, who said the viewing received a standing ovation in both Massett and Skidegate, and she is still getting compliments about it.

The film festival also saw a showing of Our Nationhood, directed by Alanis Obomsawin; Imanistaiswa: The People Go On, directed by Loretta Todd, and Totem: The Return of the Gp'sgolox Pole, directed by Gil Cardinal. Directors from each film took part in a session for participants, “Through the Filmmaker’s Eyes.”

The Chicago journey was one of six for the Haida Repatriation crew, as they have traveled many places to retrieve the remains of their ancestors, including an unsuccessful journey to London, where the Oxford Pitt Rivers Museum refused to return Haida remains. Those traveling spirits will one day come home to their rightful resting place on Haida Gwaii, honoured and at peace.

The taking of Indigenous human remains by anthropologists and collectors was common not only on the Northwest Coast, but throughout the Americas. This atrocity is being corrected, by dedicated Indigenous Nations directing the healing and pushing for recognition and co-operation from museum institutions. Bell stated that she is looking forward to the next Repatriation conference, to be held in KitiganZibi territory, two hours north of Ottawa. The drive to continue the repatriation effort is strong, and that is a positive thing for all of us.
By Myrtle Alice Morin

The word “residential” suggests images of peaceful, quiet neighbourhoods complete with lush green grass, beautiful picturesque homes surrounded by white picket fences, recreational vehicles, all nestled nicely in white suburbia. I almost forgot to add portly males that continually water their grass, and think Saturday morning lawn cutting is a doctrine to live by.

But for another group of people, mainly First Nations, the term “residential” is a word associated with school. A painful reminder of yesteryear when our fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and so on and so forth, were subjected to apartheid-like conditions similar to those of our black brothers and sisters. In our case we were forced to remain secluded from other family members and our basic human rights were continually violated. Any type of contact was prohibited except the physical and sexual abuse inflicted by priests and nuns. Other perversions were also implemented and deemed necessary to reform the “savage”. One might say, “What a bunch of perverted fuckers,” and I tend to agree.

Another great word is “de-schooling” because like my father, I am a product of residential school and have spent years trying to “de-institutionalize” myself. Of course, by luck of the draw, and learning to sense trouble coming a mile off, I would “run away” and leave my dormitory faster than the speed of light, and managed not to be subjected to brutal violence.

However, I did bear witness to some physical and sexual atrocities inflicted onto other students while attending residential school. And having spent a few years in such a “scheduled” environment, throughout my adult life I have gone back and found myself in similar institutions minus the abuse. I know, why the fuck would I do that? Living “in residence” on a university campus might conjure different images for people but for myself, it was like coming home all over again. I felt completely at ease, and although most of the faces were not brown, and tended to be pasty white in nature (no pun intended) since studying kept us all indoors. I took comfort in the fact that certain things were programmed for me.

Imagine my annoyance on having to come home to the reserve and reintegrate an existence where everything
seems to move according to the laws of “Indian time.” But such a “time” allows the spirit to move about freely, and I love my ass-sitting days because I write and consider myself a writer, although after reading this, a general opinion of my writing skills might be considered doubtful. I am in no way suggesting that First Nations people sit around all day on their asses but instead, reminding them of that inside joke that is unique to our culture.

I do not consider myself a miserable person, but in the event I was a wretched bastard, the misery would be brought on by a government intent on destroying a Nation of beautiful, artistic, brilliant people.

A government intent on keeping First Nation people caged through whatever means possible, including intentional colonizing, integrating systematic “apartheid” conditions through colonization, and “schooling” the first inhabitants of this land in the lessons of physical and sexual abuse. All the while, having the fucking audacity to complain about us.

Finally, this brings me to a final term, which is “de-colonization” which brings numerous definitions and pictures to my mind including an image of a human colon. For anyone that does not know what these words mean, please feel free to peruse a dictionary. Of course, I realize that “de-colonization” is not a word having to do with a rectum, ass, bum, bootay, but try as I might, I have been trying to remove a certain culture (along with their anal retentive views) out of my “colon” for years.

Maybe I need a plunger. And to the readership that harbour a dislike of First Nations people in general, based on hillbilly “Deliverance” type notions, please take such views and see your nearest proctologist. I tend to be like a laxative and should be only administered in small doses, and if I have offended, I will happily bend over so you can place your redneck and lips in close proximity to my brown ass.

In Spirit,
Myrtle Alice Morin
Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, Saskatchewan

Deconstructing the image of the Indian in the media. The romantic Indian stereotype meets Gone With the Wind as a trashy romance.
Women being released after the 1981 occupation of DIA offices  
photo Richard Manuel

WARRIOR WOMEN
THE TAKEOVER OF DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN
AFFAIRS OFFICES VANCOUVER JULY 1981

By Tara Willard

Many of us remember the early 80’s as a time of political actions, assertion of rights and title, Nationhood and cultural identity. It was during this time that major events that shape our world and history today took place: the Constitution Express to Ottawa, the Indian Child Caravan, and the Women’s Occupation of the Department of Indian Affairs, among others. While many of us have read accounts of politics during this time from a leadership point of view – the history of our male Chiefs and leaders – it is the women and their actions that are to be highlighted here. The lessons that our female relations learned and the lessons that our younger generation can take from this time are here, in the stories of our women. Each and every Warrior Woman who took part in actions and demonstrations during this time has a story to tell and passes this knowledge on through the work she continues to do in life. This is only one account of the 1981 women’s occupation of the DIA offices in Vancouver, from research conducted through personal interviews, oral history over many years, literature research and archival research. There are many more stories, perspectives and layers of history that are out there. Ask one of your female relatives if she remembers this time. Maybe she was there. Maybe you were there. Maybe we were all there. Let me take you there through these words.

Gathering Strength
It was during the summer of ‘81 that a group of grassroots women decided to take matters into their own hands. Their concerns were of the poor housing, education, employment, and health on reserves across this province and around the rest of Indian country. These
mothers, grandmothers, aunties, and young women gathered their strength at various locations and put their concerns into action in Vancouver at the central offices of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA).

There was a public outcry in Alberta after a young man, Nelson Small Legs Jr., committed suicide and left a note condemning the DIA and its treatment of Natives. Instead of looking into the matter, Walchli was just transferred to British Columbia.

One member of the Concerned Aboriginal Women (CAW), Joyce Willard, remembers gathering around a campfire one evening in Spences Bridge. Many of the men and political leaders were in Ottawa at this time. She describes the women talking about their serious concerns about the government policies and the basic needs of Indian people. Concerns about health, housing, education, childcare, culture, human rights, patriarchy and injustice guided the action.

Of particular concern was the new Regional Director of the DIA, Fred Walchli. Previously, he was head of the DIA in Alberta and there was much controversy over his management. There was a public outcry in Alberta after a young man, Nelson Small Legs Jr., committed suicide and left a note condemning the DIA and its treatment of Natives. Instead of looking into the matter, they just transferred Walchli to British Columbia.

Geni Manuel remembers the beginnings of the occupation at the central DIA office, from the age of 12 years. Geni remembers being at a pow wow and waiting for her parents to go back to Neskonlith (Chase). After waiting a long time, Geni found a large group of people – mostly women talking very seriously. Soon after, the family was off to Vancouver. After driving all evening, they made it to the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBIC) offices, where another gathering/meeting took place and the group planned their action. The next morning, the Concerned Aboriginal Women (CAW) would takeover and occupy the central DIA offices in Vancouver.

Occupy, Support and Regroup
The first two women to enter the 15th floor of the Toronto Dominion Building (DIA offices) were an Elder and her granddaughter, Marceline & Geni Manuel. Approximately 20 women took over the offices on July 20th, 1981. During the seven following days, more women joined and more people wrote to offer their support for the women’s action at DIA. Many women from Neskonlith, Mount Currie, Bella Coola, and other communities and Nations from across “BC” were part of the action. Equally important was the support they received from the men. Throughout the occupation several men acted as security for the women.

Many of the men at home were equally supportive of their female relatives who were taking a stand against injustice. As more and more women joined the occupation, a spokesperson was chosen, Terri John (nee Williams) from Mount Currie. Terri would address all media and read out lists of demands and daily press releases. A youth spokesperson was also chosen, Geni Manuel from Neskonlith. The numbers grew and there was no shortage of food or support from the outside. Their strength continued to grow and multiply.

List of Demands
The main concern that prompted action by the grassroots women was the mismanagement and controversy surrounding Regional Director General, Fred Walchli. The group was calling for the resignation of Walchli from his position at DIA due to his “divide & conquer” tactics in dispersing Federal funding to Indian communities. The women said that Walchli favoured bands that assimilated into white society and withheld money from bands that were autonomous. The entire bureaucracy of the DIA was not helping Native communities and the women were fed up. One elder said during a CBC taped interview, “If this is the

“If this is the Department of Indian Affairs, then where’s all the Indians? There should be Indians in all these positions.”

Department of Indian Affairs, then where’s all the Indians? There should be Indians in all these positions.”

Another demand was for an independent inquiry into the operations of the department’s BC office, as well as a meeting with Indian Affairs Minister John Munro to discuss grievances. Although Munro was willing to meet with the women on July 22nd, it was on the condition that the women leave the occupation and vacate the premises immediately and send a delegation to Ottawa. The women refused this offer and continued their occupation.
For six hours, the Concerned Aboriginal Women and their male supporters spoke using a Talking Stick that was rescued from one of the DIA offices and put to its proper use.

Grievances
One of the most powerful times during the occupation came on the seventh day when the group of over a hundred women, children and men met with Senator Ray Perrault to give evidence that supported their demands. For six hours, the Concerned Aboriginal Women and their male supporters spoke using a Talking Stick that was rescued from one of the DIA offices and put to its proper use. Impassioned speeches spoke of the poor housing conditions that often led to accidents and fires. Women talked about the high unemployment rates on reserves, the high alcoholism and suicide rates, and other poverty conditions that affect communities. Others spoke about land and title issues, where governments were extracting gas, oil and other natural resources from traditional lands, but no royalties or money was being dispersed to Native communities.

Women spoke about forced sterilization of Indian women and the racism and patriarchy involved in the child welfare system when it came to Indian children being apprehended by the government. All of the evidence was heard and recorded by Senator Perrault that evening, with a promise that he would take the transcript back to Ottawa to be heard by the Minister. He did not really have the authority to meet any of the demands or do anything to move matters forward. Again Perrault suggested that the women send a delegation to Ottawa to meet with Minister Munro; however, once again the women refused. They stood strong in their demands and remained steadfast in their occupation of the regional offices.

Battering Rams and Police
A Supreme Court injunction was issued on the fourth day (July 23rd) and the Concerned Aboriginal Women remained. Negotiations proceeded and support swelled from about twenty women to over a hundred, with written support from across the country. After meeting with Perrault and citing evidence to support demands, the women continued their occupation, realizing that Perrault had no authority to make anything happen. The next day, police used battering rams to break into the 15th floor office building where the CAW and supporters were gathered. Fifty-three people (42 women & 11 men) were arrested, charged with mischief.
“It was like they lifted me up when I spoke.”

and put into jail. The occupation was peaceful and there was no resistance to the arrests, however, treatment by police was not gentle. One elder who was arrested had her hip put out of place. After the forcible removal by police and a night in jail, the women were released on their own recognizance with a condition not to return to the offices at 700 West Georgia Street.

Lessons, experiences, perspectives
Each woman who took part in the 1981 occupation has a story to tell. Many young women at the time remember that these were the places that they learned about our history and the politics of the present. One young woman who attended the Women’s occupation and other demonstrations tells her stories about the leaders that she looked up to and how she learned about the culture, history, and rights of Indian people. For her and other young ones, these gatherings were part of an education not offered in the school system. These are other ways of learning our history and herstory, rather than textbooks that still have very little to offer from an Indian perspective.

Another woman, Diane Anthony, spoke about what she learned during the occupation: respect, work, speaking out and standing up for your rights. Although there was a main spokesperson who addressed the media, many of the women had an opportunity to express their concerns during meetings with the government. When the old talking stick was taken off the wall and used during the sessions with Perrasault, Joyce Willard explains that the strength and support of the ancestors was with her when she spoke. She says “It was like they lifted me up when I spoke.”

Terri John (nee Williams) was the spokesperson for the Concerned Aboriginal Women during the occupation. She is still active in the political arena and expresses her views that, “The time for women to stand up and be heard is here again.” She is active in working on issues of Aboriginal rights and title and the 2010 Olympics within their traditional St’at’imc territory. Terri relates the recent cuts to Aboriginal and women’s services, affecting the basic needs for women and their families, as making life for Aboriginal people as bad as the situation that precipitated the occupation in 1981. The main issues that the CAW were fighting for then, are the same now: the rate of Native children in care is still too high and Aboriginal women and communities still have difficulty meeting basic needs.

The occupation of DIA offices in the summer of 81 wasn’t planned, it was a culmination of what was happening at the time, and the women taking a stand and saying, “Enough is enough.” The occupation was a multigenerational action, with many of the women joining their grandmothers and children.

The occupation was a women led action, which Terri feels was important for that time, because it was the women, especially, who were dealing with hard times in the homes and the families and who were suffering. There was, however a lot of support from men, and this was equally important.

These brave women took a stand so that youth today would know who they are and stand up for their rights. Native people have been fighting for their rights for many generations but the fight is not over. Like their aunts, mothers and grandmothers before them the youth must speak up and stand up for the land, because Aboriginal rights and title are still under attack through resource exploitation and development, our families are still broken up, too many people live in poverty and don’t have their basic needs met.
When the women suffer, the whole community suffers. During the occupation there were many women elders and they were just as fed up as younger women. They were demanding that something be done and that the children not be taken away anymore. The women’s actions in 81’ showed the strength of women when they gather to support each other.

The women’s action in 81’ showed the strength of women when they gather to support each other.

Into the Future
As many of the women indicate through oral history and their life teachings, the struggle is not over. Many of the same conditions are perpetuated on reserves and the need to stand up for rights, title and land – the underlying issues that affect all other areas – is just as significant today.

The Peace and Dignity Run 2004 just came through the Vancouver area, and their prayers this year are for Mother Earth and the Lifegivers – the women – the female aspect of creation. It is time for women to gather their strength again and take their rightful place in the circle. Our grannies, aunts, mothers and female relatives who stand up to further the healing in our communities are to be remembered and honoured for the work that they do.

Some of these women are still active in the political field. Many work in other areas: childcare, education, health, women & violence, etc. Others do their work in unseen ways – they are the spiritual advisors and traditional people who Sundance, sweat, pray and ceremony to bring healing and use their experiences to reflect and teach the younger generations. We are all Warrior Women in our hearts.

Many thanks to the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) for funding to conduct research on this topic.

For more information or to view the CBC footage of the occupation please contact Tara Willard at: tara_stanwoman@shaw.ca

Expressions of Aboriginal Youth

The ‘Expressions of Aboriginal Youth’ video features three young Aboriginal artists who find their voices and confidence through the use of media and film. They share their personal experiences, family stories and how colonization through residential schooling has impacted their lives to this day.

The resource guide delves into personal interactive activities that engage students in challenging and compassionate discussion around the issues of oppression, stereotyping, history and media accuracy.

Video and Resource packages are available for $40.
For more info or to watch video clips go to the ‘Peer Perspectives’ section of: www.accesstomedia.org or call 250-539-5904
Colonization and Nation Building

By Aaron Mercredi

In high school, I remember learning about Canadian history in a Social Sciences class. According to my textbook, what happened to indigenous people throughout the history of Canada was 'unfortunate' and 'tragic.' This description fails to acknowledge the magnitude of the crimes that were committed against indigenous people. It also fails to acknowledge that the genocide and colonization that was committed was done systematically.

The Colonial War Continues Abroad

When we look at our history of being colonized, of being denied a right to determine our own destiny, and control our own resources, and we compare it with what is going on in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Haiti, we can see that this is not isolated to us living in Canada, but is a struggle that people are engaged in all over the world. This new era of war and occupation that imperialist countries like Canada have dragged the world into is the extension of the war that has been waged against indigenous people in North America for over 500 years. And it is the extension of the destruction and colonization that we must fight against. Since its inception, the Canadian government has been suppressing our right to govern ourselves. Whether it was the white Indian agents who were responsible for entire indigenous nations, who had no respect for our traditional governance, or if it is the First Nations Governance Act, which just surfaced in 2002, we are no strangers to the racist myths that we are incapable of managing our own affairs, and that we need the Canadian government to intervene in our lives. And we are no strangers to the failures of the Canadian government in trying to govern us. Because of this, why should we believe that this same government is serious about bringing good governance to the people of Afghanistan and Haiti? Why should we believe that the US is bringing 'democracy' to Iraq, since it was founded on the same colonization and genocide as Canada?

Colonialism and the re-writing of History

Recently, as part of an overall strategy to crush the will of the Iraqi people, to crush the resistance and stabilize the occupation, the US introduced new history textbooks for Iraqis, written and produced in the US. This is the same tactic of trying to destroy cultures that the Canadian government used with the forced removal of indigenous children from their traditional ways of life into residential schools, where they were taught Colonialist values. Indigenous youth grow up learning history from the colonizer's perspective.
Looking at the brutal history of ‘Canadian interests,’ as indigenous people, we need to see what this government is doing abroad in the name of Canadian interests.

‘Canadian Interests’ vs. the Right of Indigenous Peoples to Self-determination

When the Canadian government attempts to teach us our history, it uses the excuse that it is acting in our own interest. Before the January handover when the Canadian military took the leadership of the NATO forces in Afghanistan, I remember watching a news broadcast where Paul Martin spoke about the interest of Canadians being in putting Canada on the international stage. Because the destruction of our traditional ways of life and the theft of our land and resources have all been done in the name of ‘Canadian interests,’ we need to be especially suspicious when the leaders in the Canadian government talk about acting in ‘Canadian interests’ abroad.

Are these ‘Canadian interests’ that Paul Martin talks about the same interests of indigenous people?

With the long history of oppression at the hands of the Canadian government, can we honestly say that indigenous people have common interests with the Canadian government?

The ‘Canadian interests’ Paul Martin is referring to were and continue to be the theft of indigenous land for Canadian expansion, the displacement of indigenous people onto small parcels of land, and our assimilation into the Canadian capitalist economy. These were all necessary steps towards building a modern industrialized country like Canada. Because there are ‘Canadian interests’ at home and abroad, these attacks on indigenous people need to be seen in the context of attacks on oppressed nations globally.

We’re living in a period where a global economic crisis is facing all imperialist countries, including Canada. This economic crisis requires the colonial Canadian government to continue to occupy, steal and exploit indigenous people, our land, and resources in Canada. This same economic crisis requires direct occupations of third-world countries by imperialist countries to further plunder third-world nations. The same economic crisis that forces the Canadian government to take the leading role in the brutal occupation of Afghanistan and send occupation troops to Haiti, and the same economic crisis that forces the American government to continue its illegal and immoral occupation of Iraq.

With the photos of abused and tortured Iraqi prisoners being released to the public, its obvious that the loss of dignity and pride is an inevitable result of living under occupation. In Canada, we live in one of the most ‘advanced’ countries in the world, yet most of us live in third world conditions. Indigenous people in Canada have suffered through so much and lost so much dignity at the hands of the Canadian government. Reaffirming our pride and our dignity is fundamentally what we must struggle for.

End the Occupations

Looking at the brutal history of ‘Canadian interests,’ as indigenous people, we need to see what this government is doing abroad in the name of Canadian interests, and we need to recognize that oppressed people all over the world are under attack by colonial imperialist countries like Canada. When the Canadian military has a leading role in the brutal occupation of Afghanistan, trying to control every aspect of life over there and suppressing the Afghan people’s right to self-determination for the sake of pursuing Canadian economic and strategic interests, we need to make the connection to what the Canadian government has been doing to indigenous people in Canada for hundreds of years. When the Canadian government boasts about being a ‘peace-keeping’ nation, we know this is a lie because the Canadian military has constantly been used to attack indigenous people here in Canada.

Finally, as indigenous people it is vital for us to support the Afghan, Iraqi and Haitian people’s resistance to the occupation of their country because we have a common struggle, and this struggle needs to be united as an international movement for the right of self-determination for all oppressed people. When Afghans and Haitians resist the Canadian occupation of their country, it weakens the ability of the Canadian government to act out its war at home, and when indigenous people fight for our self-determination within Canada, it weakens the ability of the Canadian state to carry out its imperialist agenda abroad. Our struggles are very much linked. In order for us to be effective in fighting for our self-determination, for our dignity, we need to demand self-determination for oppressed nations struggling against occupations all over the world.

Aaron Mercredi is Metis and a member of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO). If you are interested in getting involved in opposing war and occupation at home and abroad, please visit www.mawovancouver.org.
I have never lived on a reservation nor have I had a problem with sniffing gas. My first language was English and I excelled both in academics and athletics. Exposure to the "system" changed all that. This is my story.

Born in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, to an eighteen-year-old mother and her single unemployed boyfriend, my life began cursed from the start. Unable to care for me, the "proper authorities" took me into care after a trip to the hospital. My parents were sharing a one-bedroom apartment with their uncle at the time.

Apparently from what I was able to find out through the adoption registry, I have an Ojibway background and am full-blooded Native. I was raised by an Ojibway women and a white father with a British background.

My name was changed subsequently I have done as much research as I can on both my (adoptive) parents' history. I can trace my mother’s family back to the early 1800’s when the family emigrated here from Green Bay, Wisconsin, after the war of 1812.

My father’s family came from England in the early 1800’s to live a better life. My last name, Weymouth, apparently means "anchor man" when ships were the main mode of cargo delivery, my ancestor would weigh down the anchor at the mouth of the river.

I live in Barrie, Ontario, and have spent most my life here. My mother’s family is Odawa Ojibway, Eagle clan of the Algonquins. My status number is 1410151801 so according to the Department of Indian Affairs that is who I am. Last June I was released from North Central Correctional Facility in Penetanguishene, Ontario.

The staffing is provided by Management and Training Corporation based out of Utah. I hate to say that I had to commit a crime to become exposed to the few fellow Native men in the area.

The ways people, even our own people, treat us, include, [racial] profiling, discrimination, isolation and discreet assimilation tactics. Beauracracy has no mercy for young Aboriginal men who are not economically viable. To live our way of life has become an ancient art that is increasingly difficult to maintain.

There is no support network or resources. Our own bands (especially mine) refuse to help out the brothers suffering in there; I mean these are our warriors of today, whether we like it or not: the guys willing to man the front lines so we can keep our little land in the face of the government.

So when something goes down and a brother takes the rap he gets three hots and a cot in a 8x12 provided for him by the oppressors. Thank you elders and spiritual leaders for your support.

Ha, well I am not going to bat for my peoples' leaders until they recognize what level of contribution is being made to the already rising problem of poverty, and bastard kids going to sleep every night hungry.
by Stan Williams

When you think of water, what comes to mind? Selling it, making money off of it, putting it into little plastic bottles for profit? Or turning it into energy/money producing systems called dams, reservoirs and hydro-electric projects? Or what about chemically breaking down water's structural elements in order to process the genetic destruction of a bioengineered sub-human/plant organism?

Maybe you want to grab the biggest plastic bag money can buy (made of oil based by-product, probably expropriated from somewhere in occupied war-torn Iraq), put all the water you can steal from Native land, disregard the rights and laws of that land, sell it and ship it to a receiving money launderer. This is called “Bulk Water Exports.”

If your chief is vying for a “new” treaty deal, ask him/her how to explain whether or not selling the “land” (including everything within this land, like water), is robbing the “next” generation of their inherent right, or better yet, their source of life?

Water is sacred, and everyday we use it in a sacred manner. The only way to manage it starts with recognizing it as a fundamental gift of the Creator.

Water Responsibility = Self-Determination.

Speaking in White Man’s terms for the moment, when the hydrological cycle is broken, we lose a vital, finite resource. From clouds, to rain, to plants (humans as well), to soil, to mineral, and back to evaporated states, water doesn’t go beyond this cycle. Yes, poisons chemicals, toxins go with it; and yes, they do come down on us; and yes they do go directly into the environment. It’s our reality.

When the Native folk in Bolivia kicked out a water corporation called Bechtel, they came up with a Declaration of Cochabamba. This declaration calls for the world to be accountable and protect water at all costs. This same water corporation, Bechtel, went straight into Iraq after the US invaded, to secure the control of water. As well as oil of course, but the fact that Iraq sits on one of the only remaining aquifers in the entire Middle East cannot be ignored! Our prophecies of war and water have come true. Waiting is like spilling your last drop of water, stranded in the desert.

I anxiously wait for the day when Indigenous rights will win “homeland security.” Until then, I hope the salmon, whales, frogs, and all other water beings will survive until we act on water protection.
Aboriginal Studies Program

Education with a First Nations’ Perspective

- open to all individuals interested in historic and contemporary Aboriginal issues
- two-year (university transfer) diploma
- provides a solid foundation in a number of disciplines, such as education, social work, sociology, political science, law, and First Nations Studies

Starts in September
For program information,
Tel: 604.323.5645
E-mail: abstprog@langara.bc.ca

www.langara.bc.ca

“The ABST Program provided me with skills and knowledge to achieve my future goal of being a First Nations lawyer. In completing the program I have been blessed with the reward of being confident and capable of meeting challenges head on and succeeding beyond my dreams.”
Rhonda McRobb, Iskut
Aboriginal Studies Graduate, 2003

Langara College’s ABST program offers an Associate of Arts degree, an Arts and Science Diploma, and, for those students who already have a university undergraduate degree, a Post-degree certificate. Students enrolled in the program move from their first two years in the intimate setting of the Vancouver college into university degree-granting programs in disciplines that include education, social work and law as well as continued First Nations studies.

“Virtually anyone who takes and completes the program will have a much better understanding of the issues and the history of the Aboriginal people in this country,” says First Nations Education Coordinator, Dave Pearson. He helped establish and construct the program using focus groups that included members of the First Nations community, Langara College’s Aboriginal students and graduates, and fellow faculty members.

While First Nations programs have existed at other learning institutions across Canada for years, Pearson says BC came late to the concept. At the same time, the province has found itself in a unique position in Canada in terms of Aboriginal concerns because, unlike other provinces, it never signed treaties with First Nations people. Land claims are still going through BC courts, and issues related to Aboriginal people continue to generate both headlines and jobs.

As a result, the program attracts both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who are eager to find out more about the past and present of Canada’s indigenous people in order to have an influence on their future. They include people like Rhonda McRobb, a 2003 ABST graduate who says the
program provided her with the skills and knowledge she needed to achieve her future goal of becoming a First Nations lawyer.

Aboriginal Studies graduate Cheryl Wadhams describes her learning experience as "profound." She says she learned a great deal about her community, indigenous people and the world. "More importantly, I learned about myself."

Those who continue their post-secondary studies after the Langara College program do not have to complete their degree in Aboriginal/First Nations/Native studies, but, if they choose to do so, can block transfer into several BC universities and university colleges as well as universities in Alberta, Ontario and Manitoba that offer Native Studies programs.

Langara College's program is divided into four themes: The Colonial Experience, Aboriginal People and the Law, Aboriginal Identity, Culture and World Views and Aboriginal Community. Core Aboriginal

Studies courses include Aboriginal Colonial Experience, Canadian Indian Policy I: Contact to 1969, International Law and Aboriginal People, and Physical Resources and Aboriginal People, among many others.

Pearson stresses that students are assured of getting the core courses they desire. Seminars in which students and faculty participate equally to encourage frank and open discussion, the option of a four-semester program so it can be completed part-time, and the support of both First Nation Student Services and the Langara College Native Centre all contribute to a program that encourages and nurtures student success.

Pearson is certainly pleased with the outcome – as is Linc Kesler, the director of the First Nations Studies program at UBC. "Students have spoken highly of their ABST Program experience at Langara College," Kesler says, "and it has prepared them well for UBC."

DISCOVER BC MAGAZINES and get a different point of view.

Go to www.bcamp.bc.ca or visit these bookstores:

**Vancouver**
- Be Books: 604-669-6431
- Blackberry Books: 604-685-6188
- Granville Book Co.: 604-687-2213
- Magpie Magazine Gallery: 604-253-6666

**Victoria and the Island**
- Book Bonanza, Campbell River: 250-286-8344
- Paragraphs, Port Alberni: 250-723-2211
- Wildside Booksellers, Tofino: 250-725-4222

**Northern Interior and Coast**
- Books & Company, Prince George: 250-563-6637
- Caryall Books, Quesnel: 250-992-6826
- College of New Caledonia, Prince George: 250-561-5808
- Eddie’s News, Prince Rupert: 250-624-4134
- Misty River Books, Terrace: 250-635-4428
- Mosquito Books, Prince George: 250-563-6495

**Southern Interior**
- Armchair Books, Whistler: 604-932-5357
- At a Second Glance, Kamloops: 250-377-8411
- Badger Books, Grand Forks: 250-442-3344
- Bookingham’s Palace, Salmon Arm: 250-832-3948
- Bookland, Vernon: 250-545-1885
- Food For Thought Books, Golden: 250-344-5600
- Imperial Books, Osoyoos: 250-495-2510
- Lotus Books, Cranbrook: 250-426-3415
- Mosaic Books, Kelowna: 250-763-4418
- Okanagan Books, Penticton: 250-493-1941
- Okanagan University College, Kelowna: 250-470-6035
- Oliver’s Books, Nelson: 250-352-7525
- The Open Book, Williams Lake: 250-392-2665

Canada BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION OF MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS
Unlearning Learning
a story from Old Crow, Yukon

by Tammy Josie

In the fall of September 1998, I was starting grade 10. The new school in my town, Old Crow, was finally completed, but this was the year I got shipped out to Whitehorse for high school. In early September, a handful of my friends and I were loaded onto a plane and sent to Whitehorse to continue our education at a High School called Fredrick H. Collins Secondary.

There I enrolled into grade 10 classes. A school counselor helped us all in picking our courses. At the time I didn't know what a moderate class was and was placed in all moderate classes for the entire school year of 1998-1999. (Moderate classes are below average, not general grades, easier than usual!)

All incoming students from Old Crow were placed in a Student Residence. It was very hard to adjust to the changes in my new environment and adapt to the world around me. I had just turned fifteen and was flown away from everyone I knew and loved. My parents, a younger brother and my grandmother Miss Edith Josie were all sitting in Old Crow while I was getting a tour of my new school. On our first day, I had a lot of trouble just trying to find my classes. On the second day, all our classes were switched around. I was not impressed at all by the way things worked in a Secondary Institution.

Our place of residence was far beyond what I had in mind and was much more strict than at home. We had a study hour everyday and a weekday and weekend curfew. Quiet time was 11pm on weekdays, and then 1am on weekends, but we had to be inside the building by midnight. There were two cooks, who were very nice. Six supervisors all together, three on shift at all times, one overnight and a dorm boss who was only in during the mornings and he was the one everyone didn’t want to talk to after a weekend.

Eventually the number of students started to drop. Students were dropping out or suspended from the area for the rest of the school year. Unfortunately, I myself had been sent back home in March just before Spring Break.

Within a matter of days I was offered a job. This was how our government supported us and told me to keep trying and go back next year. I was employed as a transcriber and did field work with the elders in town, I really enjoyed going around and recording stories of long ago.

All spring, summer and fall I worked and saved my money to return to school and had enough money to last a few months at the least. Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation paid all the students ways out in early September and once again into the student residence. I really did not want to stay there, but sometimes you just don’t have a choice.

Three months later I made some choices that put me on an all expenses paid trip back home and suspended
me from the residence area. I have never felt so ashamed of myself as when my mother came to the airport in Old Crow to pick me up and take me home. I then started working for the Youth and Recreation Department here in town. My position was Supervisor. I organized games night, opened our Youth Centre for various ages and put on fundraisers for the youth in town.

Over time I got tired of sitting in Old Crow doing nothing with myself but put on activities for the town. I mean it wasn’t bad and I enjoyed doing it, but where was I going, what was I doing? That was the year I made the choice to find somewhere to stay and continue my education.

That summer it was the 13th Annual International Storytelling Festival in Whitehorse. Once again my grandmother and I were invited to come out and tell our stories with the public.

My grandmother wanted to stay with some of her friends in town. I did not. At that time we ran into an old family friend and she offered for me to stay with her. I gratefully accepted and took my belongings to her place. I had a huge bag of dry-meat and just gave it to her and her children who devoured it over the next few days. I was just happy to be in a comfortable atmosphere and she gave me my own time to myself.

During my stay, Theresa (the friend) and I got talking about how everything had been going. I explained what had happened in my past effort to continue school in the city and she gladly offered me a place to stay with her until I graduated from high school. I was so happy that I phoned my mom to seal the deal and learned that nothing is impossible if you have faith in what you’re seeking.

That summer was my turnaround point. I had to make a decision that would affect everything else that came later. I had to stop what it was that I was doing to myself and focus on what I could be doing for myself.

In September I returned to Whitehorse. It felt so good when we stopped at the Student Residence and I didn’t have to get off and go in. Instead I went to a home in Riverdale with a family, and best of all I knew them; they were friends of the family and her kids just adored me. School was a ten-minute walk away and her kids’ school was right beside mine. So I would drop them off and go next door to my school.

Every morning I’d wake up at 7-7:30 a.m. and get ready for school, then wake up everyone else with breakfast ready and do dishes before our departure to class. Then after school we would all meet up at the store and get some goodies before going home and doing our homework. I always did my homework with the girls so that they didn’t feel like they were the only ones. This went on for two years, until my graduation.

During the time spent with Theresa and her family, I learned that being among people that you care about and who care for you in return has had a very positive impact on how I did my work and my view on education. In the year 2002 I was on the honour roll at Fredrick H. Collins, and made the grad list as one of the top three First Nations students in the school.

Today, I stand tall with my head up, knowing that I can do whatever I want; and if it wasn’t for Theresa, who had no idea how I would be, took me into her home and gave me the chance to prove myself to others. I owe this woman my life and am forever in debt to her and her family.

I’ve learned how important a family influence is on a person. Especially when you know what you have to do to get what you want, and go where you want to go.

My unlearning phase was incorporated throughout my whole time in Whitehorse, as I had my own problems and addictions. I called it experimenting and had my low points where I would go out for the weekend or two or three and just didn’t care about anything, even my future. I made some bad choices that got me sent back
to Old Crow while going to school, I and then I returned a year later, left behind from my original classes. With those choices made, I’ve learned how to be responsible for my actions and to think before I get involved with anything or anyone. This has now improved and today I take a quick second or two to think about the consequences that may happen or whatever it may induce.

All in all, I learned a great deal from my teachers (self-esteem and confidence in myself), my family (they love me even if I did wrong), my friends (who HAVE always been by my side) and myself for understanding that things will eventually work out. Anyhoo, everything I learned in school was lodged into my head and it was up to me to keep it there. Everything I learned at home was because I made the choice to learn, from learning to cut meat, to going out on the land, to making new friends to learn from. Trial and error is common but you just have to keep at it, don’t give up that easily, and go for the gold in everything that you do!

I’ll never forget what my grandmother tells me, or has told me. Don’t go out alone, always have someone with you, go and help your mom, and always be true to yourself. She has always been there whether I needed her or not; all she has said means something and will always mean something to me! My grandmother talks of the old days, where we walked where we wanted to go, ran after the caribou we ate, sat at the camp fire with your families and told the stories that were passed on through grandmother, mother and daughter. I can only hope to become as strong and dignified as she has made herself. I dedicate this article to my grandmother Miss Edith Josie. If it wasn’t for her always being there and taking care of me in my times of need I really don’t know where I would be or what I would be doing.

Mahsi Cho

10 SIMPLE STEPS TO GET RID OF THAT COLONIAL WORLDVIEW

I never let colonialism take away my voice or my ability to talk. I don’t think you should either. The following is a Redwire recommended list of resources that have been found useful to help to de-colonize your mind.

by Peter Morin

1. Billy Jack A 1971 Warner Bros. release starring a half breed, ex-Green Beret hero who takes on the corrupt and racist local town. If you haven’t heard of it, ask your parents. “You know what I’m going to do then just for the hell of it,” “Tell me,” “I’m going to take this right foot and I am going to wup you on that side of your face and you wanna know something there’s not a damn thing your going to be able to do about it.”

2. Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee An Indian History of the American West, by Dee Brown. This book is the first book written about Indians that paints a clear and accurate picture of what went on during those first interactions between the United States and the Indigenous Nations. “Yet they are not lost, those Indian voices of the past. A few authentic accounts of American western history were recorded by Indians either in pictographs or in translated English, and some managed to get published in obscure journals, pamphlets, or books of small circulation.”

3. HalfBreed Maria Campbell’s biography published in 1973. This is a heartbreak story. Just like a lot of our stories. It needs to be read because there is a lesson to be learned from these words. “Like me the land had changed, my people were gone, and if I was to know peace I would have to search within myself. That is when I decided to write about my life. I am not very old, so perhaps some day, when I too am a grannie, I will write more. I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a halfbreed woman in our country. I want to tell you about the joys and sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustrations and dreams.”

4. Black Elk Speaks The life story of a holy man of the Oglala Sioux as told through John G. Neihardt. First published in 1932. We’ve all heard about this book, in fact it may have sat unread for a while. Well, trust me, read it, Black Elk had a vision, he had a vision for
all of us, “it was the summer when I was nine years old, and our people were moving slowly towards the Rocky Mountains. We camped one evening in a valley beside a little creek just before it ran into the Greasy Grass, and there was a man by the name of Man Hip who liked me and asked me to eat with him in, this teepee. While I was eating, a voice came and said: ‘it is time; now they are calling you.

5. Porcupines and China Dolls by Robert Arthur Alexie. There is a light from inside our hearts that comes from an understanding of who we are. The stories are important because they make up our being. We need to learn, to remember, and then remember to keep breathing. “From Legends, Beliefs and the Newcomers — in order to understand this story, it is important to know the People and where they came from and what they went through. The story begins with the Blue People and their legends and beliefs in the time before first contact.”

6. Not Vanishing by Chrystos

Chrystos is a gift. She is a teacher. Her books of poetry are very hard to find but are well worth the search. There are many lessons here to help open your eyes. “I am not your princess. Sandpaper between two cultures which tear one another apart I’m not a means by which you can reach spiritual understanding or even learn to do beadwork. I’m only willing to tell you how to make fry bread. 1 cup flour, spoon of salt, spoon of baking powder.”

7. Custer Died For Your Sins


We have all heard of this book; it is on all of our lists to be read, and it should be. This book is important because Vine was right and he helped us put it in a clearer language. “Indians are like the weather. Everyone knows all about the weather, but none can change it. When storms are predicted, the sun shines. When picnic weather is announced, the rain begins. Likewise, if you count on the unpredictability of Indian people, you will never be sorry.”

8. Peace Power Righteousness

An Indigenous Manifesto by Taiaiake Alfred. There are people who are teachers, who have a message and have patience. Redwire thinks that Taiaiake is one of them. His words have power. “Indigenous people today are seeking to transcend the history of pain and loss that began with the coming of the Europeans into our world. In the past 500 years, our people have suffered murderous onslaughts of greed and disease. Even as history’s shadow lengthens to make the passing of that brutal age, the Western compulsion to control remains strong.”


Richard Van Camp can tell a story, he does so in a way that makes you hungry for more. “I remember. It is the summer of my crucifixion. I try so hard to be pure; I take two baths day. At least underwater, I can hear my heart beat. The skin on my back dries. Cracks. I make the noise of splitting wood when I walk and my scent is of something crumbling.”


This book of drawing and poetry is one of the hardest to find, but it is a diamond if you can find it. There is inspiration in these pages. “And there is my people sleeping. Since a long time. But aren’t just dreams. The old cars without engines. Parking in front of the house. Or angry words ordering peace of mind. Or who steals from you for your good. And doesn’t wanna remember what he owes you. Sometimes id like to fall asleep too. Close my eyes on everything. But I can’t. I can’t.”
I was asked to write this piece about a month ago and I would have to say that it made me a little nervous. The term ‘education’ when it comes to First Nations people is a sensitive subject to say the least.

Where do I start? Do I rant about oppression, institutional racism, curriculum biases, and stereotypical assumptions about how Native kids learn or ‘can’t be taught’. I have heard a lot in the past nine years that I have been working with children. Do I focus on the positives, like the fact that my position never existed 20 years ago, that society and educational institutions in general are more welcoming and inclusive of First Nations people today than they have ever been in the history of this colonial power.

Oh, I am sorry, maybe I should introduce myself first. I am slowly becoming a teacher, I just start talking and think that people are just going to run and start to listen. My birth names are William Edward Joseph Bedard and Gitla. The first is my Canadian name and the latter is a name given to me by my great grandmother (old nonney) at birth; it is a Heiltsuk name because my grandfather (Chinney) was from Bella Bella.

I am from the village of Masset, Haida Gwaii, raised just outside of Lakwalaams in a small town called Prince Rupert. I am currently working for the Vancouver School Board as a First Nations Support Worker; it is my second full year. I have also worked in the special needs field and as a Rediscovery Camp Director for a couple of summers up in Tsimshian territory. I am not going to worry about positive and negative; instead I am going to just talk to you about my experiences of becoming an educator.

As an advocate for Aboriginal families, it is a delicate balance weighing the expectations of the school and the families that I work with. The biggest problem or obstacle I have found is the fractionalized nature of a lot of the families I work with. I realize the historical reasons for it and why a number of the children I work with live with one parent (usually the mother). Everybody does the best they can with the situation they are in, but it can be a problem when it comes to negative consequences for the child.

If the expectations of one parent are different from the other, that also can be a problem. As well, being a male also presents a unique challenge; a number of kids I support lack a consistent male presence in the home and look to me to fill that void. As we know, the relationships that children develop as they grow are affected by what the have at home. I know that in a lot of cases we have uncles, aunts, and cousins who are present and are an influence, and in Haida culture it is the uncles who traditionally have talked to the nephew about things such as becoming a man, girls, social problems etc. However, because of colonization that traditional family has broken up.

Today nothing can replace having both parents at home and raising the child to the best of their abilities, I know that sometimes that can’t be for whatever reason. More often than not it is the children with both parents at home
that flourish, that goes for any culture. Because of residential schools, legislated cultural oppression, and religious persecution, First Nations peoples have been damaged, but we are not broken. The families I work with do the best with what they have, and with the current attack on the poor and single families that the provincial government is waging they will have to do so with less.

All of these factors I consider on a daily basis and try to be as sensitive as I can to the individual circumstances of every child and family. At the same time I try to teach these youth how to exist and be successful in a school setting. I support approximately 60 kids at five different schools. I am involved with their families and a number of parents work along with me, supporting their children. Not all these kids are involved with me, some of them for whatever reason do not identify with being First Nations, some of them have unfortunately swallowed the negative stereotype of ‘Indians’, or they are perfectly able to function and be successful on their own. The kids that are excelling do not necessarily need my support and that is the hope, isn’t it? That one day there will be no need for my job; that First Nations people will be considered equal and be fully able to participate and contribute to society. Also that others will have the sensitivity and understanding of the diversity that exists amongst First Nations cultures.

I have worked with a number of kids and have tried to tell them that I sometimes feel inadequate in this world of books and opposing values. I also tell them that in order to make real change you have to get pieces of paper (grade 12 diploma and a university degree). These academic markers may not be the true measuring stick of a person’s education or worth but they open doors and give you the freedom to go forward. At the same time I must acknowledge that there are some very real obstacles in the way of these achievements.

I hear comments made by some teachers and support staff workers that make me cringe. Things like, “Why can’t Native kids learn?” or “That was some nice chanting Will,” and “You must deal with a lot of kids with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.” The majority of these comments are not said in malice or indifference but they still twist something inside of me.

I know that it is part of my job to be understanding and try to explain to them in a non-threatening way that their views are based on stereotypes. Sometimes though I want to scream and shout and yell around at how we have to struggle with so much on a daily basis. I have not gotten along with everybody, there a few individuals that I constantly shake my head at, and who are as ignorant as the day is long.

I better state that the majority of educators I work with are open-minded people who have nothing but the best interest of the child in mind, regardless of background or ethnicity. I have met wonderful people who have a genuine interest in what I do and what I can bring to the school environment. Like society though, you always get a wide spectrum of individuals and behavior. Some use our stories, teachings and spirituality as an educational novelty or something that can enrich their own lives regardless of protocol. You see the “good Indian/bad Indian” myth in educational institutions as well, not just in Hollywood.

One of the hardest things I deal with, as a First Nations Support Worker, is the fact that more often than not I am the only resource when it comes to First Nations education. Like what I say speaks for all Native people. I really try to form my words carefully and explain (especially to children) that my perspective is that of one Haida man and I do not speak for the people of Six Nations or the Blackfoot of Alberta. Working in a large urban center I have kids’ that come from many different Nations across North America. I know that I can’t fulfill all of the kids needs at a cultural level but I try to bring my Haida culture to them and hopefully instill interest and pride so that they either explore their own or feel that they can also be proud if they are not already.

On a more positive note I have shared a lot of things with my schools; I have gone into classrooms to give talks about the drum and its significance to Indigenous cultures across the world. I have also talked to a number of high school classrooms about being a ‘modern Indian’ (whatever that means) and some of the traditions that continue today.

I make sure I include all children when I do First Nations education and try to bridge the gap between all cultures. I truly believe that in order to improve our situation as First Nations people we must educate one another about all cultures, the positives and the negatives. We must do this in order to give each other a realistic view of one another and see each other as human beings.
WE DIDN’T CROSS THE BORDER: THE BORDER CROSSED US!

By Clifton (Kahnasatake) reprinted from, “Solidarity Across Borders”, published by Noone Is Illegal Montreal

What are borders? What is the Canada/United States border? To the Kanien’keh:ka (People of the White Flint) the boundary line that divides the upper half of North America between Canada and the US is a fictitious demarcation that slices throughout traditional unceded territory.

The territory in question-Kanien’ke (The Land of the White Flint) was in existence long before Europeans traveled to this beautiful land. In the eyes of the Kanien’keh:ka the boundary that separates Canada and the US is merely a method devised by European settlers to settle their arguments over what they stole from the Indigenous nations of Turtle Island.

The Kanien’keh:ka see the bickering of these Europeans as the bickering of thieves fighting over the spoils of their crime.

As Indigenous people we make no distinction between the US and Canada, there is no difference between our lands on either side of the imaginary line created by Europeans for Europeans.

For the Kanien’keh:ka and their sisters and brothers in the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy, Onondaga spelling) have rights to freedom of movement and freedom of commerce which predate the advent of Canada and the United States of America.

These rights are entrenched in our constitution, the Kaianerakowa (The Great Law of Peace), and are ratified by the following treaties: Kaswenthà 1645 (Two Row Wampum Treaty), Treaty of Canandaigua November 11th 1794, Treaty of Amity Commerce and Navigation the Jay Treaty, November 19th 1794.

Kaswenthà of 1645 is the oldest of the treaties, created between Europeans and the Indigenous peoples of this continent. The Kaswenthà was initially a non-aggression pact as well as a treaty guaranteeing freedom of movement throughout North America for Kanien’keh:ka and other Indigenous peoples.

The Kaswenthà is a wampum belt with a white background with two parallel bands in purple running the length of the belt. Wampum belts are mnemonic instruments used to record treaties and events. They were made from beads formed from the inner parts of the Atlantic Conch shell. The symbolism of the purple bands running parallel on a white background is likened to two canoes traveling down a river.

One canoe does not cross in front of the other, nor do the occupants of either canoe try to be in both boats at the same time, hence one does not interfere with the other and each has the right to determine their course in life. The non-interference stipulations of Kaswenthà served as the basis for all proceeding covenants and treaties signed with European powers and their offspring -- the
United States of America and Canada.

The two preceding treaties - Treaty of Canandaigua [US and Haudenosaunee] and the Treaty of Amity Commerce and Navigation the Jay Treaty [British and Haudenosaunee] -- were signed immediately following the war of 1776 fought between the British and their fledgling children who called themselves Americans. The two 1794 treaties were signed to once again ratify the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to live, travel, and trade on either side of the fictitious boundary separating the two quarreling European brothers, as well as recognition of the sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples. It had become necessary for the Haudenosaunee to be signatories to the above mentioned treaties because of the extensive involvement of Haudenosaunee warriors who fought on both sides of the conflict. The Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee felt that certain guarantees were needed to ensure Haudenosaunee sovereignty.

These treaties were also one method used to ratify the unity of the Haudenosaunee, given the divide created by the war of 1776 among Haudenosaunee nations.

The war of 1776 was in many ways disastrous for the Haudenosaunee, especially the Kenneh'ken'kwa:ka who were ethnically cleansed from New York State by George Washington whom we named Ratminokwatekthah-the village burner.

Therefore it had become necessary for the Haudenosaunee to have these treaties and assurances that the genocidal campaigns of the US military against Haudenosaunee people would be ceased.

"ARTICLE 4. The United States having thus described and acknowledged what lands belong to the Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senekas, and engaged never to claim the same, nor to disturb them, or any of the Six Nations, or their Indian friends residing thereon and united with them, in the free use and enjoyment thereof."

The Jay Treaty of 1794, describes the protection of the inherent rights of navigation, travel, and trade. Article III of this treaty states:

"It is agreed that it shall at all times be free to His Majesty's subjects, and to the citizens of the United States, and also to the Indians dwelling on either side of the said boundary line, freely to pass and repass by land or inland navigation, into the respective territories and countries of the two parties, on the continent of America."

Furthermore the Treaty of Canandaigua guarantees and ratifies the earlier treaty of 1645 Kaswenth in that no European power shall interfere with the internal business and politics of Haudenosaunee peoples and their allies:

"It is clearly understood by the parties to this treaty, that the annuity stipulated in the sixth article, is to be applied to the benefit of such of the Six Nations and of their Indian friends united with them as aforesaid, as do or shall reside within the boundaries of the United States: For the United States do not interfere with nations, tribes or families, of Indians elsewhere resident."

Thus, the people of this land never accepted the Canada/United States border, as was acknowledged by all parties in these treaties. For Indigenous peoples the concept of boundaries, land ownership, and property are foreign in concept and in application and are best reserved for application in Europe and among Europeans and their descendants. They in no way apply, nor have they ever, to Haudenosaunee or Kenneh'ken'kwa:ka people or their allies.

In closing, all the treaties mentioned in this article always included the stipulation that the treaties mentioned can never be extinguished and will for ever remain valid, no matter which European power or descendents of European colonists call themselves the rulers of this land at any time.
Profiles

Shawonipesiik Kinew among those awarded by Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation

Poirier Communications

Hard work and dedication has paid off for Shawonipesiik Kinew, who has garnered a prestigious Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation millennium excellence award, which consists of a $4,000 cash award to be used toward the cost of her studies at any Canadian university or college.

The Millennium Excellence Award Program recognizes, supports and encourages talented Canadians who make positive and significant contributions to the betterment of their communities, demonstrate a capacity for leadership and academic achievement, and committed to turning visionary ideas into reality. These awards provide an incentive for many of our secondary studies. The Foundation distributes $285 million in the form of bursaries and scholarships each year throughout Canada. Since its inception, it has awarded $1.3 billion in the form of 420,000 bursaries to Canadian post-secondary students.

Shawonipesiik Kinew is an Ojibway student, living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is a proud citizen of the Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation, Treaty #3. She is one of twelve students from Winnipeg to receive a Local Excellence Award from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. She will receive a one-time award of $4,000.

Shawon plans to be a writer, and will be pursuing her studies at McGill University this fall. Some of her past accomplishments include graduating in May 2004 from the University of Winnipeg Collegiate, as a student of highest distinction and winner of several academic awards. She was the co-editor of Mindscape (UOW Collegiate Literary magazine) 2002-2003. Shawonipesiik made two films, working as writer, director, editor, camera and sound person at the Gulf Islands Film and television School in 2001 and 2002. Her film "The Girl Upstairs" won the GITS Eye Lens Award.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation is a private, independent organization created by an act of Parliament in 1998. It encourages Canadian students to strive for excellence and pursue their post-
A ghost child shoots his brother
to redness with lead chips and powder even
as a female of law enforcement
makes a ghost of a fifteen year old child
she said his B.B. gun had the laid cold shine
of a fortyfive
and the winds of storms unguessed
scream out
spit words of harsh hail
marking native soil
and those indigenous to it
who were these winter’s children?
and how many were there
to be counted/ as hillocks and raw earth
buried beneath sorrow and snow drifts
of artificial seasons and manure
Ghost child mounts his
difficult pony/cut from the
no horse herd of his people
there are no paths open to him
he
shot away his life
blew out his wings and future dreams
with his brother’s backbone
dropping time
with the red shine
of flesh
from underneath his skin
Law enforcement
rules
regulations
how do you regulate
the desperation of seeming
hopeless poverty
Law enforcement
professional assassins
with their excuse
of slow genocide
metal jacketed
to their sidearms
...I grieve for all
my ghost children of red earth
the killers
and the killed
For in the hoop
of our nations
as indigenous people
we are all connected
and thus
above all else
we share this
in common
...we share
rage!!


Without you, I'm working in a rainy city
Waiting on a sunny day
God's in the heavens
Satan's on my shoulder
There's dust in my shoes
There's weeds in my hair
Could I be someone
Could I go somewhere
May your strength give me strength
May your hope give me hope
May your love give me love
Can your breath put the flames in my way
I'm on the edge
I don't want to be a soul searcher
I want to be a love provider
Am I here
Am I aware
Am I ready
There's busses running
There's planes flying
There's people walking by
Somebody look
Somebody stop
Somebody see me
Could it be you

This poem is dedicated to R.H.
...with love from your Indian Princess, Suzanne Kilroy
A Long Story Made Short

By Qwo-Li Driskill

So I’m home alone at midnight
and there is this “ding-dong” at my door
and it’s this guy I know and he’s drunk as usual
and with his buddy and I think
   Fuck
   I just wanted to make my fry bread

So this ding-donger walks into my home like he owns it
(in typical colonist fashion)
and starts looking at one of my Native magazines and he says
   Why do you have this You’re not aboriginal
and I say
   Yes I am
and he says
   No you’re not
and I’m in no mood to discuss my racial/cultural heritages
with a ding-donger so I say
   Yes
   I am
and leave it at that adding more flour to my fry bread which
is too thin and sticky

So then the ding-donger decides to bring up a feminist
bumper sticker on my friend’s car
and he tries to claim it’s sexist
   How do you deduce that
I ask and he says it’s narrow and that it means all straight
white men are assholes
   blah
   blah
   I want to add rich and able-bodied
but instead I say
   You’re drowning in white male guilt
but Ding-Donger says he isn’t so I plop my fry bread down
on a cookie sheet and start kneading the sloppy bread
pretending it’s this man’s pasty face

Ding-Donger is blitzed out of his head and is touching me
way too much which pisses me off because
   one: I didn’t invite him to
   two: He’s straight (or says he is)
and I think
   What makes you think you can touch me just because
       I’m a Faggot and cooking fry bread and in
a skirt

and yes indeedy sexism is the root of homophobia
because somehow this ding-donger thinks because
I’m a fairiv (Not really a man) At least not like him (Thank

God)
I won’t take this sticky ball of water and flour and smear it on
his face

Too bad I haven’t started heating up the oil
so I could fry up his hand until it bubbles golden brown
in this iron pan and I could eat it with some beans
or maybe honey
which seems to be this guy’s favorite
since he keeps calling me that like I’ve got a label on my con-
tainer reading
   “Lucky Clover”

And when he comes up behind me and puts his arms around
my waist
and kisses me on the cheek and neck like I’m some kind of
bread that
needs a crust I wish
I had a fine-toothed comb
to rake down his face and then
maybe add some of his blood to my mix
cuz as a faggot
I’d like my fry bread pink

But he leaves for more beer
and I’m grateful he’s an alcoholic so he has a motivation (ding-
donger though it is) to get out of my house
He leaves his hat
which makes me nervous cuz I don’t want him to come back
for it

So I leave my bread to rise and wash the dough off my hands
but the anger doesn’t come off
and stains my fingers
and clothes

So I take a piece of paper
and smear the anger into a sign
which reads:
   The mixed faggot’s makin’ fry bread
   No ding-dongers allowed

Qwo-Li Driskill is a Cherokee Two-Spirit also of African, Irish,
Lenape, Lumbee, and Osage ascent. His work appears in
numerous publications including Revolutionary Voices: A
Multicultural Queer Youth Anthology, Many Mountains Mov-
ing, Red Ink and most recently in the anthologies Speak to Me
Words: Essays and Contemporary American Indian Poetry
and Nurturing Native Languages. She is 28 years old and
lives in the Duwamish Nation, currently called Seattle, WA.
www.dragonflyrising.com
Buy your Early Bird Festival Pass now at www.festivalboxoffice.com and enter to win 3 nights at the fabulous Opus Hotel. Save 10% on your pass, enjoy front of the line privileges and access all festival screenings.*

*Early Bird Festival Pass offer in effect July 8 - July 28, 2004
www.outonscreen.com