

shadows. Halfbreeds are blamed for a lack of tribalism by one Elder, while another muses that the dam should be dismantled, a symbol of man's disrespect for the land. The video is left, appropriately, open-ended.

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Kipp, Darrell and Joe Fisher: *Transitions*. Bozeman, Montana: Montana Public Television (Native Voices Public Television Workshop), 1991. Video: 30 minutes. Colour. 1/2" VHS (home use USA \$39.95; educational use: USA \$99.95); 3/4" (educational use: USA \$149.95); Study guide: USA \$4.00.

Kipp and Fisher's video, *Transitions*, illustrates how non-Native colonisation has led to the near destruction of the Blackfeet language on the fifty-mile square Blackfeet Reservation next to the Rocky Mountains. The result of this language loss has been both a sense of cultural shame among many of the Reservation inhabitants and a widespread feeling of lost identity. The video contributes greatly to an understanding of the severe damage done to this community, especially in the years from 1890 to 1936 when the Holy Family Catholic Mission Boarding School was responsible for up to one hundred Native children at a time. Those were years when a new social order was imposed as well as a new religion and a new government. The colonisers assumed that they and they alone knew what was good for the Native population, and acted according to this premise. Today the Blackfeet perceive that many non-Native people continue to think and act in this colonising manner.

In this sense, the non-Native colonisers created a new image for the tribe based upon English as the language to be spoken and Catholicism as the prescribed religion to believe and practice. This was coupled with the destruction of any trace of their ancestral traditions, that is, such external features as their traditional clothes and their hairstyle, which included long hair for boys as a sign of dignity. Past and present, the common non-Native attitude towards the Blackfeet seems to entail not listening to what they have to say and imposing a strange and alien lifestyle.

Kipp and Fisher present the video in a particular way, leading the viewer to approach the question from a double time dimension: a historical one while listening to the broken voice of an old man speaking in Blackfeet (with English subtitles) simply accompanied by a blank screen; and that of the present while watching and listening to Blackfeet community members expressing their feelings and opinions on the loss of their mother tongue and, therefore, of their origins. Kipp and Fisher also focus on the Government's representative buildings (i.e. the boarding school, the church, the government) on the Reservation as solid emblems of their supposed permanent presence throughout history.

Kipp and Fisher listen to and bring out the stress of these present-day Blackfeet people, most of whom live in the community and have the shared experience of having been through the process of identity loss and cultural shame. One of them (it would have been helpful to know his place in the community) expresses his pain when stating how, "you are bad for being an Indian person, for looking like an Indian person, for dressing and speaking like an Indian person." The Blackfeet experience "different" treatment from the rest of American and Canadian society even when emptied of their inner cultural essence. Referenceless, they wonder where their language is while the old man's voice announces: "the Mother is powerful, She wants to grow strong again."

Just recently, on November 7th 1990, the United States Congress enacted the *Native American Language Preservation Act* to promote and preserve Native languages.

In January 1991, the Holy Family Catholic Mission building, which had stood for so long as a powerful historical symbol of destruction throughout the video, was demolished. Nevertheless, Kipp and Fisher encourage the viewer to wonder as to the future. How long will cultural shame take to be eradicated? Will the Blackfeet language ever again flourish, as it did in the old times?

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