

# THE EVOLUTION OF NATIVE STUDIES IN CANADA: DESCENDING FROM THE IVORY TOWER

**Shona Taner**

1121 Marsden Court  
Burnaby, British Columbia  
Canada, V5A 3K2

## **Abstract / Résumé**

This article traces the development of Native Studies in Canadian universities from its ivory tower origins through its gradual descent to the grass roots. This is accomplished by the examination of the varying programs that emerged in four different universities in four different provinces. The unique characteristics of the programs and the circumstances that led to differences in each university are explored. The study demonstrates that since the late 1960s the programs have increased their responsiveness to First Nations' needs.

Cet article retrace le développement des études autochtones dans les universités canadiennes, de leur tour d'ivoire initiale à leur retour progressif vers la base. Pour ce faire, on examinera les programmes de quatre universités situées dans quatre provinces différentes. On explorera les caractéristiques particulières de chaque programme et les circonstances qui ont entraîné les différences entre les universités. L'étude démontre que, depuis la fin des années 60, les programmes répondent de plus en plus aux besoins des premières nations.

Those anthropologists,  
sociologists and  
historians who  
poke at our bones,  
our social systems  
and past events  
try to tell us  
who we are.

When we don't read  
their books  
they think we are  
rejecting our heritage.

So, they feel  
sorry for us  
and write  
more books  
for themselves.

Untitled, Lenore Tobias, 1980

This poem accurately describes the perception held by many First Nations people of the type of education provided by universities. The education of Natives has received considerable attention in both the United States and Canada. Low achievement and high dropout rates persist at all levels of education from elementary school through university (Leitka, 1973:11). For many of the early years of the century, the limited number of Natives achieving a university degree could be explained in part by Canada's brief policy of enforced "enfranchisement" for any Status Indian seeking higher education. Although this policy ended in 1880, the principle of penalizing Native people for achieving a high educational standing probably continued to have an effect for many years. For many Native students, Native education still meant the education of Natives by non-Natives using non-Native methods (Hampton, 1995:25). Fortunately, the academic community gradually became aware of past errors, and began to make changes in its methods of designing and delivering education to and about First Nations peoples.

It all began in the 1960s, a revolutionary time for the academic community. Political unrest led to changes in the traditional university system. Many believed that universities represented "ivory towers" for educating the wealthy elite, and students and political activists protested to make higher

education more accessible to the traditionally under-represented and for greater diversity in the academy. One of the tangible results of the protest movement in the United States and Canada was the introduction of Ethnic Studies including Black Studies, Chicano Studies, and Native Studies. In Canada, the ethnic make-up of the population meant that Black Studies and Chicano Studies were of less relevance than in the United States, and thus in response to the protest movement, Canadian universities chose to pursue the implementation of Native Studies.

This article is a summary of a Master's thesis that chronologically examines the development of Native Studies Programs at several universities in western and central Canada: Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario; the University of Regina/Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) in Regina, Saskatchewan; the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta; and the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, British Columbia. Although there are several other universities from which to choose, the four in question were selected because they conform to the parameters of the study, which involves examining the changes in the development of Native Studies programs in each of the decades commencing with the 1960s and concluding with the 1990s. Geographically, the universities were selected to represent the regions in which the greatest number of Native Studies programs are offered. In addition, an attempt was made to choose universities representing four different provinces, to reflect the unique influences of provincial politics, demographics, and historical experiences. The article attempts to determine the influences, obstacles, and changes that have occurred in the course of establishing and improving each of these programs to meet the needs of First Nations students and communities, and to benefit others seeking to learn more about the history, culture and experiences of Canada's First Nations people.

The article will also present the differences among the four programs and the circumstances that led to these differences; namely, the times in which each program was established, the provinces in which the universities are located, the structure of the program, and the level of involvement of First Nations people in each university. Finally, this article will attempt to demonstrate that, in the case of Native Studies, universities may once have been ivory towers determining the educational needs of a predominantly White student body from a predominantly White academic perspective, but, through internal and external pressures, universities have learned the importance of responding to the needs of all of their constituents and encouraging Native representation within all levels of university governing bodies and in the lecture halls.

It was in the sixties that the First Nations began to articulate their disappointment with the types of educational opportunities afforded them. A representative of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI) elaborated,

For too many years, non-Indians, including representatives of most universities, have been speaking for Indians. The days of that are long over. We will present our own case, in whatever forum, whenever the need arises. Certainly we appreciate the efforts others have made on our behalf, and certainly we seek continued cooperation between Indian and non-Indian societies. However, it must be just that—cooperation—not assimilation.<sup>1</sup>

In the past, failure to establish effective communication mechanisms and working relationships with First Nations resulted in irrelevant programs which had no relationship to the survival and development needs articulated by First Nations leaders. Native people often felt disenchantment and a lack of faith in traditional institutions of higher education which they felt had little credibility (Peregoy, 1980:37). Initially, many well-intentioned academics wanted to do something about the "Indian problem", and it was in this way that most of the early Native Studies courses began. Such courses were inevitably under an established discipline such as Anthropology or Sociology, and were generally taught by non-Native instructors and attended by non-Native students (Price, 1978:iix). The situation at Trent University in 1969, when it became the first university in Canada to offer a Native Studies program, fits this description well. With its origins as part of the Anthropology Department, Indian-Eskimo Studies responded little to the First Nations' desire for control of their children's education. The development of Native Studies was encouraged by faculty members and administrators out of a genuine commitment to the provision of education for First Nations students and recognition of the importance of Native issues, but the importance of Native involvement in the development of the programs was not recognized until later. According to John Price, a Canadian scholar in the area of Native Studies, the discipline branched out from Anthropology, emerging from increasing academic specialization, the shift towards social relevance in universities, and political pressure from Native people to have a place in academia for their civilization alongside those of Europeans (Price, 1978:viii).

According to two of the key figures in Natives Studies at Trent, "The initial programme was formulated in the late sixties, a period when criticism of social structures and efforts to assert human rights were creating a ferment in the United States and stirring social consciousness in Canada"

(Castellano and McCaskill, 1979:7). Organizations like the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the United States and the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) in Canada were forming and drawing attention to the issues affecting First Nations. This was a period when debate and introspection about the Canadian identity were challenging some of the assumptions arising from Canada's colonial past.<sup>2</sup> The newness of the University was another factor contributing to its willingness to create a program. In 1969, Trent University was only five years old and had yet to develop a reputation, which might explain its willingness to take a chance on a new, innovative program. In addition, with Ojibway, Mississauga, Mohawk and Chippewa communities within a 70 mile radius, Peterborough's Trent University was a likely choice for the first Native Studies program in Canada. Nonetheless, the sixties environment, the newness of the university, and the proximity of so many Native communities alone were not enough to support such a unique innovation. What also made it possible for the program to emerge at Trent was the support of the President, Tom Symons, who had been President of the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada and was familiar with the issues of the Native population.<sup>3</sup> With his support, in 1972 the Indian-Eskimo Studies program became the Native Studies Department.

Many of the programs that succeeded Trent's were responding in part to the 1969 White Paper of the Federal Government, which advocated assimilation of the Native population and the end of special services for Native peoples in all areas, including education. The White Paper and a memorandum of agreement to transfer control of all Indian education to the Provincial government received a strong negative response from Native peoples in Canada. The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) wrote a policy paper entitled Indian Control of Indian Education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) in which the NIB demanded that "Indian people have the direction and control of experimental programs conducted in their names by universities. On June 22, 1974, Jean Chretien, Minister of Native Affairs, said,

I have given the National Indian Brotherhood my assurance that I and my Department are fully committed to realizing the educational goals for the Indian people which are set forth in the Brotherhood's proposal. The Department desires to work constructively with Indian communities on a *partnership* basis which encourages full, free and frank discussion and which places *major responsibility for educational decisions and directions in the hands of the Indian community concerned* (Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 1975:2).

The adoption of the policy paper by the federal government paved the way for the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC). Nevertheless, the policy alone cannot be credited with the establishment of the College. Another factor identified as having contributed to the successful creation of the College is the extraordinary political unity of First Nations in Saskatchewan. Initially representing 68 Reserves, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI) later changed its name to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) which is currently the representative body for 72 First Nations governments in Saskatchewan. It was this body that pursued the creation of an Indian-controlled post-secondary institution (Charleston, 1988:63). According to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), because there were no factions in the political base in Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians was able to stimulate the action needed to gain control over their College (*Ibid.*:69). Yet, despite these circumstances, the creation of a Native-run College was a more ambitious goal than establishing a program at Trent and was not accepted with the ease that the Trent program had been. For several years, the FSI, negotiated with the University of Saskatchewan to create a Federated College. Rejected by the older, established university, in the mid-seventies, the FSI turned to the newly independent University of Regina, previously a College of the University of Saskatchewan. A former Vice-President of the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Lloyd Barber, was the new President, and not unlike Tom Symons of Trent, had been involved with the Native population as an appointed member of the Northwest Territories Legislative Council, and as Indian Claims Commissioner for Canada. Barber's sensitivity to Native issues made him an ideal ally for the FSI and in May of 1976, within a year of discussions commencing, the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College came into being as a fully accredited Indian-controlled post-secondary institution, academically and physically part of the University of Regina, yet financially and administratively independent. At its core was the Indian Studies program.

Like the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Alberta was an old, established institution with a reputation to uphold when it was approached in 1972 by the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA) to establish a Native College along the same lines as the SIFC. The IAA was one of the most active Native organizations in Canada, publishing its "Red Paper" in June 1970 as a counter-policy proposal to the government White Paper of 1969. The "Red Paper" stated that

The current arrangement for education is unacceptable because the Provincial and Federal Governments can make arrangements without consulting Indian tribal councils. Our

education is not a welfare system. We have free education as a treaty right because we have paid in advance for our education by surrendering our lands.<sup>4</sup>

It took five years, from when the IAA presented its original proposal for a Native College, for the University of Alberta to establish a Committee on Native Studies. Even then, its approach was "one of cautious discussion and cautious action."<sup>5</sup> One could say that this was an understatement of grand proportions. Fourteen years after discussion of a Native College began, and after undergoing substantial changes in planned structure, the University approved the School of Native Studies and, in the 1986/87 academic year, the first courses were offered. The Committee attributed the slowness in approving the School to the major move that it represented for the University and the need for the University to make the move advisedly.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, at the University of Alberta progress in adopting a Native Studies Program was much slower than at Trent or the University of Regina. According to Professor Dempsey, former Director of the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta,

... the U of A is considered to be one of the top three universities in Canada. It's one of the oldest universities in Canada, and change, even if it's additional change as opposed to real institutional change, takes time for people to accept (personal communication, July 15, 1996).

Professor Richard Price, another former Director, adds,

historically this university took a long time to establish the Department of Anthropology, and so that shows you something about the kind of cautious, conservative nature of the institution (personal communication, July 17, 1996).

Unlike Trent and the SIFC, there was no one individual among the senior administration that was key in making the School possible. Many people were involved over the years, including senior administrators, members of various faculties and several individuals who held the position of Advisor on Native Affairs.

In comparison with the University of Alberta, which spent years deliberating over the establishment of Native Studies, when the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) was inaugurated in 1994, it was the first university in Canada to open with a Department of First Nations Studies already embedded in its structure and an institutional mandate to promote First Nations knowledge and First Nations learning. With Native leaders working in active partnership with other community leaders in northern British Columbia to build a public consensus in support of a new northern

university, the inclusion of a Native Studies program was never questioned. In describing the political history of the University, Margaret Anderson, the earliest Chair of First Nations Studies, noted

The support by First Nations for establishing the University was very strong, and it was a political animal from the get-go. People knew right from the outset that they needed to have support across the north. They needed support that was politically potent, and the First Nations in northern B.C. had some of that. There was a concerted effort made by the people who were organizing the campaign to develop the University, to involve First Nations. And there was a very active response, so that there were (First Nations) people who were very active in the campaign to establish the institution (personal communication, November 12, 1996).

The current Chair of First Nations Studies, Jim McDonald, adds

...the community groups and interest that led to the formation of the University included Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal interests and they were part of the lobbying for the University and part of the development of the University concept and they wanted to have First Nation Studies (personal communication, December 6, 1996).

The large population of First Nations in northern British Columbia, the growing interest in Native Studies and the recognition of it as a legitimate field also account for the speed in establishing the program at UNBC.

With the emergence of each of the Native Studies programs studied, the same challenge was faced—development of a well-balanced curriculum which would meet the needs of Native communities and include traditional academic courses based on the humanities and social sciences; language and culture courses; and applied courses. According to Russell Thornton, a faculty member in the Native American Studies Program at the University of Minnesota,

American Indian studies has developed along three basic lines since its inception. One, it has developed along the line of Indian culture; that is, it has introduced Indian languages, music, art, literature, and ways of looking at the world into academia. Two, it has developed along social science lines; that is, it has attempted to consolidate existing bodies of knowledge pertaining to American Indians in social sciences, most notably anthropology and history, and also evaluate and reinterpret this knowledge. Three, Indian studies has developed along applied lines. It has examined Indian education,

Indian social work, Indian health care and has attempted to make these areas more relevant to problems and conditions of Indian peoples (1978:14).

In the early years, the objectives of the programs were dictated by the results of census studies revealing that First Nations' participation in post-secondary education was dismally low. Subsequently, the original objective of the Native Studies programs was to increase First Nations' participation at universities by making the institutions friendlier through a curriculum offering the traditional academic courses of history, political science and anthropology with a focus on First Nations. At Trent, a report indicated that initially the program focused on developing academic courses because it was considered politically unwise to reject the expectations and demands of the university, which, as an institution of higher learning, was turned to for direction of the novel and fledgling program.<sup>7</sup> Roger Buffalohead, of Washington State University, described the early Native Studies programs of the seventies as "a series of courses related to Indian history or culture" adding

(t)hey have the general Anthropology courses, general Sociology courses, general Education courses, in which Indians themselves are supposed to receive an airing, and an intellectual discussion (1970:162).

For Native culture to receive only an airing was not satisfactory to the Native community because preservation of language and culture is one of the embodiments of the philosophy of First Nations education (Charleston, 1988:[2]81).

Over time, as the needs of First Nations people and the role of First Nations people within modern society changed, so too did the objectives of Native Studies programs. With the rights of Indigenous people rising to the forefront globally, interest in maintaining and disseminating knowledge of the cultures of Aboriginal people also grew. Universities, as purveyors of knowledge, realized that they were ideal candidates for participation in this process. In Canada, universities began to respond to internal and external pressures to meet the needs of First Nations people by introducing more Native Studies programs and altering established programs to give more attention to language, identity, and the arts. Thus, as the seventies progressed, Native Studies became "more than an academic chronicler of Native cultures", but "actively involved in their preservation and development" (Morris, 1986:10).

Assisting in the maintenance and dissemination of First Nations culture became the objective of these new Native Studies programs; yet, for the average Canadian competing in an environment in which employers de-

mand skills and experience, a degree in Native Studies seemed like a waste of time. It was felt that "The humanities or liberal arts, such as history, literature and philosophy, in particular, are regarded as superfluous and impractical... Indian professional scholars... are not essential for Indian development, and all effort should be made to produce professional Indian educators, businessmen and technocrats" (Ortiz, 1985:6). At a symposium on American Indian Studies in 1977, Clara Sue Kidwell, a faculty member in the Native American Studies Program at the University of California in Berkeley, said

Native American Studies programs must maintain a careful balance between the purely academic concerns of the University and the purely pragmatic concerns of the community (1978:8).

In response to the criticism of government, industry, interest groups, and society as a whole, the academic community learned that it could no longer concern itself merely with scholarship and gradually began working towards making university education more practical. In Native Studies, these pressures, combined with the demands of First Nations people for self-government, translated into another shift in the objectives of the programs—from maintaining culture to helping to prepare First Nations people for the responsibilities associated with governing themselves. Thus, as Native Studies entered its second decade, applied courses, practica and community-based research were becoming a vital part of the program alongside the traditional social science and humanities-based courses and the culture and language courses.

At Trent, the program's early design reflected its origins as part of the Anthropology Department. As an anthropologist, Ken Kidd, who initially headed up the program, had a particular vision of the Indian-Eskimo Studies Program. He said

I had in mind an interdisciplinary program which would involve some anthropology, namely the survey of Indians of Canada... the geography of Canada, to emphasize the diversity of the cultural backgrounds, in the geographical sense of the word, and something about the history of the country, the progress of white acquisition of Canada, how it affected Native peoples, and Canadian economics.<sup>8</sup>

Significant changes to the program occurred in 1971 when Walter Currie, a Potawatami who had been advisor to the Ontario government on Native education, was hired to run the program. He convinced University Senate that in order to improve the status of Indian-Eskimo Studies, the program should be made a department rather than leaving it as an interdisciplinary

program within Anthropology. In 1972 the Native Studies Department emerged at Trent. In the same year, the department began to consider academic, cultural and applied development goals. A report describing the events that took place in this period indicated that a critical issue in the development of Native Studies at Trent was the appropriate mix between what was termed "conventional" academic courses, on one hand, and "culture" courses, on the other. Including culture in the curriculum is now viewed as a necessity and as David Newhouse, then Chair of Native Studies at Trent, said,

we could not do Native Studies these days without culture, and without looking at cultural premises, cultural expression... It has become very much the accepted way of doing Native Studies (personal interview, August 20, 1996).

In addition, with many Native students expressing more interest in the practical than the theoretical and majoring in other disciplines, Native Studies made an effort to allow students to apply their knowledge and skills to the Native community by incorporating a practicum into the program (Cole, 1992:124). The practicum was introduced in 1975 and consisted of theoretical instruction in methods of community service and research, complimented by a supervised fieldwork placement. Through its career development aspects, the practicum met the need for students to gain employable skills that would allow them to fit into the Native marketplace.<sup>9</sup>

It is difficult to assess the course offerings of the Indian Studies Program at the SIFC in the same manner as Trent because the College offers a variety of degrees, thus placing some of the academic, cultural and applied courses outside of the Indian Studies program itself. Aside from an Indian Studies Department, the SIFC has an Indian Languages, Literatures and Linguistics Department, as well as Indian Education, Science, English, and Indian Fine Arts Departments. In addition, the SIFC has Schools of Business and Public Administration, and Social Work. Nonetheless, within the College, Indian Studies is the central structure, providing basic courses taken by all students of the College<sup>10</sup> and often referred to as the "core" department of the SIFC.<sup>11</sup>

Evolving as it did from a Cultural College offering courses in the areas of history, music, art and language, it is surprising that SIFC did not begin with a similar framework,<sup>12</sup> but in 1976 the Indian Studies Program began with five courses—four traditional academic courses and only one cultural course, Introductory Cree.<sup>13</sup> Yet, according to the 1989-90 SIFC calendar,

Culture is the heart and soul of a nation. Language conveys culture. Art documents culture.<sup>14</sup>

This belief eventually manifested itself in the Indian Languages, Literatures and Linguistics Department which offers courses in all of the Indian languages spoken in Saskatchewan: Cree, Sauteaux (Ojibway), Dakota (Sioux), Assiniboine, and Chipewyan (Dene),<sup>15</sup> including Bachelor programs in Cree Linguistics and Ojibway Linguistics, the first university-accredited degrees in specific First Nations languages anywhere.<sup>16</sup> The Indian Art Department established at the Cultural College had, by 1977, come under the administration of the SIFC as part of the Indian Studies Program. By 1979, the University of Regina had approved the Bachelor of Arts degree in Indian Art, and the College now has a Faculty of Fine Arts offering a four year Bachelor of Arts (Indian Art or Indian Art History), or a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Indian Art).<sup>17</sup>

In terms of applied courses, SIFC is different from other universities offering Indian Studies as it has developed separate departments to offer certificates in Indian Health Studies, Indian Communications Arts, and a variety of preprofessional one and two year programs to prepare students for work in health care, journalism, and law. The Indian Studies program itself has also introduced several courses in economic planning and a Field Research Practicum, but because of the other offerings throughout the College, applied courses have remained limited. When asked about offering practical applied courses within the Indian Studies Department, Professor Asikinack said

Not specifically in this department...we have other departments that do that practical need...other programs look at certificate courses which meet the more practical needs of the community and the more immediate short-term needs (Bill Asikinack, personal communication, July 29, 1996).

Professor Stonechild added

Practical courses tend to be offered through SIFC's other degree programs, e.g. education, science, administration, social work, etc. Indian Studies does have some economic development and field research courses (Blair Stonechild, personal communication, August 27, 1996).

Finding a balance among the areas of academic, cultural, and applied is as important at the SIFC as it is at Trent.

At the University of Alberta, the School of Native Studies had the fortunate position of starting in the eighties, having learned from the experiences of the SIFC, Trent and others in the seventies. It was felt that it was "no longer necessary to address the exploration of Aboriginal cultures and the pursuit of academic excellence as contradictory goals (University of Alberta, 1991:16). Cultural courses had become accepted by academia

as legitimate, and there was less need to prove the academic integrity of the program by focusing on offering traditional academic courses. The Committee on Native Studies also pointed out that "One nearly universal limitation of the program in Canada is the focus on humanities and social science, probably because it has been cultural anthropology, history and law which have defined Aboriginal issues as subjects of study."<sup>18</sup> The Committee wanted the School to have a mandate to include other courses connected with science, agriculture, land studies and education, therefore the program was designed to offer students an effective combination of liberal arts and applied studies.<sup>19</sup> Professor Price, the original Director of the School, indicated that reading through the literature on Native Studies revealed a lot of academic programs in the United States where the focus was language and culture, but that surveys of the communities indicated that they also had all sorts of practical needs and that was why the School chose to diversify (personal communication, July 17, 1996). As a result, the program also sought to develop both the research and the community development skills of students through a series of courses and opportunities for practical experience.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the School of Native Studies began with plans for a balance of academic, cultural and applied courses in four areas: language and culture; land and resources; self-government; and community-based research and applied skills.<sup>21</sup>

The School has tried to respond to Native community representatives on the School Council who strongly emphasized the need to move beyond pure theory into a better balance of theory and practical or applied skills. This resulted in the School offering courses such as Management Issues in Native Communities, Community Development Processes, and Native Communication and Negotiation Strategies.<sup>22</sup> According to Professor Price

... our program, if you look at the course offerings, it's probably a little bit more applied-oriented and skills-oriented than would be your straight Bachelor of Arts (personal communication, July 17, 1966).

A recent report on the School indicated that representations from the Aboriginal community were "either criticizing the usefulness of a university degree for community purposes or making a bid for applied education (University of Alberta, 1991:6). The response has been discussion of a cooperative education program that would make possible practical field placements in combination with the community-based research part of the program of study."<sup>23</sup> As one of the largest universities in Canada, the University of Alberta offers students in Native Studies the opportunity to take applied courses and pursue minors in a variety of disciplines, options not easily matched by other smaller institutions (Richard Price, personal

communication, July 17, 1996). For example, the University of Alberta offers an Indigenous Law Program, a Native Health Care Career Program, and a new Graduate Program in First Nations Education. In general, it is felt that the University meets the needs of Aboriginal people who look to the University to help them acquire practical skills attainable through mainstream programs of study as well as extending and reflecting on unique understandings of Aboriginal history, language, culture, and the natural and social environments through Native Studies (University of Alberta, 1991:5).

The University of Northern British Columbia has followed in the footsteps of its predecessors. Its First Nations Studies program was designed with three streams: Aboriginal languages, cultures, and contemporary issues. According to Margaret Anderson, the original Chair of First Nations Studies, the choice of the three main streams was intended to allow

some of the courses to be taught from other parts of the institution, so Politics would have a First Nations politics course, and History and Geography and Natural Resources, and so on, would each have courses that they would bring into the mix and their programs would similarly include courses from First Nations Studies (personal communication, November 12, 1996).

Two central tasks in the University of Northern British Columbia First Nations Studies mandate are the development of specific cultural and linguistic courses for each of the different First Nation groups within the UNBC area and, given the number and diversity of the First Nations in British Columbia, this is no small feat (University of Northern British Columbia, 1996:3). First Nations Studies also places special emphasis on creating opportunities for University of Northern British Columbia students to learn from and about the First Nations of the north including courses taught in First Nations communities, internships, and community-based research projects for graduate students (*ibid.*).

While each of the programs studied continue to work towards a balance of academic, cultural and applied courses, there continue to be issues regarding the curriculum content of Native Studies. The place of culture in the classroom is chief among them. Vine Deloria Jr. asks the question:

Are these programs designed to teach the culture of the group as a direct mission, in effect substituting themselves in the role of elder of the community? (1986:3)

Answering the question himself, Deloria replies

University officials have never remotely considered their job to be the perpetuation of culture for racial minorities who have already experienced considerable acculturation (*Ibid.*).

Most First Nations demand sensitivity and limitations on the conveyance of their cultures in a traditional academic manner, and Native Studies programs soon recognized the value of involving Elders from First Nations communities in the provision of cultural information to students. Trent first employed a Native counsellor in 1974 with money from the Ontario government, and although shortages of funding meant that a counsellor was not always available, today the University has both an Aboriginal Counsellor and a Cultural Advisor with funding provided from the base budget.<sup>24</sup> The SIFC involved Elders in the program from the beginning. Resident Elders have always been available in Regina and on the Saskatoon campus for personal counselling in areas such as value clarification, interpersonal relationships, and self-awareness. The Elders, consisting of three men and two women, conduct special workshops, seminars and field trips, providing students with the opportunity for traditional growth with special attention to drumming, singing and dancing, and participation in other cultural activities such as pipe and sweet grass prayers.<sup>25</sup> At the University of Alberta, both the School of Native Studies and Native Student Services use Elders to advise students and faculty on cultural matters. Within First Nations Programming, the University of Northern British Columbia has an Elders-in-Residence program through which several Elders and spiritual people are available on an on-call basis for students who need individual attention. Elders and healers also conduct preprogrammed Talking Circles, and other spiritual and cultural activities such as Smudging and Sweat Lodges which take place each week (Lee Morrison, personal communication, December 11, 1996). In 1991, Ray Barnhardt was able to report that in the case of universities with Native Studies,

...elders are usually involved in some consultative role in shaping the priorities and ethos of the institution, and are generally regarded as the culture-bearers with regard to the practice and transmission of traditional values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and customs (1991:225).

This is the case with each of the four universities examined, all of which have Elders acting as cultural advisors, either within the Native Studies programs or through Native student services facilities.

While Native Studies programs have been involving Elders as counselors and guest lecturers since the early seventies, hiring Native faculty to teach in the programs was not as easy to accomplish. It was the general consensus among Native Studies administrators that

far too few Native students have contact with Native faculty who are attuned to their culture and who can serve as models of educational achievement."<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, there were few Natives with advanced degrees available in the seventies, and in the early days at Trent, a faculty member indicated that

times were such that you still had to have paper qualifications... and you were running a considerable risk if you made appointments without these qualifications.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, Trent soon recognized that instructors in the area of language would often lack the academic credentials normally associated with regular university appointments. At first, these language instructors were hired as "special sessional lecturers", but six years later when one of the instructors was still teaching, the decision was made to hire him for a tenure-track position.<sup>28</sup> In 1981, Arthur Blue of the Native Studies Department at Brandon University, indicated that he saw Native Studies moving in the direction of involving Native Elders and spiritual leaders and recognizing them as having equivalence in terms of degree of qualifications necessary to teach in a university (1981:181). This was true at Trent where recognition of the alternative qualifications possessed by Aboriginal instructors led the University, in the nineties, to articulate a set of criteria approved by the University Senate for the academic appointment of Elders, recognizing their traditional/Indigenous knowledge and using other Elders as their peer group in assessment (David Newhouse, August 20, 1996).

When the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College emerged on the scene in 1976, standards were still an issue, but there continued to be very few First Nations scholars available. Native staff were hired with a minimum B.A. and staff who could not meet those standards acted as classroom resource people, but were not given faculty status. The College maintained those standards into the eighties, and by 1984 the calendar boasted

the calibre of our faculty (both Indian and non-Indian) is the best anywhere. For example, the College employs seven of the approximately one dozen Indian people in Canada with Ph.Ds.<sup>29</sup>

Even today, language classes are often taught by Elders who receive neither academic rank nor recognition as faculty unless they have a minimum B.A. Clearly the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College does not want the academic integrity of its programs questioned.

For the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, it continues to be difficult to find and attract Natives with advanced degrees, as it is

understood that these people are much in demand by other universities, businesses, and for federal, provincial, and First Nations government jobs. It was also recognized by a 1978 task force that some Canadian and American universities were "compromising" academic standards to some degree to provide for teaching roles for Native instructors who held less than the traditional, esteemed Ph.D.<sup>30</sup>

As a result, the school gives appointments to Aboriginal candidates without Ph.D.s and encourages them to pursue professional development. In the area of language, further exceptions have been made. The first faculty member hired by the School was a Cree language instructor who had no university or college education, but had a proven record of teaching at a Native Cultural College. Overall, the School of Native Studies has not had the success of the SIFC in attracting Native instructors with traditional academic credentials. The same can be said of the University of Northern British Columbia. UNBC has also used Natives without traditional qualifications through a series of appointments on the co-instructional model, creating a cooperative relationship between the university and community-based cultural or language experts. The model is developmental, training the community expert in university teaching and curriculum at the same time the linguist is assisted in curriculum development. Once the language and culture courses are developed, the University of Northern British Columbia plans to shift instruction more fully to the First Nations co-instructor (University of Northern British Columbia, 1996:5). In the case of all four programs, every effort is being made to balance the importance of having First Nations instructors with the university's academic teaching requirements until the day when there will be sufficient instructors available with both formal credentials and knowledge of language.

Along with trying to increase the number of First Nations faculty in their Native Studies programs, universities have tried to increase the number of First Nations students enrolling at their institutions. From the mid-seventies on, Native Studies programs have tried to improve statistics by offering bridging programs to assist students who cannot meet admission requirements to gain entry into the respective universities. In 1968, the statistics in Ontario indicated that the dropout rate for Native students after Grade 8 was 97% (Cole, 1992:122). This translated into a very small number of qualified Native students to enroll in the newly created program at Trent. The response of the University was to create a Native Studies Diploma Program, starting in 1974, to allow students who had dropped out of high school an opportunity to upgrade for university. The program was described as a

two year modified program that develops skills for success in academics at the same time as you're taking real university subjects (Marlene Castellano, personal communication, August 28, 1996).

Within two years, the Diploma Program had increased Native enrollment at Trent from fourteen to sixty-five.<sup>31</sup>

The statistics in Saskatchewan were no better than those in Ontario. In 1977, it was reported that of the 40,000 Bachelor's degrees, 3,000 Master's degrees and 100 Doctoral degrees granted by the University of Saskatchewan, only 20 BAs, a handful of MAs and no PhDs had been received by Native students (Cuthbertson, 1977:29).

When the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College became federated in 1976, the University of Regina already had a University Entrance Program in place allowing any student who did not meet the requirements for admission, a probationary period of study during which to qualify for admission to a faculty. The College's students were quick to take advantage of this alternative access route and by 1984, over eighty-five percent of SIFC's graduates had begun in the University Entrance Program.<sup>32</sup>

Prior to the establishment of the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, the Native Student Services Office had initiated a Coordinated University Transfer Program in 1984 allowing Aboriginal students to enroll in regular university courses in conjunction with remedial studies and support services. Since its inception, it has been the access route for approximately 70% of the University of Alberta's Native student population.<sup>33</sup> The University of Northern British Columbia, on the other hand, began without a Transition Year program in place, but has since implemented what it calls the Northern Advancement Program in September 1997. As in the case of the University of Regina/Saskatchewan Indian Federated College University Entrance Program, this program is not exclusive to Native students, but is oriented towards providing access to all students from a rural background and will allow students to gain credits towards any major in the University (Jim McDonald, personal communication, December 6, 1996). Alternative access programs have been adopted by each of the universities as an effective means of attracting Native students.

The desire of these universities to have a high representation of Native students among their student bodies has allowed for these avenues to open up, but in most cases the results are still not completely satisfactory, with Native student enrollment continuing to remain low. According to Charlotte Heth and Susan Guyette of the American Indian Studies Centre at the University of California at Los Angeles,

without true commitment to the spirit of affirmative action... no institution can mount a good program (1985:66).

In the case of the University of Alberta, the institution implemented an Aboriginal Student Policy in 1990 with the objective of meeting a 5% Aboriginal quota in the total university enrolment. This quota was based on the fact that 5% of the population of Alberta is Native.<sup>34</sup> At the University of Northern British Columbia, a First Nations Task Force Committee suggested in 1996 that the University adopt a similar policy to be called the Program Access Policy.<sup>35</sup>

The above initiatives demonstrate that much has been done for First Nations, but reveals little about the opportunities afforded them to participate in making decisions about their education. In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood education policy paper stated

The government must adjust its policy and practices to make possible the full participation and partnership of Indian people in all decisions and activities connected with the education of Indian people (McCaskill, 1983:377).

According to Eber Hampton, current President of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College,

... local control is a defining characteristic of Indian education, not just a philosophical or political good. There can be no true Indian education without Indian control. Anything else is white education applied to Indians (Hennepe, 1993:198).

A report prepared for a British Columbia institution stated

Traditionally, institutes of higher learning have acted from the assumption that it is the institution who defines the needs and resources needed for its clientele. This approach has invariably led to failure in any attempts to deliver post-secondary programming to Native Learners and communities... universities in Canada are in a unique position to take a lead in developing new approaches towards partnerships with the Native learner and communities alike based upon an assumption of equals in dialogue and expectations.<sup>36</sup>

This opportunity has been recognized by the four institutions examined, each of which has attempted to involve First Nations in its Native Studies programs and throughout its university's governing body. For Trent, it took several years for Native representatives to infiltrate the university governing bodies. The establishment of a Council of Elders was suggested in the 1970s, but was not accepted by the department (Harvey McCue, personal communication, October 6, 1996). The issue resurfaced in the eighties in

a proposal for a Native Community Advisory Council, but again fell by the wayside.<sup>37</sup> Finally in 1993 the Trent University Senate unanimously resolved that "Aboriginal peoples and Trent University jointly establish the Trent Aboriginal Education Council" and this has become the main vehicle for Aboriginal input into the design, development, implementation and evaluation of programs of study and research.<sup>38</sup> In comparison, at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, First Nations have always controlled the College through a Board of Governors consisting of ten elected Chiefs and two senators of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, now representative of 72 First Nations governments in Saskatchewan (Charleston, 1888:[1]121). According to Dr. Eber Hampton of the College,

basic policy decisions are First Nations policy decisions, so that First Nations set the direction for the College (personal communication, July 31, 1996).

This system makes the Indian Studies Bachelor of Arts degree at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College the only one that falls wholly under the jurisdiction of First Nations people.

The School of Native Studies also has institutionalized Native representation in its governing body. The School Council is responsible for academic decision-making and consists of six Native Studies faculty or outside faculty competent in Native Studies, six permanent academic staff appointed by other faculties, six Native community members, and six student members (3 from the Native Studies Student Association and 3 from the Aboriginal Student Council).<sup>39</sup> Representation on the Council allows for approximately half of the governing body to be Native.

Following the lead of its predecessors, the University of Northern British Columbia has solicited input from the Native community from the beginning, initially with First Nations consultation forums, later with a First Nations Task Force and finally with a Senate Standing Committee on First Nations. In addition, the University has different Regional Advisory Councils which include First Nations as well as the Northeast First Nations Regional Advisory Committee.<sup>40</sup> With the passage of the University of Northern British Columbia Act, the involvement of the First Nations community is assured through named seats on both the Board of Governors and the Senate.<sup>41</sup> While consensus within First Nations communities as to how universities should be responding to their needs is rare and debates continue to make it difficult for universities to determine the correct paths to take, the four institutions examined are trying to be responsive to the wishes of their First Nations constituents. Currently, First Nations involvement in Native Studies has signalled a shift in the acceptance of cooperative

curriculum development as a model versus an exception, and hopefully this acceptance will soon transcend all levels of university decision making.<sup>42</sup>

Concomitant with bringing the First Nations community into the universities has been the outreach by the universities into the First Nations community. Attitudes towards distance education have seen a considerable shift. In the seventies the Department of Indian Affairs indicated that "Universities perceive that a degree obtained in a totally off-campus situation is less valuable than one gained on-campus; that it somehow suggests a lowering of standards."<sup>43</sup> More recently, distance education has been explored by most Native Studies programs. Trent is one of the exceptions. Apparently, Trent provides limited off-campus offerings because the University is situated near several First Nations communities in southern Ontario and relies on Lakehead University, further north in the province, and with a mandate to northern and Native learners, to reach out to Native communities outside of its immediate vicinity. On the other hand, distance education has always been an integral part of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College because, as an arm of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, it must reach out to as many of Saskatchewan's 72 reserves as possible. In its second year of operation, the College had 81 Treaty Indian students enrolled in on-campus courses and 275 enrolled in off-campus courses.<sup>44</sup> With a second campus in Saskatoon and an office of Extension and Northern Operations in Prince Albert, the College has a presence throughout Saskatchewan and even offers classes in Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.<sup>45</sup> In order to expand its offerings, the SIFC has been embracing new technology since 1981 when it first offered classes in isolated communities through teleconferencing.<sup>46</sup> More recently, the College began to utilize the Saskatchewan Communications Network to provide distance education via satellite.

The School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta offers courses at Maskwachees Cultural College in Hobbema; at the Yellowhead Tribal Council university program in Spruce Grove; at Blue Quills School operated by the Tribal Chiefs of Treaty 6; and in the Sunrise Project in Slave Lake and Grouard.<sup>47</sup> Aside from the strong connections with these four Native institutions, the School also brokers courses to Grand Prairie Community College, Athabasca University, and Mount Royal College (James Dempsey, personal communication, July 15, 1996). Limited faculty has led the School to approve community members to teach the courses, many of them graduates of the School of Native Studies (*Ibid.*). At the University of Northern British Columbia, distance education is a mandate of the institution as a whole and First Nations Studies has been very active in this area. The program has reached out through partnerships with First Nations allowing

them to deliver the courses in their home communities. Through these partnerships, the University offers the Haisla language in Kitimat Village, while the Tsimshian language is being delivered in Prince Rupert (Margaret Anderson, personal communication, November 12, 1996). The University also has a protocol with the Nisga'a, which is the most fully developed example of a partnership. The Nisga'a operate their own facility, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWN) and, through their partnership with the University of Northern British Columbia, deliver a degree program in both First Nations Studies and Nisga'a Studies, which is First Nations Studies with Nisga'a content. Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a delivers courses throughout the Nass Valley as well as in three other locations including distant Vancouver.<sup>48</sup> Each of the universities offering these distance programs believe that availing First Nations students of the opportunity to take university credit courses from their own communities has contributed to the increased participation and success of Native students in post-secondary education.

Achieving the necessary elements of a successful Native Studies program in terms of accessibility, accountability, and excellence is deterred mainly by the problem of funding. Heth and Guyette, from the American Indian Studies Centre at the University of California at Los Angeles, suggested that Native Studies programs could no longer rely on benevolent, liberal administrations to carry them through programmatically and fiscally (1985:63). In many cases, the myth of a special pot of "Indian money" available somewhere still persists in academia, and program planners and directors have to convince their respective institutions that they deserve regular, hard money support, and that the amount of money must be enough to ensure success (Heth and Guyette, 1985:65). One source, to which some programs turn, is the federal government. Although the budget within Indian Affairs for Native education from kindergarten through high school is unlimited because the department regards that as a statutory obligation, post-secondary support from the federal government to Status Indians and selected post-secondary education programs and services is non-statutory and thus the budget is both fixed and limited.<sup>49</sup> The federal government insists that the responsibility for the post-secondary education of Natives resides with the Provinces through legislation regarding public post-secondary education and training.<sup>50</sup> A Department of Indian Affairs report indicated that

University administrations find themselves fighting, in their view, a constant uphill battle for fiscal survival, with little capacity, or provincial encouragement, for expansion in terms of either staff or program.<sup>51</sup>

The provinces have tended to respond with their own position that they are not responsible for Native education because Natives are a federal responsibility. In the end, universities are pressured to use money from their base budgets to support Native Studies programs without necessarily receiving supplements to that budget. In times of financial restraint and cutbacks throughout universities, this places Native Studies programs in a precarious position. As for outside sources, Trent has been the most successful in procuring endowments and grants, while the other programs attribute only a small portion of their funding to these sources. Thus, most Native Studies programs struggle on with insufficient funding and uncertainty as to their financial futures.

According to Paul Axelrod and John Reid

Those who see the university as merely an ivory tower, somehow levitating above the hard realities of Canadian society, will be surprised at how directly and powerfully the world has impinged upon university life (1989:xxiii).

The need to locate funding sources is the most obvious example of the inability of universities to operate without the support of government and society. The importance of education has always been recognized by Native people, both in terms of ensuring the survival and spread of their language and culture, and in preparing to meet the challenges of the changing society of which they are a part. Native Studies programs at Canadian universities represent the recognition by the dominant society of the value of educating both Natives and non-Natives about First Nations' experience, perspective, culture and language. Yet, academic institutions have learned that fulfilling the needs of both Native and non-Native communities through the provision of a Native Studies program requires on-going dialogue between the university and its constituents. Evidence of the changes to the previously elitist institutions is apparent in the continuing efforts by Native Studies programs to balance academic, cultural, and applied course offerings. Universities have also had to make education more accessible to Native students by offering transition year programs, taking affirmative action measures, and offering distance education. In addition, recruiting Native students does not guarantee that the students will graduate. High attrition rates have led universities to employ Elders to help rural Native students to adjust to the urban academic environment and to overcome the culture shock that many experience. The introduction of Native Studies has proven to be the catalyst for many of these changes.

Apart from efforts to attract Native students, universities have also had to respond to criticism for hiring non-Native professors to teach what First Nations members like Harold Cardinal, the Alberta Cree politician, view as

"White Studies of Indians" (Price, 1978:14). Native Studies programs now involve members of the Native community in the delivery of programs through recognition of Indigenous knowledge as equivalent to academic credentials, and by hiring First Nations as instructors and co-instructors. Universities have also had to make every effort to ensure adequate representation of Natives within their governing structures, and Native Studies programs have been both the prime beneficiary and prime benefactor of these Native representatives. By requiring representation of First Nations on Boards of Governors, Senates, Councils and Committees, universities are making First Nations an integral part of post-secondary education and discontinuing what Foucault terms "the indignity of speaking for others" (Foucault, 1978).

In 1972, the education policy paper of the National Indian Brotherhood recommended the introduction of Indian Studies programs, Aboriginal language courses, Native professors and counsellors, flexible entrance requirements, and representation on governing bodies of institutions of higher learning (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972:10-18). Today it appears that these recommendations are finally coming to fruition. Canadian universities are gradually realizing that to be a fully credible institution within Native communities, mainstream society, and the university at large, in terms of both Western academic and traditional Native knowledge systems, it is critical that they not see credibility in one of these areas as more important than another.<sup>52</sup> In the case of Native Studies, Canadian universities can no longer afford to be the "germ-free sterilized environment" that Harold Cardinal identified in the late sixties (Price, 1978:14). It is hoped that this study demonstrates that Native Studies programs are attempting to respond to the needs of First Nations communities and are now descending from the ivory tower.

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