

**STORY AND STEREOTYPE: ABORIGINAL LITERATURE AS ANTI-RACIST  
EDUCATION**

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I dedicate this work to  
Bill, for his support, patience, and constant encouragement;  
to Stella, for always believing (and insisting);  
to Melissa and Micaela, for showing by their examples, ways to  
live well;  
to Lori, for Thursday nights;  
and to Erika Hasebe-Ludt for many things, but most importantly,  
teaching me how to remember.

## Abstract

Textbooks newly approved for use in secondary schools in Alberta reflect the belief that not only does literature have the power to change and shape our thinking, but also that the non-White voices of our culture need to be heard if Canada is to become a country which truly welcomes and values cultural diversity. The realization that many high school students in the Crowsnest Pass area of Southern Alberta hold negative stereotypes about Canadian Aboriginal people prompted this study which measured how effective studying literature written mainly by Canadian Aboriginal people is as a means of anti-racist education. Forty-three students in grades 10, 11 and 12, 22 females and 21 males, participated in the study. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. Quantitative data, collected from responses on a gender-specific, six-item social scenarios scale, measured the extent to which students were prejudiced against Aboriginal people as pre - and post-tests. Written responses, field notes, journal entries, and interviews provided qualitative data. Though the quantitative evidence is not statistically significant, students in grades 10 and 12 showed decreased post-test scores, while those in grade 11 increased. Within each grade, individual students showed significant attitude changes. In all grades, female students had significantly lower scores than males, both pre - and post-test, evidence that there are perhaps different stages of moral development in females, as suggested by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarula (1986) and Gilligan (1982), than the male stages identified by Kohlberg (1969, 1981). Qualitative data revealed an increased understanding of Aboriginal issues and student attempts to view the world from a non-White perspective. Central to the study are my efforts to come to terms with my own Whiteness as well as help students understand their own positions

of White privilege. This process was an emotional and disturbing experience for us all, yet one that brought growth and engendered important learning. I remain firmly committed to the need to adopt a strong anti-racist stance (rather than a multicultural one) and address racism directly in the classroom. Though difficult, it is perhaps the most important work that I, or any other teacher, may do.

## Preface

Over the years of teaching literature that dealt with racism against Black Americans—Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), and Fannie Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* (1987)—I was bothered by the smugness I detected in my students—the idea that racism was an American problem that was not present here. This is a smugness that Gabriel Bedard (2000) suggests is part of the "multicultural narrative" (p. 48) that forms part of our identity as Canadians. White Canadians visualize Canada as a benevolent, diversely populated, multicultural country with "a history pleasingly devoid of slavery and segregation" (p. 48). This view permits us to comfortably enjoy our position of privilege with little acknowledgement of the racism that is part of Canadian society. My students did not see any similarities in their attitudes toward Aboriginal people and the attitudes of the bigoted southern Whites they found so easy to criticize.

The purpose of my study was to describe the effect of teaching literature written by and about Canadian Aboriginal people on student attitudes about Canadian Aboriginal people. I hoped to reduce the prejudiced and stereotyped thinking with which students viewed Aboriginal people and determine if there were age and gender differences in the attitudes of students toward Aboriginal people both before and after reading Aboriginal literature. To do this I developed units incorporating literature written mainly by Canadian Aboriginal writers for my grade 10, 11, and 12 university entrance stream English classes. I purposely chose Canadian Aboriginal literature because I did not want my students to be able to rationalize any empathy they felt by saying "but they're different – They're American, they're Sioux, etc." I found Thomas King's writings

particularly suited to my purpose not only because of his humour, but also because many of his stories are set in Southern Alberta and refer to place names very familiar to my students such as Brocket, Waterton Lakes, and Fort MacLeod. I wanted my students to identify the Aboriginal people for whom I hoped they would develop empathy with the same people they saw in Pincher Creek and Lethbridge and spoke about in denigrating terms.

Because I am an English teacher and love literature I have a firm belief in the power of story, both in its ability to share information and in its invitation for others to make sense of experience. Teaching *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Goodrich & Hackett, 1956) and Eli Weisel's *Night* (1960) had shown me the powerful effect literature can have on students, especially the ability to feel empathy for how humans ought to treat each other. I have often thought that what we need in Canada is an Anne Frank of the residential schools. The research I found, however, shows that while reading may change attitudes, the changes may be of short duration

I also learned that as Ingrid Johnston (1994) warns that it is not enough to simply expose students to stories with the expectation that they will identify and align themselves with the main character whose experiences will shift their assumptions about another race or culture. It is important that teachers foster a "dual orientation" (Stephens, cited in Johnston, 1996, p. 110) where, as readers become aware that their perceptions and attitudes are being conditioned, they question the narrative stance that they are being led to take. In this way students can be helped to challenge their stereotypes and prejudices in the classroom.

This was brought home to me as I was introducing Thomas King's short story "Borders" (1993) to a grade 10 class. I was dismayed to find that they had read the story the previous year. When I asked them what the story was about, all could remember the situation: the narrator and his mother, travelling from a reserve in Alberta to Utah, are stuck in the no-man's land between the border crossings when the mother declares her citizenship as Blackfoot, not Canadian. When I ask why the mother does this, what the point of the story is, they tell me that it is about pride and stubbornness. When I asked "Pride about what?" they were not sure. The point of the story, the artificiality of the boundaries imposed on Native peoples by White colonizers, had not been taught.

This also shows the problem of simply exposing students to multicultural literature. The newly approved textbooks for English have a wonderful selection of Aboriginal literature, and literature from around the world, but unless the discussion of the literature helps students identify the White European perspective from which they view the world the literature may only serve to reinforce differences, not increase understanding. This is one reason why it is important to adopt an anti-racist rather than multicultural stance in the classroom.

I started the study by administering a Social Scenarios Scale that asks students to respond to six situations where prejudiced behavior toward Aboriginal people is displayed. Students could choose to agree or disagree with the action and express their feelings or remain silent.

I used the pre- and post-test scores on the scale to assess the students' attitudes toward Canadian Aboriginal people before and after studying the literature selections. Students handed in journal entries in response to the literature and the issues we were

discussing and I analyzed these for themes. At the end of the units I interviewed the students, asking them what effect the unit activities and reading the literature had had on them and also analyzed the interview transcripts according to themes. As well I kept field notes and a daily journal about what was happening in the class. This proved to be much more of a difficult process than I anticipated. I found that the process of trying to record what was happening in class itself influenced what did take place. A positive effect was that it led to further discussion and student involvement in the study itself when students noticed that I had written something down and wanted to know why. A drawback was that I lost spontaneity as I tried to both record what was happening and respond to it. Sometimes reliving the racism I detected in some of my students in my own journaling was emotionally painful. At the end of the study I used the surveys, participant journal entries, and interviews as a means of triangulating the data obtained from my field notes and journal entries.

The pre-test surveys showed that both male and female students at all three grade levels held negative prejudices against Aboriginal people. Of a possible low score of six (least prejudiced) and a high of 24 (most prejudiced) the grade 10 girls were less prejudiced (scoring 9.56) than were the boys, who had an average score of 12. The grade 11 girls had a score of 9.71 while the boys had an average of 10.67. Despite having had more schooling than the 10s and 20s, the survey results reflected the 30s' increased level of prejudice. The girls had an average score of 10 and the boys 12.45.

In all classes I introduced the topic of stereotyping with an exercise on the board: The students had to give three responses to each of the prompts "Hockey Players all/always...", "Teenagers all/always...", "Aboriginal People all/always..." and hand



them in. Their responses indicated a high degree of prejudice against Aboriginal people in levels similar to what Mackie (1974, cited in Ponting 1998, p. 276) found in his 1968-70 Edmonton study. He found 30% of respondents emphasized laziness; 29% poverty; 29% lack of education; 20% oppression by others; 28% lack of cleanliness; 21% excessive consumption of alcohol; and 15% lack of ambition. To these my students added what they perceived as special privileges (cheap smokes, for example) and the fear that some felt when in the presence of Aboriginal people. Where only a few of the responses from grade 11 and 12 were non-derogatory in that they focused on traditional stereotypes: "long hair," "bows and arrows," "pow wows," "jingle dancers," a larger number of the grade 10s commented positively on the retention of traditions. The grade 10s also used "creative" and "peaceful" as descriptors and were the only ones who saw Aboriginal people as victims—20.5%.

In all classes I introduced the topic of stereotyping with Maria McLean's article, "Stereotypes are for 'Others'" (2001) which discusses many of the stereotypes we Whites have for everyone but ourselves, a point the students quickly got. Unfortunately, despite their ability to see the harm in stereotyping, most of the students were unable or unwilling to link that general disapproval with their own ideas. From this point, I used a variety of selections and assignments at each grade level. The grade 10s for example, responded to excerpts from Richard Wagamese's "Keeper'n Me" (2000) with narratives that revealed the empathy they felt for the protagonist who was virtually kidnapped by social service workers and not reunited with his family for many years. In their interviews they said that Thomas King's *Medicine River* (1989) had the greatest effect on their attitudes.

The grade 11s responded to Thomas King's novel *Truth and Bright Water* (1999) with writing that showed their identification with the main characters. One of the characters makes the statement that "Being White is the same as being blonde," and I used that as a starting point to introduce the idea of White privilege. We read Peggy MacIntosh's (1989) list of privileges that White people take for granted and the class responded with visual representations of White privilege. Two boys, for example, cut all the pictures of non-white people from a *People* magazine and surrounded them with pictures of White people from the same magazine to show the lack of representation non-White people face in our culture. Other projects and writings encouraged me to believe that grade 10s and 11s' attitudes were changing, that they were becoming less prejudiced.

Again with the grade 12s, I used a variety of selections. It was Ferguson's "Apartheid: the Politics of Treaty-Making"(1999) in which Ferguson compares South Africa's apartheid with the Canadian system of isolating and excluding its Aboriginal people on reserves that made me more aware of one aspect of my unconscious racism. Ferguson's discussion of enfranchisement—the voluntary relinquishment of Native identity—introduced a concept that was as foreign to me as it was to the students. Like many of my students I assumed that assimilation was a desired goal. It would end the problems of the reserves—Whites and Aboriginal people would all get along on White terms.

Beverly Tatum (1992) in her work teaching undergraduate courses on the psychology of racism, warns that the discussion of "issues of oppression often generates powerful emotional responses in students that range from guilt to shame to anger and despair" (p. 2). Withdrawal, avoiding contact with the topic of racism, is a strategy for

dealing with the discomfort experienced. After only a few weeks and after a class discussion in which he became very angry, one of my grade 12 students dropped the course, telling the principal that I was using him as a guinea pig.

Though the writing and projects that the grade 12s handed in gave me hope that the material we were reading and class discussion was affecting a change in their attitudes, the interviews revealed a frighteningly different story. Two of the boys openly expressed hatred for not only Aboriginal people, but of Jews, Blacks, and homosexuals. They saw no reason to allow people from any of these groups to live. Their comments demonstrated that as Sefa Dei (2000) points out, race, class, gender, and sexuality are interrelated concepts, systems of oppression that intersect.

The grade 12s were most vocal of all the grades about what they perceived to be the economic benefits of being Aboriginal. They expressed the resentment they felt about programs designed to even the playing field between Aboriginal people and Whites, especially upset that they would have to get student loans while Aboriginal students would not.

Though there is qualitative evidence to suggest that the process of engaging in the literature, writing about it, and discussing it brings about an awareness of issues that had previously been unrecognized, only some of the quantitative data support my hypothesis.

Both the boys and girls in the grade 10 class showed a reduction in their levels of prejudice as did the grade 12 class as a whole. Both the boys and girls in the grade eleven class showed an increase, rather than a decrease in their levels of prejudice. Within each class and gender are individual reductions and increases in the level of prejudice that reveal the complexity of both the issue and the responses.

One striking result of my study is the difference in measured levels of prejudice in male and female students. In all three-grade levels, females scored significantly lower than did males.

Studying Aboriginal literature with students does not, unfortunately, automatically reduce the negative stereotypes that many students hold about Aboriginal people. It does, however, provide an opening into a dialogue that must take place.

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## Chapter 1: The Journey Begins: From Ireland to Canada

*Journeys have a way of finding our pathways.  
Whether sought or circumstantial, each journey shapes how we walk in  
the world.*

—Karen Meyer, 2002

*Of course, Dermot, or Neil, or Andrew, or any young man, could not walk through  
this neighborhood at night. It wouldn't be safe. This is where one of the boys on  
Andrew's football team was killed last week.*

The voice is that of my hostess, Mary O'Boyle, and we are driving through what looks like a pleasant suburb of Belfast, distinguished from other neighborhoods only by its red, white, and blue painted curbs, and proliferation of flag poles flying the Union Jack and the Red Hand of Ulster. It is not the notorious Shankill; I see no coils of barbed wire, no armed soldiers such as I have seen on other streets. Mary's quiet remark brings home the reality of living amidst the religious tension that exists in Northern Ireland today. I am saddened and appalled. It is one thing to read about the death of a Catholic boy at the hands of the Protestants; it is another to see the sidewalk on which he died and to hear what living and going about what one does to live entails in this strife-torn country.

I also feel guilt and shame. My background is English and Scots-Irish. My father's family was Ulster Scots, transported to Ireland by William the Conqueror in his effort to wipe out the Irish by breeding them with the Scots, a race he valued almost as little as he valued the Irish. My great grandfather left County Antrim for Canada sometime in the mid 1800s. It would be gratifying to think that he did so as a protest against religious intolerance and unfairness, but by all reports he remained a rabid Orange Man until his death. Now, nearing the end of July 2002, the season of the Orange Men's parades is

coming to a close. Almost certainly, I share DNA with some of those who have marched and expressed their hatred of their Catholic neighbours.

Mary O'Boyle is Catholic, and it is from her perspective that I see Northern Ireland. I see only the hateful Protestant wall murals glorifying the Ulster Defense League. I do not know of the existence of equally ugly Catholic murals until I buy a postcard at the airport. I see the Protestant neighborhoods with their insulting and provocative curbs painted red, white, and blue and flagpoles flying the Union Jack and the Red Hand of Ulster; I see the church that Mary's family attends, newly rebuilt after it was bombed. I see no evidence that the Irish Republican Army even exists. Yet Mary admitted to working for civil rights with the IRA in the late 60s. She left when the violence began. Despite her perspective, Mary has raised five children to be tolerant, generous, and forgiving, raised them at a time when a child's lateness could mean he was dead, a victim of Protestant aggression; raised them at a time when they, as the only Catholic family in their farming community, did not sleep at night for worrying that they would be singled out by the Protestants because they presented such an easy target. I can only admire her generosity of spirit.

It is raining as I leave Ireland, a fine mist that blurs the green of the countryside. The rain reflects my mood, sad and pensive. I know that it will be years, if ever, before the divisions between Catholic and Protestant fade away. Yet, I think of what Mary has accomplished and hope that there are many more like her.

My thoughts turn to Canada and my own community, The Crowsnest Pass, a cluster of small towns nestled in the Rocky Mountains in the south-western corner of Alberta. Its people are a cosmopolitan mixture of many nationalities, immigrants from

many countries brought to the area by the promise of employment in the coal mines, who have gradually let go of early prejudices and formed a community known for its acceptance of difference.

A few days after I return to Canada, I attend the funeral of a loved and respected Japanese Canadian woman whose family has lived in the community for many years. The two sides of the school gymnasium where the funeral is held are divided into relatives and community members. One side is predominantly Japanese Canadian, the members of the large family from which she came, clad in black, grief stricken, for this woman has died an untimely death. The other side is a mixture of different coloured clothes and faces, as members of the European, Indo-Canadian, and Asian communities gather together to pay tribute to this woman and support her family. Their coming together is a metaphor for the way the different nationalities and ethnicities in the Crowsnest Pass have blended as time has passed, blurring many distinctions of race and religion.

At the reception held afterwards, a member of a local board talks about his experiences: "The longer I am on the board," he says, "the more prejudiced I am becoming against Natives. And my best friend in high school was Native."

I struggle with this concept. This is not the time or place to debate the benefits established in 1877 by the signing of Treaty 7 between the Blackfoot of Southern Alberta and Queen Victoria. "Who was your best friend?" I ask. He tells me, giving a French Canadian name. I, too, went to school with members of this family. I am surprised and admit that I had never thought of this family as Native, although I know they are.

"You should see him now," my friend says. "He wears braids and a buckskin jacket."

Later that day I am talking to a member of the golf course who has just returned from a holiday in Okanogan. "You should see their Indians," he says. "They're awesome. That's not to say that we don't have some good Indians, too, but these guys, they really have it together. They own the golf course and all the land around it, and they run it."

A microcosm of the attitudes towards different races in the adult community. At their best accepting, blessing mixed marriages, adopting the customs of others as their own. At their worst patronizing and openly racist, especially to the Native community. If these are the attitudes of the adult community, is it surprising to find the same attitudes in the children of that community?

How did this community come about? When did the "multiculturalism that was a fact of life in the Pass before it was a Canadian buzzword" (Bly, 2003, p. B8) develop? Has that multiculturalism included Aboriginal people?

#### The Crowsnest Pass and Its People

The Crowsnest Pass is a valley cutting through the Rocky Mountains on the Continental Divide of North America. It extends from Elko, BC in the west, to Lundbreck, AB in the east. The Alberta side of the Pass is the area drained by the Crowsnest River and its tributaries. This river begins in Crowsnest Lake and flows eastward through the high Rocky Mountains, across the lower foothills and out onto the plains. The river forms a broad valley where the towns of Coleman, Blairmore, and Bellevue and the villages of Frank and Hillcrest were built approximately 100 years ago, around the mines built to remove coal from the ground. The mining industry remains the primary employer in the Pass, with workers commuting to mines on the BC side of the Pass. At present, no mines are open on the Alberta side.

Although Aboriginal people in the Crowsnest Pass make up less than 1% of the population (165 people of a total population of 6,135) (Statistics Canada, 2001), this was not always the case. The Crowsnest Pass contains over 250 pre-contact campsites, the most ever found in a mountain valley in Alberta, indicating that the valley was very important to pre-contact people. In the opinion of archeologist Brian Reeves (1979), the valley is the most important valley of all in terms of pre-contact settlement, and is of national significance. Over the past 10,000 years or so, some five hundred generations of pre-contact people frequented the Crowsnest, "hunted the valley grasslands, the forest and alpine meadows, fished in the lakes, travelled back and forth to British Columbia, walked the ridges, were born, loved, had babies, and eventually died" (Reeves, 1979, p. 19).

The first definite record of human presence appeared around 11,000 years ago in the Rocky Mountains. In the Pass this is marked by a find of a few broken tools identified as belonging to a distinctive culture known as Clovis, a culture that elsewhere in North America utilized a very sophisticated stone tool technology to hunt and kill bison, horse, caribou, sheep, and mammoth during the last centuries of the ice age. These early peoples were replaced by a series of hunting cultures characterized by their distinctive technologies, chiefly by the styles of their spear points. The first of these, the Old Cordilleran (8,000-7,000 BCE), are represented by artifacts found at one site near Burnis, one of two known sites in Alberta. The spear points of these people are made of obsidian and basalt, volcanic rocks which occur only in Yellowstone National Park and near the Columbia River in Washington and Oregon, indicating an extensive trade and

travel network in operation 10,000 years ago, which continued until historic times (Reeves, 1979).

Around 7,000 BCE, the Agate Basin culture appeared at 14 sites in the Pass. Originally Plains residents, where they hunted bison and other ungulates as early as 8,000 BC, they moved into the mountain valleys, displacing earlier people as a result of their own displacement by the northern expansion of the Cody people, proficient bison hunters originating in Colorado and Texas. Agate Basin then became a distinctive mountain culture, hunting giant bison, sheep, and possibly caribou, and travelling extensively back and forth over the mountain passes. Despite deterioration in climate, the Agate Basin people flourished, spreading out from the mountains to displace the Cody bison hunters on the Plains (Reeves, 1979).

The improvement of the climate around 7,500 years ago saw the spread of a new culture known as Mummy Cave westward across the Plains from the Eastern Woodlands. Originally occupying both the plains and the mountains, after 3,000 BCE it was restricted to the mountain valleys. The Mummy Cave peoples brought with them the atlatl, a spear thrower which allowed them to kill game more efficiently than peoples who used simple throwing spears. Around this time, the climate again improved, with mild winters, low snowfalls, and an increase in mean annual temperatures of two-three degrees. As a result, valley grasslands expanded and forests shrunk, leading to an expansion in both the bison population and their human hunters. The yearly activities of the Mummy Cave peoples centered on the hunting and trapping of bison in bogs, springs, and corrals, and in Crowsnest Lake, a summer campsite. The Livingstone Quarries, where pre-contact

Aboriginal peoples obtained stone for use in making their spear points, scrapers, knives, and other tools, came into use at this time (Reeves, 1979).

Around 3,000 BCE, the climate again deteriorated when the first in a series of small alpine glaciations occurred, causing the grasslands to shrink. On the Plains the McKean peoples moving in from the Great Basin displaced the original peoples. Because the McKean were unable to penetrate the mountain valleys, the old Mummy Cave culture survived until 1,500 to 1,000 BCE. The McKean, who at first had a limited knowledge of the use of bison jumps, adapted, becoming over a 1,500 year period a Plains culture known as Pelican Lake.

The Pelican Lake people constituted a major pre-contact settlement period in the Crowsnest Pass. They continued the pattern set by earlier people, with large summer camps at Crowsnest Lake, and fall and spring camps adjacent to the winter rangelands in the Bellevue/Burmis area. Summer activities at the lake included hunting bison, sheep, deer and elk, trapping beaver, cottontail and other furbearers, and fishing for whitefish and suckers. They built stone weirs and also used nets and fish traps, and probably had boats. The bison, which they and earlier peoples hunted, were a distinct mountain subspecies. Winter settlement continued the pattern also set by earlier peoples and concentrated in the Bellevue/Burmis area. Two stone tipi rings, radiocarbon dated to 600 BCE, have been found in Bellevue, as well as a wide variety of artifacts, butchered bison bones, fireplaces and pits. The Pelican Lake people were not restricted to the mountains, but also hunted with their Plains relatives at bison jumps such as Head-Smashed-In, and traded and travelled extensively into Montana for obsidian from Yellowstone. The use of the Livingstone Quarries reached its maximum during these times. Using only stone and



bone tools, the Pelican Lake people removed limestone cap rock up to three feet thick and built adits (access or drainage passages) more than twelve feet deep in order to mine the outcrops of silicious rock called *chert*, which works easily into stone tools (Reeves, 1979).

On the Plains, shortly after the time of Christ, the Besant people from the Minnesota-Iowa area displaced the Pelican Lake peoples. The Besant, who "may well be ancestral to the Blackfoot of the Plains" (Reeves, 1979, p. 18), were, like the early McKean peoples, unable to penetrate the mountain valleys. Though Besant sites occur as far west as Lundbreck Falls, on the east edge of the Crowsnest Pass, Pelican Lake sites of the same age occur at Burmis, a little further to the west. As in earlier times, contact occurred between Pelican Lake and the Besant, who brought with them new technologies and a complex social and economic system.

Around 800 AD the bow and arrow appeared in association with the Avonlea culture, a culture distantly related to the Pelican Lake peoples. Avonlea peoples were sophisticated bison hunters and superb stone tool craftsmen. Their stone projectile points were the best made since those made some 8,000 years ago. The Avonlea occupied both Plains and mountains, often utilizing new locations for their camps, suggesting changing patterns in settlement, travel, and trade (Reeves, 1979).

The Kootenai succeeded the Avonlea. Their settlement over the past 1,000 years was characterized by extensive travel between the eastern slopes of the Rockies and the Kootenay Valley, where they established their major winter camps. Except at Crowsnest Lake, where major summer camps still continued, Crowsnest sites are few in number and widely scattered. The Kootenai were still hunting and camping in the Crowsnest when

they met Peter Fidler at the Gap of the Oldman River in the winter of 1792-93. Fidler camped with them for some time and his is the first European reference to the Crowsnest Pass, which the Kootenai said was one of their preferred passes through the mountains (Reeves, 1979). Kootenai tradition refers to a band of Kootenai known as the Ravens' Nest Indians who claimed the Crowsnest Pass as their traditional territory. They told Fidler and other explorers, such as Alexander Henry, that the Blackfoot had forced them westward out of the foothills where they used to winter. Changed patterns of settlement in the Crowsnest Pass, the small sites, and the virtual absence of white trade goods in the valley in contrast to the Plains, suggests that the displacement of the Kootenai by the Blackfoot occurred around AD 1,000 (Reeves, 1979).

Sadly, little remains today to mark the existence of unnamed generations of Aboriginal people and the rich life they led in the Crowsnest Pass. They left little record of their passing; only in the faded rock paintings on walls such as the cave of the Oldman River, the source of Crowsnest Lake, do we get a glimpse of their thoughts and beliefs. A former member of the North West Mounted Police at Fort Macleod, T. Clarke (1979), describes the cave as he saw it on an outing in 1896. In an attempt to be humorous, he unwittingly reveals the cruel and unfeeling attitude of the dominant White settlers:

The walls of the cave contained paintings done in green and black paints drawn by Indian artists, the colors being bright and undimmed by time, there being bear, wolves, buffalo, elk, etc., shown. One large picture portrayed a group of sleeping Indians, their feet turned toward a fire while a short distance away a number of other Indians, armed with tomahawks and war clubs are seen creeping upon the defenceless sleep drugged unfortunates, soon to be made what is called "good Indians." (p. 26)

Ironically, the one mountain in the Pass that bears an Aboriginal name, Mount Tecumseh, which rises to 2,510 metres west of Coleman, was named by the White settlers to honour Tecumseh, the Shawnee chief who fought on the side of the British in the War of 1812. No Blackfoot or Blood chiefs are similarly honoured, and had Tecumseh only gained fame for his achievements advancing the cause of his people, neither, I suspect, would he have been.

Though we in the Crowsnest Pass do not readily acknowledge it, there remains "a thread of continuity" (Reeves, 1979, p. 19) between the first peoples of the valley and those of us who still occupy it. The abundance of natural resources, "the bison in the grasslands, the deer and elk of the forest, the sheep on the mountain slopes and fish in the lake," (Reeves, 1979, p. 19) an abundance not found in similar quantities in other mountain valleys, brought the Native peoples to the Crowsnest Pass. This abundance of natural resources resulted from the Pass's unique climate and geography. The west winds that are a characteristic of the Pass helped create and maintain the upper forests and grasslands. These winds occur so frequently because of the Pass's east-west tunnel-like topography, created by the formation of the mountains eons earlier. This early mountain building activity also brought to the surface coal, the mining of which became the reason for European settlement of the Pass (Reeves, 1979). Thus the abundance of natural resources continues to bring many to the Crowsnest Pass and in the mining activities of the twentieth century can be heard an echo of the early Pelican Lake people quarrying chert for their own use and for trade. As Reeves points out, "In a curious roundabout way the reason for settlement in the past and today is the same" (p. 19). Parallels between early Native settlement locations and those of the present can also be seen. Early Native

society, too, had its strongest ties across the Pass, rather than to the north or south, and Pass people continue to consider themselves a distinct community (Reeves, p .19). The theme continues to be one of "boom or bust," stability and rapid change, a pattern in which we see "a succession of people moving into the Pass from the Plains to mingle and displace the earlier groups and develop distinct cultures" (Reeves, p. 19). This 10,000-year-old pattern was continued in the last 100 years by the arrival and mingling of different ethnic groups who originally came to work in the mines. Unfortunately, the descendants of the original inhabitants of the valley, the now displaced Aboriginal people, have not returned. They are notable in their absence.

The 2003/2004 Crowsnest Pass phone book contains only one surname that is easily identified as Aboriginal. The 165 who identify themselves as having "Aboriginal identity" on the 2001 census have European surnames. Many are descendants of the Lee family.

William Samuel Lee was born in England in 1830 and made his way north from Ohio to Canada in 1867 .After building a trading post at Lee Creek near Cardston, and operating a trading post near Pincher Creek for the Hudson Bay Company, he settled on the shore of Lees Lake, as it is now known. In 1871 he "married a native girl" (Drain, 1979, p. 662). Before long, his holdings amounted to 25,000 acres and his livestock included 2,000 head of cattle and a large number of horses. He was the first to bring cattle to the Pass. On a fishing trip in the early 1880s, Lee, along with his son Henry, discovered the Sulphur Springs at Frank, whose mineral water was regarded as a cure for many ailments. It was said to be stronger than the water at the Banff Hot Spring, and to have more effective curing qualities (Kerr, 1979, p. 68). There he built a boarding house/hotel,

the first in the Pass, and dances at the Springs provided the highlight of each winter's entertainment for settlers. Lee built a school for his growing family, the first in this part of the country, and among many other accomplishments, discovered oil in the Waterton Lakes district. The original ranch building, moved from Lees Lake to his northern holdings north of Burmis, still stands, perhaps the oldest house in the southern part of the province (Drain, 1979, p. 662). William Lee died in 1896, leaving a family of three girls and five boys, none of whom now survive. After her husband's death, "his widow [unnamed] returned to her people and remarried, dying in 1950" (Drain, 1979, p. 662). A daughter, Martha, married Henry Cardinal, and one of their descendants is the much-honoured architect Douglas Cardinal, considered by some to be the Crowsnest Pass's most famous son. Today, local historical publications make no more than a mention of William Lee's unnamed Aboriginal wife, and certainly, no acknowledgement of what must have been her very considerable contribution to her husband's success.

Very little mention of local Aboriginal people can be found in the archives of the Blairmore newspaper, *The Enterprise*. In the years before the First and Second World Wars, the paper was made up of local advertising, a few national, provincial, and local news stories, and syndicated stories and articles designed to appeal to women. One of them, in the November 25, 1909 edition, is entitled "Dance of False Faces: 'An Iroquois Society in Honour of Mysterious People'" (no p. no.).

The December 16th edition report from the court of Chief Justice Sifton names the "Indians sentenced for horse stealing" some of whom received sentences of three years; one of them, Nelson Horns, "for many years a Mounted Police Scout," was sentenced to eight years. In contrast, an unnamed young [White] man with a branded calf

in his possession received a sentence of two years at Edmonton, despite a petition for a suspended sentence signed by 1044 people in the district—500 from Fort Macleod.

Under the headline, "The Government Report of Good Work Done by the R.N.W.M.P in West" (*The Enterprise*, January 27, 1910), Superintendent R. B. Dean reports "the Indians generally in the division to be extremely well-behaved except when their inordinate thirst for liquor gets them into trouble" (no. p. no.) His counterpart, Superintendent J. O. Wilson of Lethbridge "expressed the opinion that the attendance of Indians for exhibition purposes at races and fairs, when they are dressed in all their old time costumes unsettles them" (no p. no.).

These reports reveal some of the attitudes of the early settlers of the Crowsnest Pass and surrounding area to the Aboriginal peoples whose lands they had appropriated for their own. At best, they are patronizing and condescending, reducing Aboriginal people to the status of not quite bright children who must be protected from themselves for their own good. At worst, they are callous and punitive. There is no mention of Nelson Horns' fate after eight years in jail in Edmonton.

The Ku Klux Klan and the Labour Movement in the Crowsnest Pass. When the Canadian Pacific Railway extended a line through the Crowsnest Pass, it became possible to mine the coal seams that had been known about for at least ten years. Thirty-one mines were opened before 1920 and they needed workers. Initially, the Pass communities that grew along the railway line were essentially British in composition, with only a few Eastern European or Asian immigrants. This makeup reflected the ethnic and racial biases of Canada's immigration policy that was based on a race theory and reflected an attempt to apply Darwin's theories of biological evolution to human society." Races"

were thought to represent different stages of the evolutionary scale: the white "race" was superior to the black, yellow, or red "races." Teutonic Northern Europeans were considered superior to Slavic and Jewish people and to Southern Europeans. These racial and ethnic prejudices were also reinforced by strong religious prejudices; English Canada's dominant Anglo-Protestant society had grave reservations about non-Protestant immigrants (Palmer, 1985, p. 7). These widely held prejudices and the belief in a "world-wide racial hierarchy" influenced the public response to each immigrant group that came to Western Canada (Palmer, 1985, p. 7), and this was very apparent in the Pass, as more and more non-British workers arrived.

By 1911, the British population of the Pass was about 45%. French, Austro-Hungarian, Italian, Czech, Slovak, Russian, Belgian, and Polish people were significant minorities. Approximately 130 Chinese people and two Japanese people lived in the Pass (Census Canada 1911, cited in Cass, 1979). There is no mention of the presence of Aboriginal people. Class and occupational barriers were tightly drawn, ethnic residential segregation obvious, and labour solidarity and radicalism developing (Cass, 1979). The communities reflected an obvious social stratification reflecting the hierarchical ranking of company employees in the collieries. These social divisions were often largely the result of linguistic and ethnic differences. An ethnic caste system developed in the mines where most skilled mechanics, certified miners and supervisors were Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian—"Whites"—and underground and surface labourers, and miners' helpers were "foreigners"—those people of other ethnicities, especially from central or southern Europe (Cass, 1979). This segregation of non-English-speaking miners into less attractive jobs was reinforced by government regulations that stated that no person unable to speak

and read English could hold a position of any responsibility in the mine as he might "through his ignorance" endanger the lives of others (Cass, 1979).

Despite this segregation, both English and non-English speaking miners were active in the attempt to improve conditions in the mines. At first, the presence of large numbers of non-English speaking miners complicated the drive for unionization and working class solidarity. The mine owners took advantage of ethnic differences to increase their power. By the end of World War I, non-English speaking workers had become the backbone of the union movement. United Mine Worker organizers had to be able to speak a number of languages and official circulars and notices were published in different languages.

The mine owners wrongly linked the immigrant workers and labour agitation. When union trouble rose to the boiling point, it was usually assumed that "foreigners" were largely responsible. In most cases this was inaccurate, or unfounded, ignoring the role of the British (Cass, p. 22).

The Crowsnest Pass Strike of 1932 contributed to the breakdown of the religious and ethnic barriers that existed between the members of different immigrant groups themselves, and between the immigrant groups and the "True Blue British" (Sher, 1983, p. 46) population. This was the eventual result of what has been called "a showdown" between the Ku Klux Klan and most of its principal targets—non-English speaking immigrants (many of whom were Catholic), labour unions, and communists (Sher, 1983, p. 45). The United Mine Workers, which had been broken in the Pass in 1924 (Seager, 1977, p. 1), had amended its constitution in 1921 to ban members of the clan from holding membership (Sher, 1983). The newly formed Mine Workers Union of Canada (MWUC),



affiliated to the Communist Party-led Workers' Unity League, represented the workers in the mines of the Crowsnest Pass. Company threats to cut wages in 1932 and an attempt to break the union led to a wildcat strike in one mine that quickly spread to other mines. Though the strike was painted as "a Red conspiracy and a Workers' Unity League plot by the enemies of the miners," the Pass strike was launched by the rank and file over local grievances, one of them being job discrimination (Seager, 1977, pp. 4-5). When attempts at bargaining failed, the miners turned to demonstration, and May Day of 1932 saw a huge mass rally, with schools closed to allow even children to participate. When West Canadian Collieries (a French-owned company) revealed plans to reopen the Bellevue mine with "scab" labour, the battle lines between the striking miners and the owners were drawn. While 300 miners manned the picket lines at the pithead, 75 heavily armed members of the RCMP were brought in from Lethbridge, and they, along with a number of "blacklegs," faced the picketers. The battle continued for two days, with upwards of 1,200 men and women from the towns, "grimly determined that the cause of the miners should not fail" (Seager, 1977, p. 6), manning the lines at the height of the confrontation. Two Imperial Army veterans, Bill Knight and Sam Patterson, drilled the strikers in military formation. The RCMP did not open fire, "probably to avoid the public outcry which followed the slaughter of three striking colliers in Estevan, Saskatchewan, in 1931" (Seager, 1977, p. 6), but their batons were used freely, and at least two women were quite badly battered. More than a dozen strikers were arrested, but the owners admitted defeat and closed the mine indefinitely on May 12 (Seager, 1977, pp. 5-6).

In Coleman, the employers turned to other tactics, carefully nurturing divisions among the strikers along ethnic and political lines, and using members of the clergy and

the "Citizens' League" to further their aims. The League spearheaded a vicious campaign of political racism "which sought to break the union under the guise of a crusade against Communism and foreign domination" (Seager, 1977, p. 6). The Ku Klux Klan arrived to help (Sher, 1983). Right-wingers who used the Klan's racist ideas to justify their refusal to continue the strike heckled Anglo-Saxon miners who supported the strike. Two union leaders driving to a meeting charged that a Klansman had fired on them. A Klan member helped provoke a riot at another union meeting, and crosses were burned on hillsides. The owners achieved victory when the miners voted 292 to 237 to return to work. In the aftermath, company officials blacklisted 100 miners (Seager, 1977).

Perhaps hardened by the revenge taken by the Coleman owners, the Blairmore miners did not give up. In a letter to the *Blairmore Enterprise*, June 16, 1932, four union officials wrote:

...the police ...have in fact been quite zealous when it came to arresting miners, and we can cite many unfair prosecutions and flimsy frame-ups, while on the other hand, a secret organization based on ignorance and bigotry, viz. the K.K.K., have been burning crosses, sending threatening letters to miners' homes. The secretary of our union, Mr. Stokaluk, was shot at from ambush, and not one arrest was made... We understand that the same people that are fostering [the Citizens' League] also back the K.K.K., and are undoubtedly an open expression of that secret terroristic K.K.K. This organization is undoubtedly out to smash our strike, our union, and all working class organizations... ...we miners...wish to assure the Communist Party that we will give it every assistance in the struggle against the K.K.K. or other organizations such as the "Citizens" League...

For the Blairmore Miners: Chairman W. Peters; Secretary. J. Krkosky Jr.

For the Bellevue Miners: Chairman J. Price; Secretary F. Dugdale (no p. no.)

This same *Blairmore Enterprise* insisted that less than one percent of the strikers were English, despite the fact that the strike committee was predominantly English and that Anglo-Saxons had taken their places, along with the foreigners, on the Bellevue picket line. Although 17 of the 21 names on the MWUC scab list were English or Welsh, these represented only a fraction of the Anglo-Saxon community. All attempts to organize the "True Blue" British were doomed to failure (Seager, 1977, p. 7). In the opinion of one Women's Auxiliary member, Julia Johnson, the strike did, in fact, unite the traditionally divided community: "In this struggle for right, racial and personal prejudice has been swept aside....We are one big happy family" (Seager, 1977, p. 7).

The fact that the entire working-class community, "employed and unemployed, male and female, young and old" (Seager, 1977, p. 8), was included in the struggle did much to break down the barriers between the various groups in the community. The Blairmore Women's Auxiliary, led by Mary North, had 76 members and was tirelessly involved in relief work for the striking miners and their families. A 133-member youth wing of the MWUC was set up and the Miners' Children's club organized picnics and other outings. The adults attended occasional dances at the Frank Hall and participated in sporting events organized by the union. At least once the miners played a match (which they won) against an RCMP team, a match which one observer likened to "an intervening peace in time of war" (Seager, 1977, p. 8).

Though the striking miners remained determined, they were also hungry. Municipal relief for the destitute was \$4.24 per month, for a diet of flour, rice, porridge,

beans, sugar, lard, and prunes. Hunting by non-working miners had quickly depleted the game available in the Pass (Seager, 1977, p. 3). On the first payday following their return to work, the Coleman miners donated \$283 to their still striking comrades. Another "communist-front" organization, the Farmers Unity League in the Lethbridge, Vegreville, and Red Deer areas, made important contributions.

The miners continued to hold mass demonstrations and picket the homes of the mine owners. The province's United Farmers of Alberta government retaliated by banning parades in the Pass and by ignoring a delegation of 100 miners in Edmonton on July 18. The next day 100 demonstrators were arrested in defiance of the law. The miners were threatening a 100% picket that would have banned firebosses from entering the mines to keep them operational, when Inspector Duncan of the RCMP called a truce and prevailed upon Premier Brownlee to intervene. This he did, and the strike, "the collective expression of a people fed up with the kind of life-style imposed upon them by economic depression, the federal government, and corporate totalitarianism" (Seager, 1977, p. 5), was officially over on Labour Day, 1932.

In municipal elections the following February, a slate of miners' candidates defeated candidates backed by the Citizens' League and formed the Workers' Town Council. May Day was proclaimed a civic holiday (still celebrated when I was a child) and the town's main street was named "Tim Buck Boulevard" in honour of the imprisoned Communist Leader. The strike may not have caused the downfall of the Ku Klux Klan in Alberta, but it did show that "when the people held their ranks, the Klan's racism made little headway" (Sher, 1983, p. 47). In the words of Mrs. A. Lucas, one of the five women arrested during the confrontation on the picket lines, "In spite of the KKK, police terror

and boss agents, we are standing as solid as before..." (Sher, 1983, p .47). Most importantly for future generations of the Crowsnest Pass, "the divisions along national lines ('white men' and 'foreign') were wiped out" (Seager, 1977, p. 10).

Despite the inactivity of the mines on the Alberta side of the border, the Crowsnest Pass is still a "union town." The legacy of the early miners' struggles permeated my childhood. Though we did not fully understand what was meant by a "strike," "scab" was the worst of the pejorative insults we hurled at each other as children. We were fascinated by the tales of burning crosses on the hillside, but could find no one who would do more than acknowledge that they "had heard about them." It was all in the past, and best forgotten. A local historian, herself a teenager at the time of the strike, does not recall any mention of the Ku Klux Klan, but thinks that at least some of the cross burnings were pranks perpetrated by some of the more adventurous of her high school classmates. The legacy of the Klan perhaps lived on in the "Ghost Riders," a group of teenage boys wearing white hoods and mounted on horseback, who for a period in the fifties irritated the citizens of Bellevue and Hillcrest with the mischief they got up to. We, of course, romanticized the exploits of these boys and they took on a mystique similar to Dumas's Three Musketeers in our young minds. It was not until the civil rights movement of the 60s, when I was a young teenager, that I realized the horrible significance of white hoods and burning crosses.

A former resident of the Pass, interviewed about growing up in the Pass in the forties, commented, "You didn't think twice about the colour of someone's skin," (Bly, 2003, p. B8). That may be an idealized memory, as few non-White families lived in the Pass. I like to think that growing up in the multitude of different languages and cultures

that surrounded me as a child gave me an appreciation and acceptance of differences that extended beyond the White European community to those who are not White. My loyalty to the Pass causes me to want to paint it as a place where different ethnicities grew to forget their differences and form a strong community. When I hear the racist attitudes of some of my students, I am ashamed that they could grow up in this community and value other human beings so little.

### Rationale

An English teacher in the Crowsnest Pass for almost 30 years, I have long been concerned with the racism I detect in my students. A few years ago, I assigned a research paper with a two-fold purpose, one to move from a study of social issues in Fannie Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* (1987) to a more Canadian perspective; and two, to try and create an awareness of Canada's treatment of Blacks, immigrant groups, and Aboriginal people. I wanted to pierce the smugness, the feelings of superiority that I detected in my students as they discussed racism in the US and South Africa. They insisted that "this would never happen" in Canada. They did not see any similarity in their attitudes to Aboriginal people and the attitudes of the bigoted southern Whites who mistreat the African-American characters with whom they find it easy to empathize. This is a smugness that Gabriel Bedard (2000) suggests is part of the "multicultural narrative" (p. 48) that forms part of our identity as Canadians. White Canadians visualize Canada as a benevolent, diversely populated, multicultural country with "a history pleasingly devoid of slavery and segregation" (p. 48). This view permits us to comfortably enjoy our position of privilege with little acknowledgement of the racism that is part of Canadian society. Our belief in multiculturalism is, he states, "a

trope to satiate non-White people while relieving White anxiety and guilt about their colonial and imperial past" (p. 48).

One of my most thoughtful students very proficiently linked the examples of racism and prejudice against African-Americans in *Fried Green Tomatoes* with the racism and intolerance experienced by Japanese Canadians during the internments of World War II and with the discrimination encountered by Canadians of Arabic descent after September 11, 2001. "Because of their recognizable differences, Arabic people, much like the Black people in *Fried Green Tomatoes*, are limited in the privileges they receive," he concluded and I turned with anticipation to his section on Native Canadians who "much like the blacks in the Southern United States in the 1930s, receive *special treatment* [emphasis mine] because of their race." This "special treatment," he wrote, consists of "fishing, hunting, and educational rights, funds from the government for living expenses" and consideration for "some jobs and universities before people of any other race." He concluded with the statement, "This sort of racism parallels the racism described in *Fried Green Tomatoes*."

In my comments on his paper, I introduced the term "affirmative action" and asked if it outweighs the negative aspects of being Native in a White society.

"Remember," I wrote, "the 'privileges' you describe are treaty rights established a century ago. Do you know of any non-Native who has been denied entrance to university in favour of a Native Canadian?"

My English 30 students are appalled at the treatment of Black South Africans portrayed by Nadine Gordimer in her 1956 story, "Happy Event" (Iveson, Oster, & McClay, 1993). They write with sympathy and compassion, able to justify the black

protagonist's killing of her new-born child as the only option open to her under apartheid. When I try to elicit the same responses to the Métis character, Piquette Tonnerre, in Margaret Laurence's "The Loons" (1963), I do not succeed. Most dislike the story intensely because they cannot "identify" with anyone in it. They choose to write, instead, on 1956 Tillie Olsen story, "I Stand Here Ironing" (Iveson, Oster, & McClay, 1993), which chronicles the efforts of a poverty stricken American White woman to raise her child through the Depression and succeeding years, roughly the same time period in which 17-year-old Piquette Tonnerre struggles to be accepted by Manitoba's White society before dying in a fire. Only a few are able to draw the parallels between South African Lena and Canadian Piquette.

In retreating from the turmoil of facing their own inherent racism, my students are doing themselves a great harm. Pinar and Castenell (cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995) link knowledge and identity: "We are what we know" (p. 327). They argue that in denying knowledge of the role of African-Americans in American history, white Americans harm not only African-Americans who are denied role models, but also white students who are denied an opportunity for self-understanding (p. 328). If, they argue,

...what Americans know about themselves—American history, American culture, the American national identity—is deformed by absences, denials, and incompleteness, then the American identity...is fragmented. A fragmented self...represents a repressed self. Such a self lacks full access both to itself and the world. (p. 328)



The same argument can be made for what Canadians know about themselves. In marginalizing Native Canadians and presenting a "Eurocentric" school curriculum, we are impairing our capacity for "intelligence, for informed action" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 328). Just as what Pinar terms "institutional racism," the absence of African-American knowledge in the American school curriculum, hurts African-American students, this same absence "deforms" White students as well (p. 329). So, too, does the absence of Native Canadian knowledge in the Canadian curriculum. We must understand curriculum as racial text and accept that we are also "racialized, gendered, historical, political creatures" (p. 329).

Derek Wilkinson (2000), studying secondary students in Sudbury, Ontario, suggests that the extent of racial prejudice in high school students is an effective indicator of what public attitudes toward minority groups will be in the future. Measuring racial prejudice in high school students will give an indication of how much societal attitudes toward minority groups have changed and the amount of further change that is needed. Though the general view in the U.S. is that prejudicial attitudes have changed, Canadian studies (Clifton & Perry, 1985; Driedger & Mezoff, 1981; Ross & Nagy, 1987; Thomas & Willinsky, 1997) suggest that the situation here is different in that reduction of prejudice may be occurring more slowly or not at all. The lessening of prejudicial attitudes that might be expected from secondary students, as younger generations tend to change first (Mannheim, cited in Wilkinson, 2000), is not happening. This does not bode well for the hope of a more accepting Canadian society to come.

Is it possible to change racist attitudes in the classroom? Wilkinson (2000) found that secondary school education does not reduce prejudice. In fact, the proportion of

students who leave high school with prejudicial attitudes is virtually the same as the proportion who enters. He feels that it would be best to target elementary school students, especially males, who are more prejudiced than females (Wilkinson, 2000), rather than secondary students.

There is, however, little evidence to show what happens when eliminating racist attitudes toward Native Canadians becomes a learning outcome. I began to wonder if it was possible to reduce the prejudicial and stereotyped attitudes about Aboriginal people my students have by exposing them to Aboriginal literature and inviting "authentic dialogue" (Delpit, cited in Pinar et al., 1995) which "emphasizes experience, critical self-reflection, and personal growth through self-education...[and also] peer learning and cooperation using media that stimulates all the senses, feelings, and emotions" (Butt, cited in Pinar, 2000, p. 334).

### Research Focus

The purpose of my study then, was to describe the effect of teaching literature written by and about Canadian Aboriginal people on student attitudes about Canadian Aboriginal people. I hoped to reduce the prejudiced and stereotyped thinking with which students viewed Aboriginal people and determine if there were age and gender differences in the attitudes of students toward Aboriginal people both before and after reading Aboriginal literature.

### Definition of Terms

Racism is "an ideology, the belief that one racial or ethnic group is inferior to another and that unequal treatment is therefore justified" (Alladin, 1996, p. 11). Racist ideologies try to justify social and economic inequalities among racial and ethnic groups.

Alladin identifies three forms of racism common in Canadian society: individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism. Individual racism is "the belief that one's race is superior to another (racial prejudice) and behaviour that suppresses members of the so-called inferior race (racial discrimination)." Institutional racism "consists of those established laws, customs, and practices that systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities, regardless of whether the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions" (p. 12). Thus, as Alladin points out, while individual lawyers and judges may not be racist, they function in a society that treats Aboriginal people differently and results in a higher percentage of Aboriginal Canadians incarcerated than Whites.

Textbooks and educational materials that give an ethnocentric and Eurocentric view of the world, omitting the contributions of certain racial groups or presenting minority groups in a negative or erroneous way are examples of institutional racism. Cultural racism is "the belief in the inferiority of the implements, handicrafts, agriculture, economics, art, music, language, tradition, and story of non-Anglo-European peoples, and the belief that these people have no distinctive culture apart from that of mainstream white Anglo-Europeans" (p. 13).

The term *racism* became popularized during the American civil rights movement of the 1960s (Spencer, 1998). Before that, Allport (1958) used the term *ethnic prejudice*: "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization that may be felt or expressed, directed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a member of that group" (p. 10). Allport's definition emphasized ethnocultural differences and inaccurate stereotypic assumptions, either positive or negative, of groups and individuals on the basis of these differences (Spencer, 1998).

Allport (1958) uses a definition of prejudice that recognizes both positive and negative prejudice: "A feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience" (p. 7). Unfortunately, the prejudice I detected in my students toward Aboriginal people was unfavourable. A student in one of my classes illustrated this as we discussed prejudice in *West Side Story* (1959): "The only people I am prejudiced against are Natives," he announced. He was not angry, or defiant. He was making what appeared to him to be a perfectly reasonable statement. When I asked why he felt that way he replied with stereotyped remarks about drunkenness and welfare, but admitted that he did not actually know any Aboriginal people.

Allport traces a progression of negative ways of expressing prejudice that demonstrate the range of intensity in which racism may be acted out (Spencer, 1998) These progress from *antilocution*, "expressing antagonism verbally with like-minded friends," through avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and finally, extermination (Allport, pp. 14-15). Unfortunately, I feared that some of my students had already gone beyond saying discriminatory remarks to taking physical action. Another student wrote a story about the fun of tripping a boy: "Looking at him sitting there screaming made everyone laugh hysterically." The boy in question, Luke (a pseudonym as are all names), is at least part Aboriginal. This year he has enrolled in another high school in our division.

A further conversation with this student later in the year illustrates the difficulty of doing research with teenagers and the care that must be taken in interpreting what they say. Alone with me in a supervised study class, he told me a horrendous tale involving a cat in a shower that took place at Luke's house while his parents were at work. "Wait a

minute," I said. "I thought you didn't like Luke. You did horrible things to him last year." He assured me that they still do horrible things to him, as he does to them and tell me that "I don't get it." He plays at his house all the time. The reason he has left our school is not, they said, because of persecution from students, but from one teacher who "burned" him all the time. As well, his parents operate a business closer to the other school. Ironically, Luke is a descendant of William Lee.

Stroebe and Insko (1989) argue that the concepts of stereotype and prejudice are closely related and that prejudice as a negative attitude towards an out-group is usually based on a negative stereotype, that is, "on beliefs that associate that group with predominantly negative attributes" (p. 4). Stereotypes are not inherently negative or positive. They serve as categories that bring coherence and order to our social environment and provide a means of preserving and creating differentiations between social groups. They also lead to the creation and maintenance of group ideologies that may be used to explain or justify a variety of actions against an out-group, in this case Aboriginal people. Thus, while a stereotype may be defined as "a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people" (p. 5), the stereotypes I was and am concerned about changing are those that are typically ethnocentric, less favourable to Aboriginal people, and more positive toward White Canadians.

#### Prejudice, Stereotypes, and Moral Development

Where are prejudices and stereotypes formed? According to Stroebe and Insko (1984), social learning theory is the only theoretical perspective that can satisfactorily account for the historic and cultural stability in stereotypes and prejudice (p. 29). Ethnic and national stereotypes can thus be understood as culturally shared categories that go

beyond the individual. Though they may be modified by experience they are mostly acquired through avenues of socialization such as parents, schools, and mass media (p. 29). Thus, morality and its opposite, prejudice, are socially learned.

A second theory, the psychoanalytic model, argues that subconscious factors such as anger and fear prevent children from developing morally and often cause them to be prejudiced (Davidson & Davidson, 1994). Davidson and Davidson suggest that though parental modeling and societal influences do have a strong effect, a third cause of prejudice underlies the other two—cognitive immaturity, the child's inability to reason about and value the idea of respect for people. This, they argue, has important implications for educators, because it means that if children's moral judgement can be stimulated, they can gradually be taught to recognize "the fallacies in their thinking and their prejudiced assumptions" (1994, p. xx). In their opinion, "failure to address cognitive and related behavioral aspects of moral growth is a chief source of persistent childhood prejudice" (p. xxi). Thus, if school experiences are instrumental in creating prejudiced and stereotyped thinking, then perhaps they can also be instrumental in helping students critically evaluate the ideas they hold.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1969, 1981) describes three levels of morality: self-centered, then conformist or conventional, and much later, if at all, principled. Each level has a less advanced and a more advanced set of structures totaling six stages. Structures are defined as the instruments and organizers of content, transforming between stages according to their own laws. Very young children have fewer structures and more limited points of view. As they develop, they are able to coordinate more viewpoints (a structural operation) and enter into the conventional level of morality. At stage one, the fear of the

power of authorities implies that harshness of judgement is right, a "might equals right" (Davidson & Davidson, 1994, p. xxi) point of view. At stage two, the child becomes aware that standards for behaviour are not set in concrete, but influenced by other people. At stage three, the child begins to understand social concepts such as friendship, trust, relationship, and society and that each person influences another in a mutual way. Speculations and conclusions about causality are often based on only one or two experiences. At stage four it is possible to adopt a neutral or third person perspective that means others should be valued as highly as the self. At stages five and six, morality is determined not by rules of conduct but by abstract principles of fairness to all (Kohlberg, 1981, pp.123, 409-12).

In both their studies, Davidson and Davidson (1994) found a strong statistical correlation between lower moral stage and higher prejudice. Unfortunately, they and others (Wilkinson, 2000) have found no significant change in the values held by grade nine students and those held by grade twelve or thirteen students. Those entering high school with prejudiced attitudes are almost certain to leave with them. Though schools ensure that academic learning takes place, they are not fostering the moral development of students.

#### Anti-Racism Versus Multiculturalism

George Sefa Dei and Agnes Calliste (2000) emphasize that the way we name our discursive practice is as important as the practice in which we are engaged politically. This study is an anti-racist work, located within the basic tenets of anti-racism, rather than multiculturalism. Multicultural education, which results from the application of the ideology of multiculturalism, is a term used to describe a wide variety of programs and

practices related to "educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, and the disabled" (Banks, 1989a, p. 6). It was generated by the American civil rights movement of the 1960s when African-Americans and other groups demanded curricula that would reflect their "experiences, histories, cultures, and perspectives" (Banks, 1989a, p. 4) and rapidly grew to include the women's rights movement, senior citizens, disabled persons, and gay rights advocates. The goal was (and is) to "increase the achievement of ethnic and immigrant students and to help students and teachers develop more positive attitudes toward racial, cultural, ethnic, and language diversity" (Banks, 1989a, p. 4). The first responses to the demands of the activists of the 1960s were hurried and led to the development of courses and programs without the careful planning and thought necessary to make them educationally sound or to institutionalize them within the educational system. Holidays, ethnic celebrations, and courses that focused on one ethnic group were early manifestations of a limited view of multiculturalism as curriculum reform (Banks, 1989a, pp. 4-6). Banks (1989a), and Grant and Sleeter (1989) define multicultural education as an effort at total school reform designed "to reduce prejudice and discrimination against oppressed groups, to provide equal opportunity and social justice for all groups, and to effect an equitable distribution of power among members of the different cultural groups" (Grant & Sleeter, 1989, p. 53).

Banks (1989b) identifies four American approaches in ascending levels of complexity to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum: the contributions approach, which focuses on "heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements;" the additive approach, in which "content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure;" the transformational approach in which "the



structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups;" and the social action approach where "students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them" (Banks, 1989b, pp. 192-205). The four approaches are often mixed and blended in actual teaching situations.

In Canada multiculturalism was seen as a way of dealing with issues of identity, loyalties, and Canada's place in the world. The Quiet Revolution in Quebec of the 1960s and the publication of the 1963-70 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism set the ground for its development. Its principles were established by Pierre Trudeau's statement in 1971 that "Canada was a multicultural country within a bilingual context" and that the federal government would "give public recognition to ethnic diversity" through a policy on multiculturalism (Bruno-Jofre & Henley, 2000, p. 3). The schools were expected to play a role in the construction of a multicultural Canada where cultural retention was encouraged, "although there was little clarification of what cultural retention entailed" (p. 3). Since education in Canada is a provincial responsibility, multicultural education policies and practices reflected the different provincial immigration histories, with those provinces with a large population of newcomers developing more extensive multicultural programs. These programs had their flaws. They demonstrated little understanding of colonization and post-colonization; nor was there any discussion of the inequities in the distribution of power in Canadian society, or a recognition that multiculturalism involved more than culture. (Bruno-Jofre & Henley, 2000). In practice "liberal tolerance was the essential quality to be developed in this citizenship paradigm well into the eighties" (p. 3.) The policies' most serious flaws,

however, were that multiculturalism as an ideology and multicultural education as a practice of citizen formation did not provide an adequate response to French and Aboriginal Canadians who saw themselves as "more than ethnic groups in the cultural and political fabric of the country" (p. 3).

Anti-racist education is education that seeks to examine the structures of inequality in education; it is "education that challenges racism" (Alladin, 1996, p. 17). Multiculturalism and anti-racism have fundamental differences (Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000). Multiculturalism works with the notion of our basic humanness and downplays inequities of difference by accentuating shared commonalities. It "heralds the mosaic, cherishes diversity and plurality and promotes an image of multiple, thriving, mutually respectful and appreciative ethno-cultural communities" (p. 21). The proponents of multiculturalism see the issue of inequality as one of a lack of recognition of the positive contributions of minorities, stemming from misunderstandings and miscommunication and manifested in intolerance and lack of goodwill. The multiculturalists see the expression of prejudice as a violation of democratic rights that may be redressed through education, through the sharing and exchange of ideas. Multiculturalism is based on the assumption that "we start from a relatively level playing field" (p. 22), have access to similar resources, and have comparable "values, aspirations and concerns" (p. 22).

In contrast, anti-racism is doubtful of "the whole nation-building enterprise as pursued by the dominant, together with the underlying assumptions of empathy, commonality, and goodwill" (p. 22). Anti-racism shifts the focus away from tolerance of diversity to the pointed notions of difference and power. It sees race and racism as central to how we claim, occupy and defend spaces. The task of anti-racism is to identify,

challenge and change the values, structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of societal oppression (p. 21).

Central to the advocates of anti-racism is the issue of entrenched inequities and the imbalance of power which is manifested as bias, discrimination, hatred, exclusion and violence (Price, cited in Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 21). They see prejudice as an integral part of the social order and redress as possible only through fundamental structural and societal change.

Though multiculturalists and anti-racists share many of the same goals, especially at Banks' (1989b) transformation and social action stages, it is also too easy for teachers to remain at the contribution and additive stages Banks describes. It is "the practice rather than the principle of multicultural education which is problematical" (Cole, 1998, p. 4). This was brought home to me as I was introducing Thomas King's short story "Borders" (1993) to my grade 10-1 class. I was dismayed to find that they had read the story the previous year. "All right then," I said, desperately trying to retrieve the lesson, "tell me what the story is about." All could remember the situation: the narrator and his mother, travelling from the reserve at Standoff, Alberta, to Salt Lake City, Utah, to visit their daughter and sister, Laetitia, are stuck in the no-man's land between the border crossings at Coutts and Sweetgrass when the mother declares her citizenship as Blackfoot, not Canadian. When I ask why the mother does this, what the point of the story is, they tell me that it is about pride and stubbornness. "Pride about what?" I ask. They are not sure. Something to do with being Aboriginal. The point of the story, the artificiality of the boundaries imposed on Native peoples by White colonizers, had not been taught.

### Literature as Anti-Racist Education

How can literature function as a part of anti-racist education? While the Alberta curriculum does not specifically mandate anti-racist teaching (Anchan & Holychuk, 1994), it does provide freedom and flexibility for teachers who recognize that "no education can be considered neutral or apolitical" (p. 94) and who wish to engage in anti-racist practice. Literature is a powerful tool through which readers can develop a more critical understanding of racial issues. The power of story is found both in its ability to share information and in its invitation for others to make sense of experience. It allows readers to develop an awareness of the roles they and others play in life, and the ability to feel "empathy for how humans ought to treat each other" (p. 101). Purves and Beach (cited in Gwinn, 1998) found, however, that while reading may change attitudes, the changes may be of short duration. Hines (1984), in a study of the effect on sixth graders of listening to children's literature with or without stereotyped Black characters, concluded that children's literature alone does not appear to affect the racial attitudes of children.

Ingrid Johnston (1996) warns that it is not enough to simply expose students to stories with the expectation that they will identify and align themselves with the main character whose experiences will shift their assumptions about another race or culture. It is important that teachers promulgate a "dual orientation" (Stephens, cited in Johnston, 1996, p. 110) where, as readers become aware that their perceptions and attitudes are being conditioned, they question the narrative stance that they are being led to take. In this way students can be helped to challenge their stereotypes and prejudices in the classroom.

Little research literature can be found that deals specifically with the use of Aboriginal literature to reduce stereotyping and prejudice. Many studies (Alley, 2001; Gwinn, 1998; Hines, 1984; MacKay, 1998; Napholz, 2002; Taylor & Fox, 1996) discuss the use of multicultural literature to reduce stereotypes, primarily with elementary school children, and primarily to reduce negative stereotypes against African-Americans and immigrant groups. Anne White (2000), in Newfoundland, used a thematic literature unit on social injustices with junior high school students to develop in them an increased awareness of stereotypes and prejudice. She, however, limited her study to prejudice against African-Americans and Jews.

## Chapter 2: Methodology: The Importance of Narrative

*Auto-narrative provokes a deeper awareness of one's own potential for projection, control, and harm to students and involves a mindful examination of self.*

—Leah Fowler, 2002

This is essentially a qualitative study as defined by Marshall and Rossman (cited in Showler, 2000), in that it is naturalistic; it draws upon multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study; it is emergent and evolving; and it is interpretive. Some quantitative data, collected from a gender-specific six-item attitude scale, measure the extent to which exposure to Aboriginal literature influenced the attitudes of the students. This study is an inquiry in the tradition of Donald Schön (1983, 1987) who asserts that practice and reflection on practice can constitute a body of professional knowledge in itself, and that practice becomes research when the practitioner engages in a reflective conversation with the situation. It owes much to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who see a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story. At the beginning of this research project my students and I began a new story, and my principal interest was the growth and transformation in our life stories that my students as participants and I as researcher wrote together. Included as data are autobiographical writing and journal entries, both my students' and mine. These writings and the narrative voices of the Aboriginal writers we studied in class act in counterpoint to weave the narrative that is this study.

### Overview

I began the research process with the English 30-1 (university-entrance grade 12) class, 13 males, 6 females, ages 17-18; the students assigned to my English 20-1 (university

entrance) grade 11) class, 4 males, 7 females, ages 16-17; and the students assigned to my English 10-1 (university entrance grade 10) class, 7 males, 9 females, ages 15-16.

Two of the grade 12 boys dropped the course leaving a total of 17, and one grade 10 boy is not counted because he joined the class too late for the pre-test and initial activities.

Consent forms and explanatory letters were sent home to parents to be signed by both parents and students. (I had intended to include English 10-2, non-university entrance grade 10, class, a group of 32 students, 25 males and 7 females, aged 14-16.

Unfortunately, because of the time required to obtain approval for the study, I only used the materials with them for a two-week period). My adaptation of Wilkinson's (2000) Canadianized version of the Byrnes and Kiger (1988) "Social Scenarios Scale" was administered to students as a pre-test before material dealing with Canadian Aboriginal people was covered to determine the students' attitude toward Aboriginal Canadians. Participant journal entries describing students' feelings about Aboriginal people were gathered as a pre-test also. Participant journal entries were gathered periodically throughout the semester, particularly after each selection was taught. I kept daily field notes of observations of classroom activities and student responses as well as a daily journal detailing my perceptions of what happened in the classroom. The "Social Scenarios Scale" was administered again at the end of the classroom activities as a post-test to determine if there was a measurable difference in attitudes toward Aboriginal Canadians.

### Ethical Considerations

Obtaining informed consent from a research subject takes on greater ethical considerations when the researcher is the teacher and the subject is her/his student. A

relationship of trust already exists and the teacher as researcher is under a great moral obligation not to violate that trust or harm her/his student in any way. Students must fully understand and be comfortable with the possible uses of the thoughts and ideas they express in the classroom, in interviews, and in their writing. This is especially true when the area of research is the students' own attitudes. This was an issue much discussed with students and though many students wanted their own names used, all are pseudonyms. All examples of student writings and remarks, whether from class discussions or interviews, are used with their written permission. To further ensure anonymity, especially revealing biographical data has been fictionalized. While my goal was (and is still) to effect a positive change in my students' attitudes, they had to be made aware of that goal and at no time feel denigrated because they took the risk of revealing stereotyped or prejudiced attitudes.

Carrington and Short (1993) warn of the dangers of disregarding ethical considerations when probing children's understanding of issues related to race. It is possible to place children in embarrassing and potentially stressful situations. The teacher researcher faces a dilemma: how to express disapproval of a racist attitude while assuring the child that s/he is still valued. A happening in my classroom, which, in part, provided the motivation for my study, illustrates this:

*"Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness." My daughters would recognize that these words signal a real emotional upset. They know that my fluent profanity deserts me in times of real stress. I sound like a stereotypical elderly school marm. Briefly, I pause to ponder the fact that I am forming the basis of a stereotype of somewhat elderly*



*schoolteachers in the minds of these students. Should I pull my hair back in a bun and perch my reading glasses on the end of my nose?*

*It is the last few seconds before the bell. Chairs are tucked under desks at least somewhat, books and binders into backpacks, and the class stands poised for flight. The boys at the front, Scott, Jeff, and Hendrik are talking to me. All three of them have only just begun to let down their guard in my presence. In an early report on Jeff's progress, I am happy to write that we are getting along fine; he has completed all assignments, and is behaving well. His mother is concerned. The counsellor who has asked for the report tells me that he had many difficulties with teachers last year and his behaviour was a real problem. He has been relatively quiet so far, apologising quickly for his frequent use of the "F word" and participating without too much protest when I take four of the boys outside to pick up the paper missiles that have rained from our upstairs window past the science room downstairs.*

*I know little about Scott. He likes to read and cheerfully takes large parts when we read stories aloud. He is talkative and I tend to see more of the back of his bleached blond spikes than the front—hence his seat at the front. The girls tell me he is an instigator—"A real gossip queen, Ms. Gill."*

*I am ashamed of the feelings I first felt for Hendrik upon first meeting him. I was apprehensive and expected trouble. He appeared unresponsive and sullen, another student who really did not want to be in the class. With his golden brown colouring he could be what one of my other students calls herself—"Dark Dutch," in reference, I think, to those who are part Asian and descended from the Dutch colonizers of Indonesia.*

*Hendrik is almost handsome, but he has yet to grow into his features and he has a disfiguring scar that slices across the right side of his face. "Call me Freak," he says.*

*But I have come to like Hendrik over the past few weeks and realize his initial sullenness and hostility masked his own fears. I, my hand and arm stained red with a port wine birthmark, should understand this.*

*"I've got a joke for you, Ms. Gill." Which one of them says it I don't know. The class is buzzing with the desire for freedom.*

*It is a racist slur against Natives and it is out in its entirety before I even see it coming.*

*Is it Scott? Hendrik? Jeff? I don't know. I don't know how to respond. I can almost not catch my breath. I have been thinking a lot about the subtle racism I detect in many of my students, but I am not prepared for this overt display.*

*"Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness." I walk to the door with the boys.*

*"Good joke, huh?"*

*"Not really. How would you feel if someone said something like that about you?"*

*"I wouldn't care. I hate Natives." It is Hendrik. "And I hate Blacks."*

*"At least you didn't 'spas' out on us when we told you that joke. Mrs. X did last year." And I get an idea of some of the problems the boys had last year. (October 2002)*

I wondered then where to start with these kinds of attitudes in adolescent boys. They illustrated only too well what research (Pate, 1995) is saying about the relationship between prejudice and self-esteem. Those with low self-esteem tend to find fault with other people, especially if they are different in some way. They tend to stereotype them

and hold negative attitudes about them. Throughout the study, I was faced with a difficult task. It is ethically reprehensible to fail to challenge any stereotype or pejorative reference (Carrington & Short, 1993), yet how was I to try and decrease my students' prejudices without further damaging their already low self-esteem? It was vitally important that my students did not confuse my disapproval of their attitudes with disapproval of them as individuals.

Manning (1997), working from a Freirian philosophy, reminds us that research subjects are to be treated as subjects, equal to the researcher, not objects. They are not individuals on whom research is performed, but co-researchers working with the researcher. This is a concept that has exciting possibilities for the classroom, and in my case encouraged the dialogue I wanted with students.

### Journalling

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) see journals as a method of creating field text that can be interwoven with other field texts to construct the research text. They note that often details that appear to be trivial as they are recorded take on significance when compared with other field texts and contribute to emerging patterns. Janesick (1998) identifies journal writing itself as "a powerful heuristic tool" (p. 1) and qualitative research technique. She points out that although journal writing itself has a long and well-documented history in the arts and humanities, from Samuel Pepys to Anaïs Nin, it is only now that it is being used and talked about as a serious component in qualitative research projects. For the qualitative researcher, journal writing is a way to document the researcher's role and triangulate data by the journal itself being entered as a data set. The teacher-researcher uses the journal to trace the development of her/himself as a

practitioner, and the case study becomes her or himself (Dacre & Mackey, 1999). Journal writing also serves to improve research practice by providing an opportunity to analyze, rethink, and go deeper into a critical stance about one's life work (Janesick, 1998).

Elliott (1991) suggests that the journal should contain personal accounts of observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses, and explanations, not just the bald facts of the situation. It also provides a check and balance on the course of a qualitative research project by providing a way of clarifying and reinterpreting much of the work as it is done.

A problem with journal writing is the time it takes, and in a classroom setting, the lack of opportunity to do it. Convery (1999) questions the validity of teacher narrative itself, arguing that a teacher may use autobiographical conventions to construct a self-image as a consistently moral individual whose narrative compels a sympathetic audience to endorse rather than investigate the identity that the narrator offers. Thus, teachers may use such narrative encounters to authorize the use of teaching as an opportunity for fulfilling their personal identity projects, a process that may not benefit either students or teachers. He warns that we "use opportunities to describe ourselves to reconstruct ourselves—to become that which we describe" and content is "judiciously selected and organized to satisfy the primary therapeutic purpose of self-presentation" (p. 6). One of the dangers of personal experience accounts is that the narrator, in disclosing private thoughts and experiences, assumes an advantage in a relationship in which it is difficult to dispute his/her version of events and is "conventionally discourteous" (p. 7) to attempt to do so. Mallon (cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 102) warns that although a journal is private, it is not without a sense of audience, an audience that affects not only what the

researcher chooses to record, but also the researcher's actions, in that an honest journaler will change his/her actions rather than have to admit to less than complimentary behaviour. Central to narrative inquiry is the belief that as we retell our stories we remake our past. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) comment on the inevitability and the benefits of doing so, but also warn of the dangers of constructing a "less-than-adequate, even unhealthy, story" (p. 85) which they, citing Dewey, call a "miseducative experience." Atkinson (1997) also cautions that the narrative is but one mode of representation among many and does not necessarily provide a "hyperauthentic" version of anyone's experience (p. 10). To avoid these pitfalls, it is imperative that researchers then critically explore not only the teacher's experience but also the students' experience of what the teacher describes through a variety of field texts and data collection methods.

Finding time to do the journaling proved difficult. I usually sat after school and worked from the field notes I had managed to hastily record during class. The time that elapsed between the class and the time I actually wrote about what had happened, meant that some data would be lost. After a particularly upsetting grade 12 class, I wrote:

*I find it difficult to remember even immediately after they have occurred, the disruptions that Kyle and the front row cause with their racist remarks. I just said "Enough," today, and did not enter into the discussion except to ask them if they truly thought it was ok to be racist. Kyle and Beric answer, "Yes. What else could it be?" and I know they are not taking me entirely seriously. This whole issue is so entangled with their egos and need for attention. Brian, on a more serious note, said that he thought it was ok to be racist "so long as you didn't act on it." I didn't know what to say in return. I did say that I thought they would possibly not*

*change their views on racism until they were subjected to discrimination themselves. Kyle and Beric said that they wouldn't care if they were called names—how could names hurt them? They have not considered the other aspects of racism at all. They take their position of White privilege as a right, one they would certainly not give up. (March 25, 2003)*

That condensed version of what took place records only a fraction of what actually happened during the 80-minute period, and provides no record of the other students' responses or reactions. It is also a record shaped not only by what I was able to jot down in field notes, but also by the study itself. Looking back, I wonder if my behaviour as a teacher was shaped as much by the necessity of gathering evidence to support my study as by my desire to have an effect on my students' attitudes. As I continue to use many of the same materials and strategies I developed for the study, I find I am much more relaxed and open to my students' responses without the constraints of having to write them down.

A further barrier to journaling was the necessity of preparing new materials for what turned into five new units, each including quizzes and unit exams. I had truly "bitten off more than I could chew," and found the constant preparation for each class for each day as well as the marking generated by the three academic stream classes almost overwhelming. I had inadvertently placed myself in the situation of a beginning teacher without the energy level so necessary to get through the first few years of constant preparation. The preparation, combined with my attempts to gather data in the form of field notes and collect and analyze student responses in order to be able to respond to them in class, led to a frenetic three-month period that was reflected in my mental state. There

was never enough time to sit and reflect calmly on what had taken place. Journalling became another task to be completed as part of the research process.

As well, I who had always found journalling to be a calming and reflective process, found I was reliving what had occurred in some of the classes, and I came to dread the necessity to reflect on the ugly racism I heard from some of my students. It became, in some instances, very disturbing. It did not have the cathartic effect that reflecting on a class that had gone badly and devising a new strategy to try to improve the situation usually had. I did not have strategies to change some of the attitudes I uncovered, and while I was happy and perhaps proud that these students would trust me enough to possibly risk their grades in the course, I was not happy about what was being revealed.

#### Participant Journal Entries

A second pre-test, a participant journal entry, was also collected. Students were asked to respond to prompts designed to identify attitudes they hold, including stereotypes about Aboriginal Canadians.

Participant journals were used periodically throughout the semester to provide all students in the class with an opportunity to voice their opinion about class activities and as a means of checking for congruence between students' actual reactions and my perception of their reactions. Advantages to the use of participant journals are that they are efficient in terms of time (both in gathering and analyzing the data), allow the participant to define aspects of the experience the participant viewed as salient, and allow the participant to describe the experience without the influence of an interviewer or interview questions. Participant journal entries are generally short and easily analyzed to identify themes. As well, passages that typify the themes can be easily selected. The entries can then easily be

compared by date, and passages representing themes can be arranged in a table according to date and theme and compared in a straightforward manner (Giraud, 1999).

The journal entries the students handed in were invaluable. They gave many students the opportunity to share ideas they were hesitant to reveal in front of the class.

The same Kyle who thinks it "OK to be racist," writes in a response to Beatrice

Mosionier's *April Raintree* (1984),

Anna dies  
 Part-Native  
 Raped  
 Inspirational  
 Living stereotypes  
 Runs away  
 Appears white  
 In the streets  
 Not realizing  
 Trapped  
 Running from life  
 Explicitly graphic  
 Exposed

In this simple acrostic poem he reveals an empathy and awareness that he will not reveal in class discussions.

#### Field Notes

Daily observations as detailed as is possible within the context of both conducting a class and attempting to record what the students and I did were recorded. My intention was to follow Bomer's (1994) suggested strategy for recording observations about students and class activities. A sheet for the class is made with each student's name on it and space to record comments. These sheets are photocopied so that there is a sheet for each day of the class. Observations of anything that will help create a portrait of each student's attitude can be recorded. These field notes can then be referred to when journal entries are made



after the class. Bomer, recording student responses to writing activities, finds the note taking also serves to validate what the students are saying. As students become more comfortable with the process and pause or repeat what they have said in order that the teacher "get it right," this becomes a means of adding "an immediate quality of reflection" (p. 23) to their thinking.

Using a sheet for each student proved impossible. I ended up keeping a coil bound notebook open in front of me and entered the date, class, and activity at the beginning of each class. On this I jotted as many observations as I could during the class. My students quickly became aware of when I was taking note of something someone had said or trying to record parts of discussions, and commented on what I was doing. I had hoped that my recording would, as Bomer suggests, cause the students to reflect on what they were saying and the notemaking itself become a means of effecting change in thinking. In this way the research act itself would take on an increased pedagogical as well as a data gathering function. This method of inviting the students' direct contribution to the research process may be seen as a type of "member checking" (Lincoln & Guba, cited in Manning, 1997, p. 5) which can increase the validity of the research data, but more importantly, is a means of assuring that the teacher is accountable to those students sharing their thoughts and experiences with the teacher.

I cannot be sure what effect my recording what students were saying had on their thinking. In answer to their questions, I would answer as honestly as I could, telling them that I thought a remark revealed what they were thinking, or that I wanted to make sure I came back to what had been said later in the discussion. With the more vocal and openly racist of my grade 12 boys, I often responded with an expression of disbelief at what had

been said, and took the opportunity to check that what had been said was what had been meant, often journaling about it afterwards.

### Interviews

Each of the students was invited to participate in an individual or group interview. Whether they participated in an individual or group interview was determined by their wishes. The focus group interviews were comprised of self-selected groups of two to six students. Though the groups were not necessarily balanced according to gender, class ranking (not all high-achieving or low-achieving students), and personality (not all outspoken or reserved students), the data could be sorted according to those criteria. Because our school was temporarily housed in another community, more students were dependent on bussing and fewer were available after school for interviews. The high number of students employed in part-time jobs also limited the availability of many students. For this reason, I decided to conduct the interviews during class time. A space in which to hold the interviews was hard to find. Our temporary location, previously an elementary school, was jammed tight with the grade 10, 11, and 12 classes. There were no rooms available. One of the teacher aides working with students in a literacy program very generously moved her students in with another group in order to provide me with a space in which to conduct my interviews. As this room was located very close to mine, I felt comfortable leaving some members of the grade 12 class working independently while I took a group to the workroom. As the grade 10 and 11 classes were smaller, and I did not want to disrupt the aide's work any more than was essential, I interviewed these students in the classroom. The students being interviewed and I retired to a table in a corner while

the remainder of the students watched a tape of the CBC broadcast of the 2003 *Canadian Aboriginal Awards* and worked on projects.

According to Martha Carey (1994), one advantage of using group interviews is that the group dynamic itself will be a synergistic factor in bringing information out. It may, conversely, also prevent some members from speaking out. The major pitfall is the potential impact of censoring and conforming, where a group member may withhold potential contributions due to lack of trust of the interviewer or other group members, or tailor contributions to be in line with those of other group members. Thomas and Willinsky (1997), examining students' perceptions of racial and ethnic tensions in a British Columbia classroom, however, found that even when students completed a survey as a group with conditions of anonymity violated, they responded with very apparent personal conviction. Another danger is that some group members may believe that each guideline question needs to be resolved by mutual agreement and use the opinions of others in forming their own opinions. This results in a "bandwagon" effect that lessens the meaningfulness of the data (Carey, p. 238). Exaggeration, something that Carey finds occurs rarely, may also be a concern when interviewing teenagers. Carey describes a situation where exaggeration occurred and was recognized and disputed by other group members (p. 239). This might have the effect of severely limiting a sensitive teenager's contribution to the group.

When seating the group, Carey suggests putting the dominant person next to the interviewer so that s/he can be guided, and the shyest, quietest ones across from him/her so that the interviewer can encourage them nonverbally. The interviewer will have to decide whether to call on those who are reluctant to speak or let the group unfold

naturally. The interviewer prepares three or four guideline questions concerning the broad concepts to be explored and a few subquestions for each area. The guideline questions can be used to guide the initial development of themes or categories in data analysis. (See Appendix B).

Carey stresses the importance of the interviewer's mental preparation and skills. The interviewer must have sufficient knowledge of the topic and guideline questions so as to be able to develop good probes and not have to refer to notes. The danger of knowing the topic well, or having certain expectations, is that it becomes difficult to be open to information contrary to that knowledge or those expectations (p. 230). A calm mental state is essential, for the interviewer has the complex task of processing the group interactions during the interview. Carey suggests that the interviewer take as few notes as possible.

At the beginning of the focus group interview, the interviewer must do all that s/he would do when interviewing one person: establish trust and an accepting atmosphere, explain the purpose of the study, explain the planned use of the data, confirm permission to tape the interview, and reaffirm confidentiality. Confidentiality may be of special concern as the nature of the group session may elicit information more personal than the members anticipated. In the focus group interview, the interviewer must also train group members for their roles both formally and informally (Carey, p. 231). Formally, the interviewer sets out rules for the interview: no one can make any derogatory statements about another member's contribution—all contributions are considered valid and legitimate. Informally, the interviewer conveys unspoken expectations by encouraging and limiting participation as appropriate. As in single interviews, the interviewer

encourages responses, but does not endorse or agree with comments, and remains neutral by also monitoring non-verbal behaviour. Because interaction among members encourages more synergistic exchanges than leader-member interaction, the leader encourages members to respond to each other by asking questions that encourage those responses. The interviewer continually weighs the potential to be gained by following leads from the group and thereby deviating from the guideline questions (Carey, p. 231). The interviewer's role is very complex: s/he must (a) attend to non-verbal and verbal communication, looking especially for nonconcurrence; (b) evaluate the relationship of each member's contribution to the total interaction of the group; and (c) assess the consistency of contribution for each group member. Knowing when and how to probe is the most important aspect of the interviewer's role: the basis of the probe can be lack of agreement between verbal and non-verbal communication, or inconsistent contributions. Though Carey warns that the interviewer can listen and commiserate but cannot try to rectify problems except in extreme circumstances, a teacher doing research with her/his own students must be prepared to disregard that caution and put meeting student needs ahead of gathering data. This is especially true when dealing with issues of racism. It is essential that racist views not be seen to be condoned by default. Carrington and Short (1993) point out that while the researcher must take issue with any manifestation of prejudice which surfaces during the interview, it is not possible to make hard and fast rules about the form or timing of such responses. They also caution against inadvertently forcing a student to adopt a reactive stance and embrace an attitude diametrically opposed to that being advanced (Snyder & Wickland, cited in Carrington & Short, 1993) by exposing her/him to public disapprobation.

After finishing the discussion of a guideline question and before going on to the next question, the interviewer feeds back a summary of the discussion to the group to check out his or her perceptions. This becomes an opportunity for the group members to clarify and correct the information.

The actual interview process was not as I had imagined it. With the grade 10s and 11s I was able to follow the procedures I had researched and practised because the groups were small, of two to three students. They elected to take part in the interviews with the students they normally sat and worked with, and appeared very comfortable talking with each other and with me. They did not hesitate to interject when they felt a fellow student's points needed clarification, or if they had similar or dissimilar ideas. I felt quite comfortable during these interviews, as nothing really contentious or different from what I had detected in class was revealed in the interviews.

The grade 12 girls elected to be interviewed as one group, a group of six. This proved to be a mistake. Girls who had written very sensitively and empathetically in response to class readings fell silent before the loud and essentially negative comments of three of the girls. My reminders to them of their previous written sentiments were greeted with a shrug of the shoulders. They were unable or unwilling to express opinions contrary to those expressed by the more aggressive girls. These girls illustrate the conforming behaviour described by Carey (1994). This behaviour was also repeated by two of the grade 12 boys who had completed very perceptive projects.

The grade 12 boys elected to be interviewed in smaller groups that reflected their seating preferences within the classroom, and to a large extent, their attitudes. I knew how strongly prejudiced the attitudes of some of the boys were, but I had suspected that

some of the things they said in front of the class were voiced to attract attention, and to provoke a response from me. That may have been the case, but in a small group they expressed even stronger and more hateful ideas as is revealed in the interview transcripts. I departed from my role as neutral interviewer, openly arguing with the boys one last time in an effort to change their thinking:

I. G: What effects can a Native person calling you "Whitey" have on you?

Student: I just feel "Jewed" because it's not fair. He can do it to me, but I can't do it to him. (Though I normally would have identified "Jewed" as a racist term and discussed its use with the student, I do not hear it in the interview).

I. G: The fact that one person has power and privilege and the other does not, that does not affect you?

Student: Not really. It doesn't matter. You get punished and he doesn't. It's exactly the same. Power and authority mean nothing. I'll make fun of an Indian kid, or I'll make fun of the chief and they can make fun of me...

I. G.: What I'm trying to get across is that because you're White, you've got a position in society where you count with other people. To be Native in our society doesn't give you much power. (Interview, March 2003)

I used the interview process as well as surveys for several reasons. It is an obvious method of triangulating the data from the surveys and exploring areas that the survey identifies or does not identify. It is also a means of determining if students answered the survey questions seriously. Most importantly, it gave me another opportunity to include student voices in the narrative that resulted from the research process.

### The Social Scenarios Scale

Derek Wilkinson (2000) modified the Byrnes and Kiger (1988) contemporary "Social Scenarios Scale" to include scenarios appropriate for Canadian high school students rather than American college students and to allow for variations in the gender and race of those discriminated against. In order to suit my purpose, identifying prejudice toward Aboriginal people, I simplified the scale by eliminating the variations in the race of the victims of discrimination. Instead of measuring prejudice against Black, Chinese, and Aboriginal people as Wilkinson did, I measured prejudice only against Aboriginal people. Wilkinson also compared prejudice against males with prejudice against females, and analyzed his data according to whether the prejudiced response was verbal or non-verbal, while I did not. The scale asks students to respond to six situations, "The Party," "McDonalds," "School Trip," "Dating," "Classroom," and "Apartment Rental," where prejudiced behavior toward Aboriginal people is displayed. Students may choose to agree or disagree with the action and express their feelings or remain silent. (See Appendix A)

The pre- and post- test scores on the "Social Scenarios Scale" were used to assess the students' attitudes toward Canadian Aboriginal people before and after studying the selections from Canadian Aboriginal literature. Passages reflecting significant themes in participant journal entries were compared. The interview transcripts were analyzed according to themes. The surveys, participant journal entries, and interviews served as a means of triangulating the data obtained from my field notes and journal entries and provided a way to determine actual student responses, not just my perception of their responses. They also provided a record of the research process.



### Locating Myself

Another equally important part of the research was an examination of my own attitudes, a coming to terms with my own Whiteness. In the words of Gary Howard (1999): "The fact that I am White has colored my journey in a particular way, and it is from this perspective that I write" (p. 1). As White educators we often suffer from what King (cited in Howard, 1999) has termed "dysconscious racism," the inability to see the full impact of our own social dominance. Howard's metaphor of white dominance as a "highly selective poison that continually steals the lifeblood from those people who have not been marked with the genetic code of Whiteness" (p. 16) is one that I wanted to explore within myself and with my students. There was a danger of engendering resistance in doing so. One of my students, responding to Gordimer's short story, "Happy Event," commented that she had had enough of discussing South Africans and it was time to drop the subject. I saw this same attitude magnifying when we explored the effect of White dominance on Aboriginal people. The idea of dominance as a system of "privilege and penalty" (MacIntosh, 1989), in which privileges accrue to Whites without our awareness or intent, is a difficult one for not only students, but also adults, to come to terms with.

Janet Helms (1990) suggests a six-stage psychological model of racial identity. The characteristics range from a low level of awareness (if any) of one's own racism, or of institutional and cultural racism, at the Contact Stage, to an internalized state where one actively confronts racism and other forms of oppression in the Autonomy Stage of "racial self-actualization" (p. 66). In between, individuals go through the other stages where they break down their previously held perceptions about themselves as non-racist

(the Disintegration Stage); resign themselves to the status quo or blame the victim for the racism they now see (the Reintegration stage); abandon their belief in White superiority (the Pseudo-Independent Stage); become active in defining a positive White identity and seek to find what being an anti-racist White person in society means (the Immersion/Emersion Stage).

*I listen to the students in front of me discuss their Remembrance Day projects. Brian is doing a poster to represent the mosaic of different peoples who make up Canada and who have reason to be grateful for the sacrifices made by those who fought in Canada's wars. "Here's a Christian, an Indian, a Frenchman, a Chinaman—I mean a Chinese person," he says.*

*Neither his classmates nor I question how or why "Christian" has become a separate and distinct category, whom he means by "Indian," or what distinguishes a "Frenchman" from perhaps, an "Englishman." I open my mouth to begin this discussion, but, instead, find myself thinking about Brian's last words:*

*A Chinaman...*

*I am transported in time to a Halloween night more than forty years ago. I must be seven or eight, charged this night with taking my younger sister trick-or-treating in our neighbourhood. A much safer time, a time when an eight-year-old and a five-year-old are allowed to go from door to door alone, filling their pillowcases primarily with apples and sometimes (the absolute joy of it!) unexpected and coveted popcorn balls and not just plain apples, but apples covered in sticky brown caramel.*

*We know not to go past the railway spur line that bisects the highway which runs through the town, linking the main railway line on the south of town with the mine that*

*huddles under the mountain on the north side. We know not to go across the highway or past the West End Confectionery, a false-fronted red building where we warm our hands in front of the pot-bellied stove that hisses and crackles at the back of the store. The railway lines east and south, the river to the north, and the crossing at the confectionery form the geographic boundaries of our early childhood, the division between East End and West End Blairmore.*

*We live in a small Anglo-Saxon enclave of our multi-ethnic community. Bradley, Bruning, Burns, Cargill, Congden, Costick, Drake, Evans, Gibson, Lester, Lloyd, Lord, Lote, McCrae, McKay, MacPhail, Morgan, Oakes, Panterson, Pinckney, Pratt, Russell, Ward, Wolstenholme, Wyatt: the names echo down the years. The British section of town. The Anglican Parish. A few, the dentist, Dr. Burgman; the mine engineer, Mr. Aschacher, reside in this tree-lined section of town by virtue of their occupations. It will not be until we leave the isolation of the two room West End School to attend the Blairmore Main School that we will come to know the reality of our community, its plurality of ethnicities: Amatto, Arseneault, Avoledo, Bator, Biafore, Brobrosky, Caroe, Castellarin, Cenerini, Cervo, Chabillon, Coccioloni, Derenzo, Dobek, Galicia, Galvon, Kadonaga, Koentges, Krkosky, Kroli, Kropinak, Kubik, Kutcher, Lucente, Marcial, Martini, Micherda, Olinek, Pagnucco, Perozak, Pinel, Rojek, Sartoris, Schilling, Sikina, Slopak, Samaniotto, Stella, Takahashi, Ulrich, Vanoni, Verbaas, Wojcik, Woo, Yacuibec.*

*My sister and I trudge up the stairs to the apartments above the commercial buildings on our section of Main Street—the small West End business section. Wide, creaky stairs. The familiar, slightly damp smell of steam heat, steam piped from a mine boiler across the river. This network of pipes heats many of the houses in the*

*neighbourhood, a perk originally provided by the mine owners to their managerial and office staff. These mainly two-story stucco houses are on wide, well treed lots in comparison to the smaller, wooden houses built more closely together in other sections of the town—the houses of the mine workers.*

*We knock and call: "Halloween Apples!"*

*Mrs. Hunter opens the door and smiles at my sister. I put my hands on either side of my eyes and pull them slanted.*

*"Chinky-chinky Chinaman," I say and wait for Mrs. Hunter to laugh. She doesn't. She does not reprimand me, but I know she is not pleased. I do not clearly understand why. I think it is because of the ugly face I have made. I have no recollection of exactly how many years later it is that I realize how offensive what I have done is and am filled with shame.*

This then, was the beginning of my exploration of my own Whiteness, my own attempt to understand the position of privilege I have taken for granted all my life, my attempt to understand how my privilege translates into lack of privilege for others. I started my journey as a "recovering racist" (Allingham, 1992, p. 15) with the hope that as a teacher I could help my students examine their own positions of privilege and begin their own journeys towards anti-racism.

### Chapter 3: The Research Process: A Journey Together

*...in seeking to live truthfully and in growing towards understanding, we are connected not only to the earth that surrounds us and the physical spaces of growing up—the backyards and fields and rivers of where we grew, the places we left behind to create new homes—but also to the ground of the heart.*

—Erika Hasebe-Ludt, 2002

#### First Period: The Grade 11 Class

The scene opens on a second floor classroom in a 1960s era red brick school. Eleven students sit at tables in front of a wall of windows that frame the snow-covered peaks of the Livingstone Range. The classroom is bright, the students quiet, eager, attentive; ready, this first day of class, to hear what their teacher has to say. They are busily filling out a survey designed to assess the degree of prejudice they feel towards Aboriginal people. They do not put their names on the surveys, but instead key them with an identifying symbol so that the surveys belonging to any who do not return the necessary permission forms can be discarded.

In front of the class stands the teacher, me—apprehensive but determined. As well as having the normal first-day-of-new-semester anxieties, I also worry that the students will not want to participate in the study, that they will not be engaged, that they will not like the literature selections, that English 20-1 (the university entrance stream of English in Alberta) will not be a positive experience for them.

Grouped together on the south end of the classroom are Linda, Kerry, Alana, and Cathy. Linda is an excellent student, quiet and thoughtful, following in the footsteps of a successful older sister. Kerry is bright and bubbly, daughter, granddaughter, and great-

granddaughter of teachers. Alana is beautiful and perceptive. Cathy is an eager and outspoken girl.

In the middle section of the room sit Kim, Christine, and Ashley. With them are Ritchie and Jim. Ritchie is outspoken and delights in challenging a teacher's comments, both orally and in writing. His attitude is reflected in his bright blond spikes, cheerful grin, and the fact that as the semester progresses he will pride himself on never being on time. Jim, who is a year older than his classmates, will join the class later. His experiences with me have not been positive and he has not hesitated in the past to express his dislike for my teaching methods and me. His presence in the class will initially cause me both discomfort and anxiety.

On the north end of the classroom sit Terrence and Jacob, both good-natured, serious students, Jacob in particular.

Pre-Tests and First Responses. I collect the surveys and introduce the topic of stereotyping with an exercise on the board: The students are to give three responses to each of the prompts "Texans all/always...", " Hockey Players all/always...", "Aboriginal People all/always..." and hand them in. The surveys will show that both male and female students hold negative prejudices against Aboriginal people. Of a possible low score of six (least prejudiced) and a high of 24 (most prejudiced) the boys have an average score of 10.67 and the girls of 9.71. (Males: mean = 10.67  $\pm$  SE 0.33; Females: mean = 9.71  $\pm$  SE = 0.4) see Figure 1, p. 76).

Orally, the students are shy about expressing the negative stereotypes they feel about Aboriginal people. They use euphemisms such as "problems with alcohol," "unemployed," but harsher terms in their written responses which focus on drinking

(22%) and what the students perceive as special privileges, "cheap smokes," for example, given only to Aboriginal people (11%). Several (3.7%) mention the fear they feel when in the presence of Aboriginal people, reliance on welfare (18%), lack of cleanliness (7.4%). Only two of the responses are non-derogatory in that they focus on traditional stereotypes: "long hair," "bows and arrows," "pow wows," "jingle dancers," and "pemmican." These responses show little improvement from Mackie's (1974, cited in Ponting 1998, p. 276) 1968-70 Edmonton study that found 30% of respondents emphasized laziness, poverty (29%), lack of education (29%), oppression by others (20%), lack of cleanliness (28%), excessive consumption of alcohol (21%), and lack of ambition (15%) (p. 276). It is disheartening to think that 30 years later my students hold many of the same views of Aboriginal people. What is worse is that they do not see Aboriginal people as victims, another stereotype Ponting identifies (p. 277), and do not, as Whites, feel any responsibility for the marginalized position of Aboriginals in Canadian society. These students are representative, as will be the majority of my students, of individuals at the Contact stage (Helms, 1990) of racial identity development. They have no concept of cultural and institutional racism, or of their privileged White position. The fear that some express and the naïve curiosity of others as indicated by their responses that focus on identifiable cultural differences are also typical of the Contact stage.

The discussion that follows focuses on why stereotypes have developed and the necessity for understanding the reasons for the behaviour that seems to fit the stereotypes. The students then go on to read Maria McLean's article, "Stereotypes Are for 'Others'"

(2001), and quickly get the point that, as Ritchie puts it, "White people have a lot of stereotypes for all other races, but little or none for themselves."

After discussion the next day, the students respond to the prompt "Stereotyping and Aboriginal People..." Despite his perceptive appreciation of the impact of stereotyping, Ritchie writes, "It seems as if most of the things said about them are true. Therefore in my mind they deserve the rep they get." He concludes with "there are exceptions and yes, I do like some Natives." Ritchie here indicates the discomfort and guilt that may be felt as one moves into the Disintegration stage (Helms, 1990) of racial identity development. He attempts to reduce his discomfort by denying that his beliefs are racist and by blaming the victims.

Unfortunately, despite their ability to see the harm in stereotyping, most of the students, like Ritchie, are unable or unwilling to link that general disapproval with the ideas they hold. It is as if the stereotypes they have are different from other stereotypes. Though the majority of the responses are negative there are some notable exceptions.

Ashley writes:

Stereotypes are seen everywhere and we need to stop contributing to them.

Especially in our area where we have a reserve just 45 minutes away and you only have to travel to Pincher Creek to see Natives. It is only the select few out of one race that creates a bad influence on society. We need to stop stereotyping.

Terrence is equally perceptive:

Seeing how the Natives came here first before we did, should they be the ones with the stereotypes? White people...tend to look at themselves as being the superior race; it wouldn't matter where you came from as long as you're White,



you're okay! Our stereotypes need to change if we as the human race are ever going to move ahead in our life.

Christine asks,

Do we really have the right as White people to stereotype others? There are White people who have long hair, who dress differently, and drink too much, but no one ever thinks anything about it because that person is White.

Cathy thinks, "It is unfair to judge a person only on what race they are. People can do good or bad things no matter what race they are."

My Own Journey. The classroom is empty. I sit alone at my desk, writing the thoughts generated by the classroom discussion of Thomson Highway's "My Canada" (2001):

*Edmonton, the spring of 1968, almost one year after the "summer of love." Expo 67 and Woodstock have come and gone. The flower children may still be on their way to San Francisco, but I am no longer tempted. Pierre Trudeau has ridden triumphantly down Jasper Avenue. Bobby Kennedy will not die until that June. My friend Ginger and I rent a basement suite, the bottom of a three-story house on a quiet tree-lined street just two blocks from Whyte Avenue and its cosmopolitan conglomeration of shops and cafés. It is like living in a small town. We easily carry groceries home from the Safeway on the corner, and the small German butcher shop, whose owner also advises us on the benefits of peppermint concoctions for our stomachs, is a favorite. Our "suite" comprises of a living room, a tiny alcove containing a stove, fridge, and sink, and a bedroom. Even with the two of us to split the rent, it is all we can afford. The bathroom is shared with the room across the hall and is tucked in the no-man's land of pipes and water heaters beside*

*the furnace. We have used our own funds to paint the two rooms and with the energy of youth have washed and scrubbed the cupboards, the floors, and the bathroom. The bathroom does have a door and can be locked. We have bleached the plastic shower curtain as best we can, and scraped as much rust, mildew, and the accumulated scum of soap residue, body hair, and unidentified other matter from the tin shower stall and the wooden platform on which we stand to shower. Our mission is to keep the bathroom clean. Never has one room been subject to so much bleach. We do not trust the tenant of the other suite to do her part.*

*Large, unattractive, and uncommunicative, Hildegard lives in the room across the hall from us. She is on welfare. We rarely see her, only sometimes catch glimpses of her stealthily adding to her locked food cupboard in the hall. Despite being on welfare, Hildegard has more food than we do. Our occasional glimpses past her protective bulk afford us the sight of rows and rows of tins, the red of Campbell soups, the green of Del Monte vegetables. With the righteousness and rigidity of thought reserved for the young, we resent Hildegard and her food. Despite being on welfare, Hildegard sometimes babysits for her sister and does not report this added income to the authorities. We have added it up. Between babysitting and her welfare cheque, Hildegard makes more than we do. I am working in an art gallery of sorts in West Edmonton, a job that requires an hour bus ride each way. I could be collecting welfare and making just as much money. I know nothing yet of the circumstances that lead people to welfare, the lack of hope that pervades their very existence. I am convinced that we live in a meritorious society, that every one has had the same chances to succeed that I, the white Anglo-Saxon daughter of a much loved small town doctor, have had.*

*I am not totally unsympathetic to others less fortunate. I am passionately pro-Israel, part of my teenage rebellion against the British heritage of my parents and the inequities I see perpetuated by British colonialism. Leon Uris's Mila 18 (1962) and Exodus (1958), Forster's A Passage to India, (1965) have shaped my thinking. I have dated a Black exchange student while at school in Calgary, as have all my friends, evidence of our free thinking and lack of prejudice. I have not dated an Aboriginal person, but envied a friend who went out with one of the Gladstones from Cardston, his good looks made doubly fascinating by the fact that he was Native.*

*Though I knew or had even seen very few Aboriginal people, I had a childhood fascination with their culture. They were part of a Peter Pan world of magic and adventure. One of the few Aboriginal people in our community, Mrs. Silverhorn, living in her tidy little house and occasionally babysitting us, was a disappointment because she did not fit the stereotype already formed in my mind by Western movies and books. On the rare occasions we drove through the Peigan reserve, I begged to go slowly so I could see a "real Indian." Each summer I was allowed to purchase an "Indian" doll from the Waterton Lakes souvenir store, spending hours deliberating on my choice. Did I want an Indian maiden, her long black braids held back with a beaded headband, her soft, fringed buckskin dress reaching almost to tiny beaded moccasins? Or an Indian mother, her baby fitted snugly into the cradleboard carried on her back? The shelf and its birch-bark canoes, teepees laced together with plastic portrayed a village of happy people, all with shiny black braids, and sparkling black eyes. It is only years later that I see what a metaphor for the attitude white society has for the Aboriginal people this "village" is— isolated, marginalized, thought of as curiosities, tourist attractions—"Other."*

*The Edmonton summer continues, and one day we come home to find a For Rent sign on the lawn. Hildegard is leaving. We are overjoyed, glad that we will no longer have to deal with her sullen resistance to our efforts at hygiene, glad that we will no longer have to share a bathroom with her, glad that we will no longer smell the musty sunwashed odour that marks her passage and lingers in the hallway. The landlord stops by to say he has advertised the suite and is setting up appointments to view it. Will we give any interested passers-by his phone number? And we agree.*

*The doorbell rings. I am alone, Ginger still at work. I go to the door, unsuspecting, unprepared for what I am about to do. I open the door to an Aboriginal couple, probably in their mid-thirties. Quickly I take in their appearance. They are both overweight and even from my threadbare perspective, shabbily dressed. Even on this hot summer day he wears a parka, she a loose denim shirt over jeans. She has a round, plump face and bright smiling eyes. Her hair is short and curly. They bring with them a faint odour of perspiration and alcohol. Real Indians. Do I even wait for the question before I say, "I'm sorry. It's already rented."?*

*Her expression does not change. Her eyes continue to smile at me as she nods as if to say this is what she expected. Does she nod because she believes me or because she is already inured to possible hurt and knows what a risk she is taking in asking a White person for accommodation? Already I am ashamed, and know that however much I rationalize my actions, I will not be able to forgive myself. But I do not take the words back, do not run after them saying, "I made a mistake." (Journal, February 2003)*

Thirty-five years later I am still ashamed. Thirty-five years later I still have not forgotten her eyes.

It is not until two years later, when I return to university, that I am exposed to ideas that shatter my preconceptions and beliefs about Aboriginal people. An American professor talks about Canadian racism, our belief that Aboriginal people have to be protected from alcohol because they are genetically unable to process alcohol in the way that Whites are. For the first time I see the Interdict list, the banning of alcohol from reserves, the banning of Aboriginal people from bars for what they really are: racist, patronizing and condescending actions towards a people we do not value or treat the way we treat ourselves as Whites.

Though I am further along Helms' (1990) scale than are my students when we start our research, I still have a lengthy journey to make. Though I insist on equal treatment of all minority groups and am vigilant against any expression of prejudice in my classroom, I think of racism as "individual acts of meanness," not what Alice McIntyre has defined as the "system and ideology of white dominance that marginalizes and oppresses people of color, ensuring existing privileges for white people" (1997, p. 3).

It is not until reading Tomson Highway's (2001) piece, "My Canada," that I lose further remnants of my unconscious racism. Tomson Highway writes eloquently of his love for Canada, how "his little Cree heart just puffs up with pride" when he thinks of "all the people we've received," who "live in a situation of relative harmony, cooperation, and peace" (p. 49).

Ashley expresses the surprise that the class feels after reading the piece to find that Tomson Highway is Aboriginal. The class is surprised because "we treat Natives so badly" and yet Highway speaks so highly of Canada and what it means to be a Canadian. I feel the same surprise. I am not sure if the class experiences the same moment of "racial

awakening" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 1) that I do. I am amazed at Highway's generosity of spirit and the fact that he and I share the same feelings for our homeland. And then it dawns on me—he is more a full citizen of this country than I am—and I stop thinking of Aboriginal people as Other. I stop thinking of what Whites have done to Natives and I start thinking of what we have done to each other.

This is not an attempt to deny that race is an issue, to become "colorblind" (McIntyre, p. 126) in the sense that "being colorblind allows White people to both ignore the benefits of Whiteness and dismiss the experiences of people of colour" (p. 126). It is an attempt to regard myself in all ways the same as people of color, to regard the world from a perspective other than my own, one that I have always taken for granted and accepted as the norm.

The idea that "race is theoretically and empirically a meaningless term, that it lacks scientific and analytical status and must accordingly be discarded" (Miles, 1980, cited in Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 13), that what is important is that we are all members of one human race, is one that I try to teach my students. At the same time, no one can deny the importance that race has in our society. Our society, despite our wishful thinking, remains "colour-coded" (Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p.14). Race has a social, political, cultural, and intellectual meaning in our society. To take the position that because race has no scientific validity it is meaningless and thus promulgate the "public discourse of a colour-blind society is [an action] as insidious as the practice of racism itself" (Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 14). What is important is that we disassociate negative meanings from race, that we realize that "race is not connected to racism except through deliberate human action and response" (Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 14).

It has taken me 35 years to get to this point. I am expecting my students to experience the same shift in thinking in just a few short weeks.

As a first narrative assignment the students assume the persona of one of the characters in "Voices of the Grandmothers: Reclaiming a Métis Heritage" (Welsh, 2000). Most of the girls chose to write from the perspective of Margaret Taylor, the Métis woman who, with her children, was abandoned by her "country husband," George Simpson, when he returned from England with a White bride. The boys write from the perspective of George Simpson, the Governor of Rupert's Land. All adopt an empathetic and perceptive stance. With the quick judgement of teenagers, they readily respond to the unfairness of Margaret's abandonment and judge Simpson harshly.

From the narrative we move to an essay, first reading the story, "Suburbs of the Arctic Circle" (Burns, 1994), a story of the effect on the occupants of a small Yukon town when an elderly Aboriginal man is left to freeze to death outside a local bar. We discuss the ways in which the characters do or do not take a stand, and I used the example of my own response to hearing the word "Nici" as an RCMP corporal told a joke about Native people at a neighborhood party years ago. Though I had never heard the term, I could tell by the tone that in this instance it was derogatory. I did not laugh, but neither did I object or leave. I wonder now if the derogatory reference had been to Black people if the teller would have been as comfortable telling it and if the response would have been the same. I remember my discomfort at hearing the joke and my inability to say something. "What would have been the right thing to do?" I ask my students. In a small community it is difficult for an adult to take a stand against the majority and still be able to socialize. This is very apparent in our staff room. The racist comments have almost

stopped as more and more people have become aware of my research project. Yet when I hear someone say, "Not all the parents in Brocket are stupid, you know," in reference to parents living on the reserve sending their children to Pincher Creek for schooling, I do not say anything but simply leave the room. If I still bite my tongue in an effort to maintain at least a semblance of harmony in the staff room, how can I expect students to stand up to their peers in our small school?

The students write in response to two prompts, "If I thought one of my friends had done something really wrong that hurt another person I would..." and, after that has been collected, "If I saw/heard my friend do something racist against a Native person I would..." I am hoping that the students will equate doing something wrong that hurts another person with a racist act, and will respond in virtually the same ways. Terrence writes, "If I knew for sure that whatever was being said hurt someone I would stop it" unless it was "simply a joke taken the wrong way, or said at the wrong time." Jim's comments are interesting and surprising:

You can make fun of somebody that's fat, or gay, or stupid, because they can change that. You can't change your race. That's the meanest thing you can do, maybe they don't want to be Black or Native...and then they go shoot themselves and it was your fault. How bad would you feel?

Cathy writes that she would "take offense and tell them my grandpa's part Native; and they shouldn't be so judgmental... Most of the time people are just repeating stereotypes with no reasoning."

I am pleased with their responses. All see racist actions as bad and would confront their friend, though with some qualifications: the presence of the Native person



would stop them; they indicated a hesitation to get "too involved" and express a desire to talk to their friend "afterwards."

In their essays the students show a perceptive understanding of the story and the tensions generated by racism: "It is so much a part of everyday life that people do not even realize the amount of discrimination and racism that goes on around them and are often part of the problem. . . . But we are the only ones that can actually attempt to fix the problems we have created. And by fixing the problem, we need to just learn to live together," writes Kerry. Kim states that, "Although it is often denied, minimized, or ignored, racism continues to shatter and destroy lives." Linda talks about the barriers racism creates that can only be broken down "if people have an open mind toward others that are of a different race. For ultimately, there is only one race, the human race."

Thomas King's short story "Magpies" (1993) provokes a different response. Ritchie finds it "dull," Ashley "really weird." Kerry comments that the reader "has to do all the work." All mentioned the choppy sentences and the difficulty they had reading them. They all laughed at the end line, "You can count on me" (p. 30), though, and are able to see the treatment of dying and burial as a vehicle to express cultural differences. Most sympathize with Granny and feel she has every right to follow her own customs. I play a tape of an Aboriginal storyteller, Dayton Edmonds, telling Trickster stories and the students listen well enough to be able to laugh appropriately, though Jim and Ritchie are skeptical. Jacob says he could listen to the stories all day. They are able to see how "Magpies" reflects many elements of traditional Aboriginal storytelling.

Our next work is Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water* (1999). I choose it partially because the setting is so close to our own area: Brocket is mentioned and we

explore the possibility that "Blossom" is Lethbridge. I want the students to identify the characters in the book, especially 15-year-old Tecumseh and Lum, with Aboriginal people they see in their visits to Pincher Creek and Brocket. I do not want them to say, "But they were different," because of geographic distance. The students respond well to the novel and quickly identify with Tecumseh and Lum in a variety of ways. Ashley parallels her relationship with her father to that of Tecumseh and his father: neither "communicate all that well." Jim writes of Lucy Rabbit:

She symbolizes the longing of the Natives to be accepted and considered attractive to the majority (White people). For many years they have been considered 'beneath' the White race. They have been discriminated against and hated to the point where many had to turn to alcohol to forget what we were doing to them.

Terrence, a dedicated track and field athlete, points out that "Lum's will to win his race at Indian days and all the training that he has been putting himself through shows exactly how a real dedicated athlete will work towards achieving his goals." Christine writes, "Lum wants a better relationship with his father, as I do with my mom and brothers." Kerry points out the unfairness that when both Whites and Natives wait to get work cleaning boxcars, "even though both races are equally capable of doing a good job and working to their full capacity, the Whites are always chosen first." When discussing the symbolism of the unfinished bridge between the two communities, Kelly writes that it shows the "gap between Whites and Natives" and goes on to ask why the "two cultures can't join together." The students are quick to appreciate King's use of humour to describe the reality of the characters' relationship to the White world. Lana points out that "after

Lum and Tecumseh witness the strange woman jumping off the cliff, Tecumseh suggests that they should go and tell the cops what happened, but Lum replies by saying, 'Sure...they love a good Indian joke.'" After discussing King's use of realistic dialect, Jacob goes on to say,

Some people do not see Natives as 'human beings' as much as they see Whites as 'human beings.' This is not to say that they are prejudiced against them, it is only to say that when they say 'Natives' they see them as what they expect them to be. This chapter...is a reminder that Natives are people just like any others."

Lum at one point in the story makes the statement: "Being blonde is the same as being white." I use this as a starting point to introduce the idea of White privilege. I read Peggy Macintosh's list to the class and we discuss those privileges that as White teenagers they take for granted. I ask them to work in small groups to express what it means to be White visually and accompany their representation with a written statement to be used in a class presentation.

The class responds with a variety of collages. Kelly and Alana surround a picture of one Native person with "blonde, beautiful people" to represent how the White race dominates other cultures, specifically Native. They paste words such as "beautiful" and "power" over the White faces because "that is the way our culture portrays them." They end by saying, "Whites power the world and everything that goes along with it, even though one culture is not better than the other is." Terrence and Jacob cut all the pictures of non-White people from an issue of *People* magazine and surround them with pictures of White people from the same magazine. The ratio of White to non-White is great, but

not as great as it should be because they do not have room to show the actual proportion.

They explain that

this easily shows us how the White people tend to have more role models, actors, actresses, and singers of the same race to look up to. The way our different races seem to be depicted in the one magazine gives us the idea of the kind of negative environment we live in. This negative environment, in turn, brings about stereotypical thoughts to our younger generations thereby continuing this cycle.

Linda and Kerry respond with a poem and a poster with White people outlined in a red circle in the center and surrounded by people of other races:

Whites are 'divine' and looked upon as fine.

Others are different, and do not belong within the red line.

The middle is the core, the Whites representing the norm.

Anything outside of that is considered just a bore.

Kirsten, Crystal, and Amanda surround one Aboriginal person with White faces to show that "not many Aboriginals seem to be in today's spotlight." Jim and Ritchie's presentation points out "what it means to be White is that we get more things shown about us, more 'social status and importance,' and just about everything better than any other race."

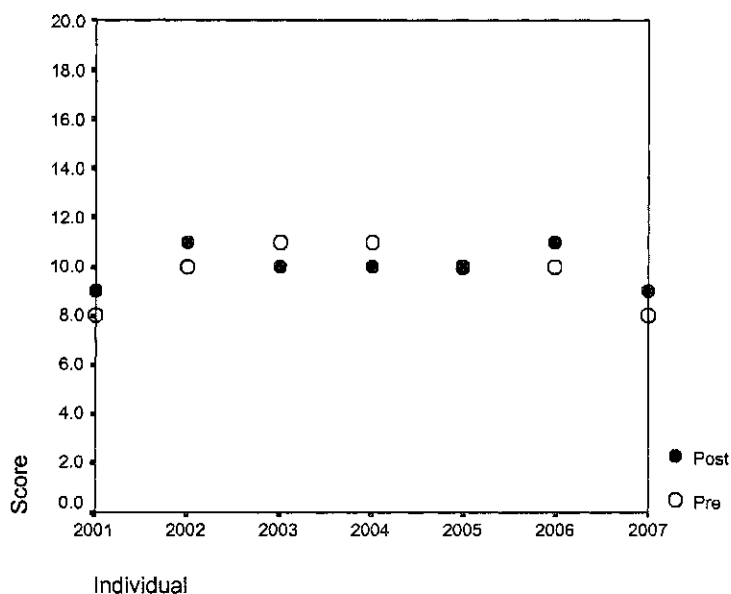
Post-Test Survey and Free-Association Results. The posters and presentations, as well as the enthusiastic response to the novel and its Aboriginal characters give me hope that the post-test survey will indicate that the class as a whole is considerably less prejudiced. It does not. The girls' average score has risen from 9.714 to 10 (three have risen, one has dropped, and three remain the same), and the boys' from 10.67 to 12.33.

(Females: mean =  $10 \pm SE = 0.31$ ; Males: mean =  $12.33 \pm SE = 2.96$ ) One boy's score has dropped from 11 to 8 while another's has risen from 11 to 18 (see Figure 1). Ritchie's feelings are reflected in his post-free association exercise, "Aboriginal people all, always..." in which he emphasizes drinking, violence, dishonesty, complaining and "causing trouble" in very negative language. While 19% of the class identify problems with alcohol, they do so in much more neutral language. They respond this time with much greater variety: keeping traditions (25%), stereotyped (9.67%), equal (9.67%), unhappy (6.45%), victims (6.45%), violent (6.45%), dependent on welfare (3.2%), poor (3.2%), culturally different (3.2%), and writers (3.2%). No one mentions special privileges or fear.

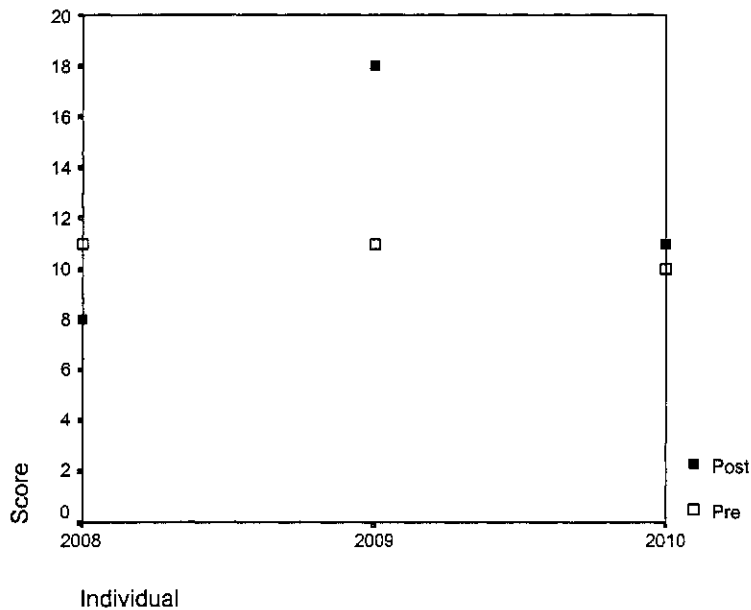
Figure 1

## Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Females and Males in Grade 11

## A. Female



## B. Male



Interviews: The Grade 11s Tell Their Stories. In the interviews, Jim and Ritchie both admit to racist feelings. The unit activities changed their behaviour "a bit, but not really." Though they "used to single them out" by avoiding, ignoring and making fun of Aboriginal people, now they imply they are less likely to do so. Jim doesn't know why he is racist: "It's just a thing that's been stuck in me. I like some; I don't hate all of them...." Ritchie feels that nothing can change his attitude: "Every Native I see acts the same way," though he is careful to say that he doesn't "go out and say things. I just think them." Both boys "didn't mind the novel." They say they did not identify with Tecumseh and Lum except when Tecumseh's dog, Soldier, died. The unit was "worth it" primarily because

doing it meant that they didn't have to do a lot of other things (more poetry) that they probably would not have liked.

The two remaining boys, Terrence and Jacob, say that the unit activities made them realize that racism "is out there," and that "Natives know it's there, too." The writings and poems by Native authors gave them a new perspective, "their opinion...not just your opinion, not just what you're used to." Jacob says that he was "never racist," but the short selections "about Natives complaining about themselves or complaining about what's going on when they're writing it, probably irritated me." The novel gave him "a different perspective than we dealt with the whole way through." When I ask if Lum and Tecumseh have the same opportunities as they do, Terrence answers,

Well, I think for us we are forced to work towards our goals, but you know a Native on a reserve he doesn't really have to. He can stay in his own little comfort zone. He doesn't have to branch out into the world the way we are forced to do so.

Jacob adds,

Maybe not growing up they might not have an equal chance. It seems like they don't want to have the chances. They think they are stuck there. They are on the reserve so they think why go out into the world and take that chance?

He goes on to say,

It would be a whole lot easier if everyone was a Canadian, right? There's no Aboriginal...I filled out this form for something and it said you had to be a Canadian citizen or an Aboriginal. I just think if everyone is a Canadian, I don't think they would face the stereotypes that maybe the reserves create.

Both think that the unit is worth doing, it's "an eye-opener," but next year I should deal with other examples of racism and stereotyping "like the Blacks or the East Indians." In this comment, I sense a discomfort at dealing with racism in their community, even though as Jacob says, "I don't think I should be feeling guilty....Just because one White person does it, do all the White people have to feel guilty for something that someone else did?" All understanding of the concept of White privilege seems to have gone.

This is a theme that is brought up by other students. Cathy and Alana ask, "Why should we be paying for the mistakes that [European settlers] made?" Both see the reserves as problems that "make them kinda look like they're different when they live in a different town with just them. It makes them stand out more." Both agree that the unit has affected their thinking, though Cathy feels that racism "isn't a big part of our lives 'cause we're not really racist here." Alana points out, however, that may be because "we don't really have the chance to be." Cathy is a lot "more aware now" and Alana says that she "used to have a lot of hatred toward them, too, like going through Brocket and all that." Cathy points out, "Now you see all the good things that they've done and not just the bad things like that's really all we've been exposed to." Both also feel that next year I should expand the focus to include other groups besides Aboriginals. Both agree that *Truth and Bright Water* is a "really good book" and also comment on how "Suburbs of the Arctic Circle" showed the separation between the Natives... 'cause that's how it is in lots of towns, people in Fort Macleod stereotyping them lots, not stopping for them just because they are Native." When I ask about their privileged position as Whites, they turn the question around: "Well, they make it seem like we have more privileges and rights than they do." And, "They get all the special treatment, like they get all their schooling paid



for." When we compare what an average miner makes to what a person on welfare makes, the response is that "Natives can get a job, too. It's not that they can't go out and get a job...." Despite the prejudices they reveal, Kelly ends with the plea, "Why can't we be us, just all of us?"

Ashley, Christine, and Kim form another group. They, too, feel that I should include different groups of people in the unit and agree that the novel is worth doing. Ashley says that she has been brought up to be non-racist and feels that the unit has had little effect on her thinking except to give her more of an understanding of how stereotyped Aboriginal people are. Christine says she "wasn't actually racist or anything," but now understands "more what their life is like and what they have to live with every day." Kim agrees that she now understands "what they go through."

Linda is away the days that we do the interviews, so Kerry is interviewed alone. She compares the stereotyping of Aboriginals to the stereotyping she gets as a "ditsy" blonde, though it is "not as harsh." She is much more aware of stereotypes and thinks that the work we have done has increased her knowledge of them. She speaks perceptively of the position she occupies in society compared to the position of Aboriginals:

It's not like there isn't White drunks. I think we exclude ourselves because we're the majority and we can do that. I think it makes us feel better when we can say, "Oh, look at those drunk Natives." I think we just excuse ourselves for doing the same things or maybe we don't relate to them or we don't want to give them a chance...so they have to be the drunken slobs and we have to be the high quality standard people.

The unit has made her "more knowledgeable." She thinks "more about it, because before I was thinking of us as one big happy family world—but it's not." She expresses her confusion:

They have all the stereotypes, but really they are the same as us. A lot of them don't want to live on reserves, they want to be equal with us, but at the same time I don't know if they can, I don't know the whole situation. . . .It's harder because we don't really look at the good things about them.

#### Second Period: The Grade 12 Class

The scene changes to another class—17 English 30-1 (the grade 12 university entrance stream) students. I have looked forward to working with this class. It is always my favourite. I delight in the students' ideas and their ability to express those ideas. I enjoy the level of discussion, the opportunity to discuss ideas at a different level than with younger students. This, I think, is where my research will have its most profound effects. I am not wrong in thinking this, but the process and the results are not what I expect. This will be my most difficult class.

As I begin the process of explaining the research project and distributing permission forms and surveys I do not have the same attentive group that I had with the 20s. Marcel, Kenny, and Lawrence are loud and obnoxious. I am not surprised at Marcel's behaviour. He was the same in English 20. His school career has been distinguished by immature, attention seeking behaviour. He does not, even in grade 12, know when he has crossed the line between what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour and what is not. It did not take long before he was the subject of negative comments in the staff room during the first semester. Though I have seen his name on the class list, I

do not anticipate any real problems. I expect that the tone of the class and the attitude of the other students, most determined to achieve good results on their diploma exams, will exert a controlling influence. I am wrong.

Kenny is a very different student. He is bright but lost. As the semester progresses he will be kicked out of his house and end up sleeping wherever he can find shelter before being taken in by a family from his church. He, too, is attention seeking, but in a less disruptive manner than Marcel. Despite kicking in his parents' television, he has a gentle side to him, a wistfulness that seems to express his disappointment and perplexity at the way his life is turning out.

Lawrence is a small boy who has completed English 30-3 (the non-university entrance grade 12 English) and now wants to try 30-1. He is a talented cartoonist and a perceptive thinker. He and I got along well when I taught him in English 10-2. There, only his lack of good work habits prevented him from an honours mark. What he lacks in stature he makes up for in loudness, entering the room with a loud "Whazz-up!" He is in class to be entertained and readily attaches himself to Marcel and Kenny.

Pre-Tests and First Responses. Instead of leading an enthusiastic discussion about my research project and the students' part in it, I first must establish rules for appropriate behaviour and what my expectations are, something I have not had to do with an English 30 class before. This is not how I wanted to start with them. Once those rules are established, however, the discussion goes well. I use "Teenagers," "Hockey Players," and "Aboriginal People" for the free-association exercise and find that the students are able to make the association between the stereotyping they experience and the stereotyping of Native people. The responses are in many cases more thoughtful and developed than

were the 20s. Eva expresses a concern that will come up again and again: the perceived economic benefits of being Aboriginal. "After all," she writes, "we didn't do anything to them. The people hundreds of years ago did." She goes on to say that Native people are "regular people" who are "not treated so good." While Kenny refers disparagingly to alcohol use, he also adds that Aboriginals "are not to blame necessarily." James writes: "Native people have the potential to succeed if they try; they take advantage of money given them by the government; they need to take responsibility for how they portray themselves." Many of the other responses repeat even more negative stereotypes, sometimes viciously. Those written by Marcel, Kyle, and Beric are the worst. Lawrence, starting a pattern that ends with his dropping the course, does not hand in a response. Though I am shocked and troubled at the frightening lack of empathy for another group of humans that is revealed in the responses, I am not surprised. The comments from the class as they prepared to do the exercise are an indication of their feelings and range from Marcel's, "What if I can't be rational?" to Ethan's appreciation that there is something wrong with thinking the things that he does: "What if it isn't going to be very nice?"

In this class too, we read M. C. McLean's "Stereotypes Are for 'Others'" (2001) and the class is asked to respond in writing to the question of how stereotyping affects Native people. I tell Marcel that the exercise is in response to his question, "Why don't you just ask us?" I do not tell him that I am afraid to ask them. I find myself already caught in the same dilemma I explained in detail in my methodology. I cannot listen to the horribly racist comments that I know are going to arise without expressing my disapproval and disgust. Yet these are my students who trust me enough to be honest with me. I have assured them that my disapproval of their ideas will not affect their marks. I

must struggle to differentiate between my dislike of their ideas and my opinion of them as students who must be made to feel valued and secure in my classroom. Though I sense some reluctance to voice their thoughts, it is not to the same degree as it was with the 20s. Despite having had more schooling than the 20s, the survey results reflect the 30s' increased level of prejudice. The girls have an average score of 10 and the boys of 12.45. (Males: mean = 12.45  $\pm$  SE = 1.41; Females: mean = 10  $\pm$  SE = 0.82) (see Figure 2, p. 104). The increased openness the 30s reveal may be not only because of their increased confidence, but also because I am not a new teacher to these students. I have taught all of them before and act as their grad advisor, working closely with many of them all year.

In their responses to the article, the students demonstrate their understanding of the dangers of stereotyping and the fact that they, as Whites, tend to form the stereotypes, not suffer from them. Their views on the ways that Native people are stereotyped are varied. Myrna, whose best friend is the only visibly Native student in our school, writes,

Even with my respect for the Natives, I disagree with a few things. One is the free ride that many get and some abuse. A system was set in place to help them and they abuse the privileges they have.

This will be a recurrent theme with this class. Jason and Brian, who both play hockey with and against Native players, express different views. Brian confesses to holding very stereotypical views "until this year when I participated on a hockey team with many Natives and developed a new perspective of the First Nations people. I have learned not to judge people before I get to know them." Jason writes movingly that "Natives are people, they make mistakes. But like all people they have feelings. They laugh, they cry, they love, and they hurt." Another member of their hockey team, Kyle, does not share

their perspective. He writes from a morally less mature position, one that he will reiterate throughout the semester:

I don't like Indians. The last one I played hockey against hit me from behind and then laughed. I feel the government wastes citizens' tax money by giving those [expletives] anything. They always bitch about racism and wanting to be treated like everyone else, but if the government took away treaty cheques to make them even and made them pay taxes like everyone else, they would whine even more. I see Indians as a detriment to society.

Brandon, who had earlier, as a grade 11 student, commented on the special privileges accorded to Aboriginal people, feels that "Natives live up to people's expectations and stereotypes." He feels their "special privileges" are abused and Natives should be "forced to integrate with the rest of the population." Then, "with more people getting to know more Natives, the stereotypes will eventually diffuse, and equality will take a new precedence." Kyle's writing is an indication of the contradictions I will find within individual students. Though he is verbally one of the most racist in his comments, he writes sympathetically:

In this area many Natives do live the stereotype. But I don't think they are necessarily to blame. From the time the White man came to North America, he acted superior and took advantage of Indians. When John A. MacDonald was Prime Minister he waged war on the Métis, half Whites and half Indians. As the war went on the Blackfoot nation helped government in hopes of rewards, but after defeating the Métis they were screwed over. Ever since that time the White man has taken everything from the Indians they wanted, and paid them to stay on

the worst land in the country. If that happened to me I would be a drunk [expletive] as well. Most of us do have some Indian heritage in us so we shouldn't discriminate.

Kenny later tells me that his great-grandmother is full-blooded Native, and despite his blond hair and blue eyes, he is one eighth Aboriginal. James, one of the top students in the school has almost daily contact with Aboriginal people through his job in Pincher Creek. "Though," he writes, "many Natives have risen above the typical stereotypes placed on them, there is still a much greater proportion of drunk Natives than in the rest of the population, giving some weight to the stereotypes." He goes on to give examples of stereotypical behaviour he has observed at his job, which he feels is "digging an even deeper hole." Danny, an equally strong student, gives me hope with his opening line that "Natives receive treatment that is unjust and unfair." But, he goes on to say, "They receive government funds for a tragedy that has long passed...Natives need to be stripped of their special rights and integrated into society." Ethan picks up on this theme, arguing that "Natives have as much opportunity as we do and should see it as a responsibility to their image to become successful." Though in his view, "often stereotypes have some validity because people are a product of their environment, we should blame our culture for the problems faced by theirs." Tim, a first-generation Chinese Canadian, feels that the Native people he has met and talked to are "no different than a typical White or any others in the world. They have families and jobs that pay well." Rob writes with both sensitivity and lack of feeling, combining tolerance and prejudice. He writes,

The majority of the population does not come into contact with highly successful or wealthy Natives. Instead they only catch glimpses of the roadside bums tipping back a bottle of Lysol. I know several Natives from Brocket who are pleasant, caring people and responsible citizens. One of them is a Pentecostal Minister. I realize that only a small portion of Natives have bad lifestyles because I've interacted with more than just the drunken bum chasing a dog with a stick.

Despite his apparent tolerance, his real attitude is revealed by his use of the word "bum" and the examples he chooses to illustrate what he says is not his point of view.

Kyle, Beric, Marcel, and Lawrence are most disparaging and insulting. Marcel lists common stereotypes and states that he agrees with them. Derek says that "there is a natural good in everyone, although I really struggle to *want* [emphasis his] to take a second look at any of them to see if I can find any." Lawrence gives his perception of a reservation and ends with a complaint that centers on the misuse of taxes and lack of respect.

Of the girls, Nola's attitude most closely parallels the worst of the boys'. She uses vituperative language to illustrate her feelings despite working with an Aboriginal girl whom she likes. Though she concedes that "there are lots of different kinds of Natives out there," she also feels "it only takes one to ruin the reputation of them all." She writes negatively of "all" Natives, even though "this is the wrong attitude to have." Janine writes that she has only seen "bad Natives" but knows that "there are plenty of good ones out there," though she is "waiting for one good one to change her perception." As she develops her thoughts, though, her sense of fair play comes to the fore and she comments that though she may "see a Native drinking and smoking, so do most teenagers. Harsher



views are instilled upon Natives and the moment they do bad things society jumps in saying, 'I told you so! People are afraid of the unknown.'" Chelsea echoes the fear that Janine expresses, as well as the double standard that is applied to Native people:

Broken glass from empty beer bottles lying in the ditches is evidence of what they do with their free time. However, beer bottles litter the ditches of the CNP but it is okay for us to drink in our free time because we're White. I have listened to the music that makes fun of Lysol drinking, wife beating Natives and laughed, knowing that deep down it really isn't funny. However, viewing and hearing these stereotypes constantly only encourages my viewpoint. I've never had seriously racist attitudes towards Natives, yet they scare me as they pace back and forth through the food court at Park Place Mall. Maybe my stereotypical views are more serious than I believe, but it's hard to change that when I can see firsthand why I think this way.

As a lead-in to Nadine Gordimer's "Happy Event" (1993), I introduce Peggy MacIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1989), hoping that the students who easily see the unfairness of the situation in South Africa and the position of privilege that White South Africans enjoyed under the system of apartheid, will be able to transfer that understanding to southern Alberta and their own positions of privilege. They are able to understand on an immediate level—they are not restricted from buying certain items in stores because of their race. They talk about the courage it must have taken for the young Aboriginal dancers who recently performed at the school to come to a high school like ours. They speak of how they are able to go anywhere and not worry about not being welcome because of their colour. "Except Brocket," they say. "We only go in

groups and we are still chased out." This prompts Marcel to make exceptionally disparaging remarks and I take him outside the room to talk to him. The rest of the class says, "No! You can't throw him out. It's only day two and we have a bet that he will last three days." We finish with a discussion of South Africa's apartheid system. The empathy they feel for Black South Africans is reflected in their essays. Many refer to them as "slaves" and use the term "White privilege" when referring to the power and status White Ella has in contrast to her Black servant, Lena. A discussion of the differences leads to a discussion of welfare and the difficulty families can have getting off welfare. Kyle brings the discussion back to Canada and the number of Aboriginal people he assumes are on welfare, who wouldn't be "if they used their cheques for something instead of new Ford trucks." As I open my mouth, Jason jumps in with a defense of Native people who "do not all use their cheques that way—some put it to good use." When I say that I don't think that welfare payments would pay for a truck I am not believed. When Black South African Lena is sent to jail, Gordimer writes:

For Africans there is no stigma attached to any involvement with the forces of the law; the innumerable restrictions by which their lives are hedged from the day they are born make transgressions commonplace and punishment inevitable. To them a few days in prison is no more shaming than an attack of the measles. After all, there are few people who could go through a lifetime without once forgetting to carry the piece of paper which is their "pass" to free movement about the town, or without getting drunk, or without sitting on a bench which looks just like every other bench but happens to be provided exclusively for the use of people with pale skin. (p. 358)

Building from that I ask the class to read "An Alternative to Incarceration" (Heaton, Cohen, & McManus, 1991) which points out that though Aboriginals comprise only two percent of Canada's population, they make up 10 percent of the prison population. And on the prairies the percentage jumps to 32%. Kyle easily draws a parallel between the attitudes of Black South Africans to jail and that of Canadian Aboriginals. He makes very negative comments about why so many Aboriginal people are incarcerated and then changes his "All Natives" to "Some Natives." I pick up on the "some" and comment that I am glad to see that he is modifying his thinking at least a bit. Kenny stays after class to talk to me about a writer he has met and the life he leads.

The next day, Kenny leads the discussion with a very derogatory comment and Marcel and Kyle join in. Their references to Native people are crude and hurtful. They play off one another: "Savage beasts." "Put them all on a mountain top somewhere away from us, I don't care." "If we had not come to North America they would still be throwing spears at buffalo humps." Their comments illustrate "the diffusionist myth of emptiness" (Henderson Youngblood, 2000, p. 60) which attempts to justify colonization on the grounds that the gift of "civilizing ideas" more than makes up for the "confiscation of material wealth by Europe from non-Europe" (p. 61).

I do not handle it well. Instead of removing the boys from the room, and dealing with them in private, I lose my temper and attack. Kenny stops, but Kyle continues and I make denigrating remarks about attention seeking, attacking him as well as what he is saying. I am flushed and angry, sick to my stomach, and almost in tears. He reacts angrily—"You told us you wanted us to be honest." Marcel picks up on the theme, and turns it into an attack on me. At this point, the other students intervene and tell me to

throw him out. "This isn't about free speech, Mrs. Gill. He's just being rude and we don't want to hear any more and you shouldn't have to either." Marcel goes to the office where he drops the class, saying I am forcing him to read things he doesn't want to but get upset when he tries to voice an honest opinion. I am using the class as guinea pigs, he charges.

Beverly Tatum (1992), in her work teaching undergraduate courses on the psychology of racism, warns that the discussion of "issues of oppression often generates powerful emotional responses in students that range from guilt to shame to anger and despair" (p. 2). Withdrawal, avoiding contact with the topic of racism, is a strategy for dealing with the discomfort experienced. I am not sure if this is only what is upsetting Marcel. Mine is not the only class he drops. His reaction does, however, serve to warn me of how great the danger of increasing student resistance is, and that I risk actually increasing prejudice rather than reducing it.

I start class the next day with an apology to Kyle. I try to explain how upset I am to hear the hatred and dislike they express for another group of human beings. I value their honesty, I tell him and the class, but sometimes it is just too much to take. This leads to a discussion of why the term "Aboriginal" should be used instead of "Indian." Eva asks what I have found in my research that would help Native people. I have to say that I don't know. All I can say is that the answers have to come from Native people, not us. "Are we as Whites qualified to speak?" she asks.

I introduce Linda Cunningham's (1994) poem, "Dakota Grain." I am almost afraid to after yesterday's class, but I want to shock them into realizing why I am so upset at the blatant racism they have articulated. I want them to see what the consequences of racism can be. The poem is brutally graphic in its depiction of the rape of a young Native girl by

two police officers. Because of its subject matter and language I have discussed using it with my principal who trusts my judgement. I warn the class of what they can expect and tell them that no one has to read it. No one refuses. The poem works. Many are almost unable to respond: "I am having trouble even verbalizing my thoughts on this poem," writes Ethan. Brandon asks,

If this is what society has stooped to, then where can we expect the rest of the world to go? Maybe it would be better if Saddam Hussein and George Bush obliterate the entire world. It is with deepest regret that I have to read this poem, but even the idea of it has opened my eyes to the real world. Reading this makes me want to be a better person, and do whatever possible to right these wrongs.

After commenting on the "sick and twisted [people] on this earth, especially the ones who reinforce the law but are breaking it," Rob looks for a sanitized way of dealing with the ugliness: "They make many racial comments that make me want to cringe. All I have to say is some people's kids! I tell ya!" Brittany goes on to say, "This poem goes to show...that maybe we shouldn't judge so harshly the Native culture. The treatment they get from the White people is absolutely appalling." Chelsea observes that "if it had been a White girl they may have been too afraid that she would come forward. But in this girl's case, who would believe a drunken Native?" Nola speaks of how "betrayed and unsafe" the young girl must have felt. Danny: "The truth hurts and the truth is that in a prejudiced society she is very alone and vulnerable." Kenny likes the graphic depiction of the rape: "Finally an author who doesn't sugarcoat everything or barely mention a topic." Beric does not want to deal with the ideas raised by the "sick and disgusting" poem that used "too much detail." Kyle's macho perspective is revealed in his comments: "Maybe raping

young girls, so drunk they don't know what's happening makes the cops feel like big, tough, powerful men. But it doesn't. It makes them look like pussies, raping a drunk, young, Native." Myrna is "appalled that anyone can do this to another human being" and speechless: "I still don't know what to say."

To bring a Canadian focus to the discussion, I mention Jack Ramsey, a former RCMP officer, who when accused of raping a young Aboriginal girl he had in his cells admitted to going so far as to undo his belt and unzip his flies, but then change his mind (The Calgary Sun, 1994, p. 4.).

At this point I sense a change in the class. There is suddenly a genuine interest in the problem of racism and I am hopeful once again.

*One Step Forward...*

*The front row boys  
are there for a reason,  
used to be  
in fact,  
the back row boys  
until  
too much foolin' around*

*led to angry words,  
red faces...  
sarcasm  
slighting references to attention seeking  
and*

*mutual apologies.*

*And now we get along  
these front row boys and I.  
I'm  
their  
captive audience.*

*The front row boys keep me up-to-date  
on what goes on in their world.*

*Reality TV 301*

*"I was lookin' for it in the morning  
'cause I know I did it  
but I couldn't find it—  
puked on my pillow."*

*Cars, Beer, Hockey, and Sex.  
Suddenly they're six feet tall  
—Go figure.*

*They don't have girlfriends yet  
these hard-talking,  
posturing,  
front row boys.  
They're still tryin' way too hard...  
expressing their sentiments  
on the front of their T-shirts—  
"Orgasm Donor"—  
with wistful bravado.*

*Sometimes they surprise me*

*Ask to write a poem  
" 'cause sometimes when you read one,  
you just want to write one."  
Telling just me,  
quietly  
that they don't think  
God  
hates  
homosexuals—  
" 'cause how can you  
hate someone  
for something they can't help?"*

*(But "that's gay"  
is applied to anything and everything:  
a story, a test—  
all that they dislike.)*

*Just when I think  
we've taken a step forward  
they tell me:*

*"Last night we almost picked up a guy on the reserve—*

*pulled up beside him  
and when he was going to get in  
we pulled away.  
We laughed like crazy".*

*I am*

*Trying desperately to believe  
that  
more than geography  
separates  
my front row boys  
from the  
dark glasses,  
Stetsons,  
beer bellies  
and bigotry*

*of Buford...Bubba...Billy Bob...  
And the rest of*

*Those good old boys. (March 2003)*

We move on to a chapter from Will Ferguson's *Bastards and Boneheads*, "Apartheid: the Politics of Treaty-making" (1999), in which Ferguson compares South Africa's apartheid with the Canadian system of isolating and excluding its Aboriginal people on reserves. The class is intrigued by the title of Ferguson's book and responsive to the points he makes. The notion of reserves as concentration camps "for nomadic people" or perhaps more accurately "holding pens" (p. 148) is one they have not considered before. Ferguson's discussion of enfranchisement—the voluntary relinquishment of Native identity—introduces a concept that was as foreign to me as it is to the students. Like many of my students I assumed that assimilation was a desired goal. It would end the problems of the reserves—Whites and Aboriginal people would all get along on White terms. Ferguson shows how racist the idea is:



...if a Native person was good, if he was very good, if he learned English or French and agreed to give up Native customs, languages and religion, he would be allowed to "graduate." That is, he would be granted the privilege of *not* being an Indian.  
(p.148)

Fortunately, these students have not had the exposure to Duncan Campbell Scott that my generation had. I read them "The Forsaken" (1990):

the worst poem ever written by a respected literary figure. In it an Indian woman baits a fishhook *with her own flesh* in order to feed her starving child. Years later, as a withered old woman (natch), she is abandoned in the woods by her people "without a word of farewell." Why? "Because she was old and useless." She dies. Of course. (Ferguson, 1999, p. 151)

This poem was anthologized as recently as 1990 in an English 10-1 text. The students struggle to grasp why this is denigrating and insulting, just as I did only a few short years ago, when a student introduced me to Ferguson. "Can you imagine your own mother doing this?" I ask. "Can you imagine anyone doing this? Is this an accurate representation of Aboriginal people as people?" Slowly we loosen the grip of our conception of Aboriginal people as "Other."

From this we move to Margaret Laurence's "The Loons" (1963). Where previous classes showed no empathy for Piquette, the majority of these students sympathize with her desire to belong and readily see Vanessa's view of Piquette as "a daughter of the forest, a kind of junior prophetess of the wilds" (p. 119), as condescending, part of the view of Aboriginals as "Noble savages" they were able to identify in Scott's writing. As I check first drafts of their essays, I am impressed by the confidence with which they write;

they have something to say about the position of Aboriginal Canadians and White responsibility and they say it with conviction. Several have gone to the Internet for an appropriate quotation to use in their introduction and have found words of Tennessee Williams, "We are all sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life," to use as a starting point. Nola writes,

Native people in Canada are still very much marginalized. We set them aside on reserves and expect them to abide by the rules we set for them. We do not allow them to have alcohol sold on their reserves or own private land, but we make it all right by giving them a treaty cheque at the end of the month.

"Because of the rigid, predetermined outlook we have of the Native members of our society, we inflict both an injustice to them as well as ourselves," observes Brittany. Without knowing it, Brittany has identified yet another harmful aspect of racism, the fact that, as Henderson Youngblood (2000) states, "Through taking identity against their construction of 'Indians,' Europeans and colonialists become bound in their own being by the terms by which they oppress others" (p. 64). Intuitively, Brittany senses the harm we do to ourselves by denigrating other human beings.

In his struggle to express his feelings, Jason becomes almost profound: "Yet, as we view the crying of the loons as beautiful, we view the crying of a Native as a product of alcohol and drugs." All but Kyle, Beric, and Kenny write from a sympathetic perspective. While they acknowledge that "through race and culture people are segregated into insiders and outcasts of society," they go on to deal with the facts of the story without commenting on Piquette's isolation.

The difference between the boys' thinking and the girls becomes apparent when we read an excerpt from Beatrice Mosionier's *April Raintree* (1984). Though the boys are not unsympathetic, they see the story of the two sisters as evidence that, as Rob puts it, our decisions dictate our future and not our situations. Both girls were Native and foster kids, but they each chose different paths in life. Cheryl took the easy way of drinking, prostitution, and suicide. But April strove to earn respect, earn wealth, and make her family proud.

For many, the excerpt serves to reinforce the stereotypes they have of Aboriginal people and alcohol. Danny writes: "Alcohol is the demon that does this to her people. After all, they are too weak to resist the temptation." James, more sympathetically, suggests that both April and Cheryl have recognized the situation their family and relatives have been thrust into, but "they nonetheless fall into the same pattern of alcoholism and apathy that seems to have engulfed the remainder of their fragile culture."

The girls respond with much more emotion. Nola has "made her mom read it too." and writes sympathetically of Cheryl, who was a "good person" who became "everything she resented and despised. After a while of reading I started not to even think of Cheryl as a Métis. I thought of her as any old White person just looking for her heritage...." Though Nola expresses the stereotype of the Native as victim, it is a more sympathetic view than she has expressed before. Myrna comments on Cheryl's potential, her loss of hope, and finishes with a discussion of April, "who realizes what is happening and segregates herself from her culture and heritage. Losing heritage is almost as bad as losing hope." Janine writes a poem from Cheryl's perspective and comments that "April should not have surrendered her background and family. She left behind something in her

past that is too important to ignore." Eva writes of the sadness of the story and April's reading about Métis and Indians "who were inclined to be alcoholics, weak, put down more than anyone else....She should not think that about herself and her people." Chelsea equates alcoholism with being Métis, and comments that

the stereotypes of these people are reinforced in the story when discussing Cheryl's life. However, April contradicts these stereotypes by displaying her success in following the course of the rest of the family. This proves that not all Métis people or any non-Whites are destined for a life of poverty and alcohol.

Brittany writes that

I now have some kind of idea of the pain they go through, and how hard it is to break a continuous cycle when you live in the middle. It is not easy for them, and they become lost souls who are unwanted. This makes them turn to alcohol that eats them up inside and out.

Towards the end of the unit we read Thomas King's short story "Joe the Painter and the Deer Island Massacre" (1993), and Jeanette Armstrong's poem "History Lesson" (1993). Both selections give an Aboriginal perspective to the settlement of the West.

Brittany writes in response to the poem:

The Natives...were the first things dealt with by the White man. Once these "creatures" were out of the way, they became free to do whatever they pleased with this wild and untamed land. It, in return, has been "forever closed, forever lost" by the Indians, along with their culture and way of life.

The students respond well to "Joe the Painter." It is the only story Beric likes. The class finds parallels between outspoken Joe and his lack of regard for propriety and

Kenny. Kenny himself says, "I am Joe." James starts his essay by quoting lyrics from a popular band, Gaping Lotus Experience: "Time to see things as they really are. But we wouldn't want to shake this crystal box you've watched grow up around you." Danny writes, "The White population can not handle the truth when it portrays their ancestors as disrespectful and shameful." Brandon adds that "the honest perspective in the play shows how white people manipulate history to fit their own expectations." Chelsea says that

society's discriminations are not to be taken lightly and actions should be taken to reverse these stereotypical views. As most believe that the Natives brought all the misfortune upon themselves, this could easily be disproved if history is traced back to the beginning. Nonetheless, history books are mostly written by the Whites and therefore are indoctrinated with the idea that the White man is completely innocent.

Nola says, "Thomas King plays on the fact that White people are not as perfect as we may think. We too have flaws, but because we are not a visible minority ours are not so easily revealed."

As an end of the unit activity, the students are asked to complete projects that comment on stereotyping and Aboriginal people. I am encouraged and delighted by many. Janine writes:

My project is simple. There is a mirror in the center and on either side there is a picture of a Native and a White gold miner in earlier times. If one can look at the Native, then look at the gold miner, and then look at oneself, and not notice any difference, then my heart will be lighter. I used to carry around a burden with myself. I would look in the mirror and list about fifty differences between the

three of us and then think how I was better. I could probably list about a thousand. Then an interesting thing happened to me second semester...because my eyes were opened. Despite all the stereotypes, the name calling, the beliefs, the opinions, and all the physical evidence that one person may be different from another, we are not.

Danny writes,

throughout this unit the guilt of this experience continued to weigh me down. The more talk of Native Canadians and their oppression, the more I felt to blame. I know that I cannot immediately change my views, but after studying this unit and opening my perspective, I will make a conscious effort to view all people without stereotype.

Brian researches the contributions that Aboriginal people have made to Canadian culture and prepares a CD presentation with slides and audio entitled "Beyond the Stereotypes."

Chelsea researches the UN position on Canada's treatment of its Aboriginal people and responds with a series of journal entries depicting the life of a young Aboriginal girl and her family who leave a reserve to pursue what they see as a better future in the city. As she details the crumbling of the family under the discrimination they experience in their new life, she writes: "My dream of becoming a journalist and attending university has been vanquished. No one would accept a Native into the privileged education system, and no newspaper or magazine would want a Native working for them? So why try?"

Nola, of whom I expected more, hands in a thin booklet with "Natives" on the cover and three illustrations: "noble savage," "drunk," and "academic student." At the end she instructs, "You decide."

Kenny does not complete the assignment. Kyle responds with a series of illustrated racist jokes copied from the Internet, which he submits thinly disguised as a critique to show that "racism is a joking matter for some, but a very hurtful one for others." I write on his project:

*I have to be honest and say that these cartoons are very disturbing, Kyle. I find it very difficult to look at them and the ugly views of humanity they express. I have to ask what it is we gain by denigrating another human being the way these cartoons do. What do you think of these cartoons? What viewpoint are you expressing?*

Beric hands in a newspaper clipping of a picture of an Aboriginal man over the caption "Warning of Sex Offender's Release" and photocopies of articles on Black-White relations in the U.S. He comments on the selections we have read in class and ends with the statement, "All three of these different articles show that racism has occurred for a very long time, and that it occurs in different places such as in school or professional hockey." He makes no moral comment about racism. It is as if his articles are an attempt to justify his own racism by showing its prevalence in the world.

James writes a sensitive poem that reveals his perceptive understanding of many of the issues we have tried to address in the class:

## Native Blood

Broken,  
 Like an ancient relic whose value cannot be seen,  
 So fragile yet beautiful in its own way.  
 Trapped in a bubble of our crafting,  
 Segregation and assimilation waltzing in paradox,  
 Interwoven in a web with too many strands to count.  
 Thousands of wayward souls linger,  
 Knee-deep in the blood of faded treaties conjured by wizards of another age,  
 Concealing the path back to Camelot.

*As much as they may seem like people,  
 They are only another wheel,  
 Rusting on society's doorstep.*

Tee-pees and pow-wow.  
 Not a treasured culture refined over millennia,  
 But another spectacle,  
 The circus sideshow next to the lion tamer and the elephants,  
 Temporary distractions for wandering minds,  
 But there is no safety net for these Walkers of the Tightrope.

Lives shaped by the pens of Xperts  
*Trust us*  
*We know what is best*  
 But pens can be used to stab,  
 Severing body and bone,  
 And as the tears begin to run,  
 Rivers of crimson weave their way among shattered lives,  
 Native blood.

Post-Test Survey and Free-Association Exercise Results. Despite the change in attitude I think I detect as the class has progressed, the post-test survey results show no real change in the attitude of the class as a whole. The girls score an average of 9.66 (pre-test 10) and the boys 12.27 (pre-test 12.45). (Females: mean = 9.67  $\pm$  SE = 0.49: Males: mean = 12.27  $\pm$  SE = 1.21) The pretest scores of Lawrence and Marcel were not used. What is surprising is the change in individual scores. Two of the girls dropped from



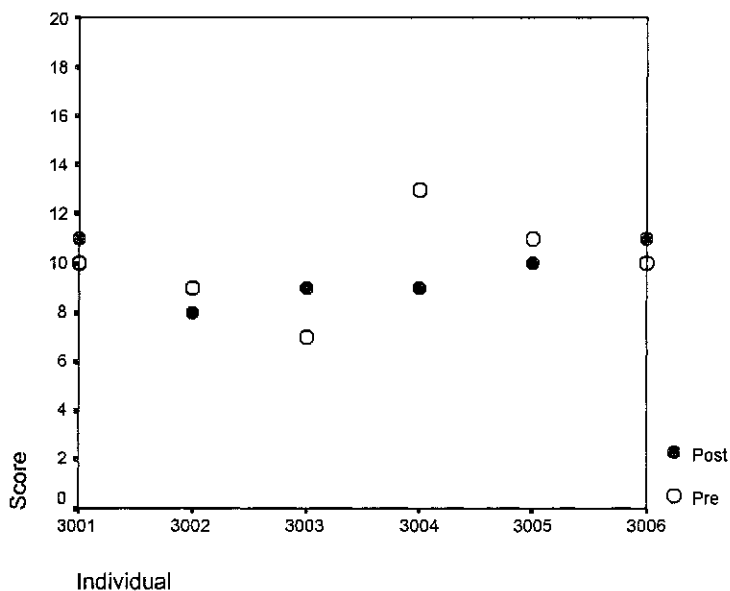
scores of 13 and 11 to 9. Of the other girls, two increased, one from 9 to 10 and another from 10 to 13; two stayed the same at 7 and 10. Of the boys, one score increased from 18 to 19, one from 19 to 20, one from 9 to 13, one from 8 to 11, one from 7 to 9, and one from 9 to 10. One score did not change, remaining at 10. Four of the boys' scores dropped: from 20 to 16, 11 to 10, 14 to 11, and 13 to 11 (see Figure 2).

In their post-responses to the free-association exercise, "Aboriginal people all/always..." only Nola, Kyle, and Beric write negative statements. Nola refers to drinking, and welfare, and suggests that Aboriginal people can be "academic students if not subjected to the reservation influences (sex, drugs, alcohol, etc.)." Kyle makes derogatory comments regarding alcohol use and more but adds a heavily underlined "Some" as an afterthought. Beric makes insulting references to alcohol use and the behaviour of those under the influence of alcohol.

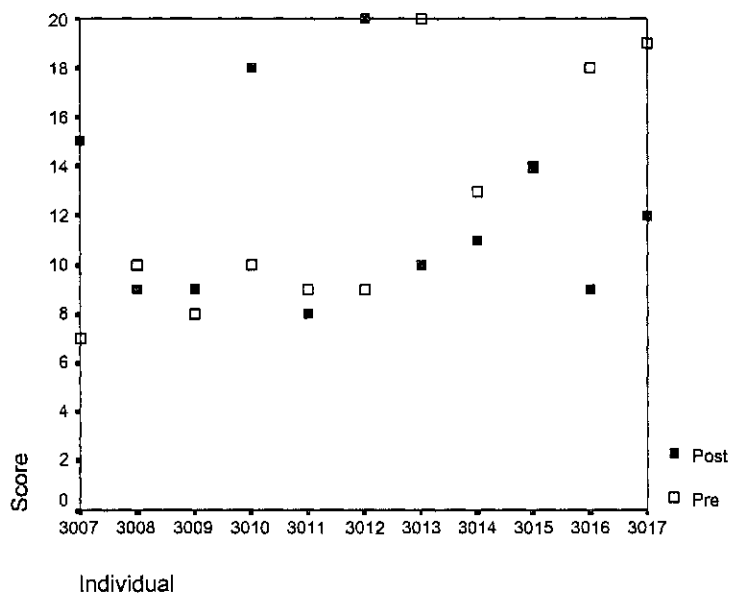
Figure 2

Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Females and Males in Grade 12

A. Female



## B. Male



Interviews: The Grade 12 Voices. In their interviews, some of the grade 12 students reveal frighteningly racist attitudes, not only to Aboriginal people, but also to African-Americans, Jews, and homosexuals. Though their interview groups are self-selected, James offers to sit in on the interview with Kyle and Beric, to give me some support, because he thinks I will need it. In that interview he is very quiet, unable to do more than shake his head. His efforts to interject more rational statements are ignored. The school librarian, who transcribes these interviews, can only do so in small increments; otherwise, she says, she gets sick to her stomach. What some of these students say is very disturbing, especially as they are the grade 12s, about to graduate from our school system. What have we taught them? The attitudes of some of these students reinforces what Wilkinson (2000) found in his studies of northern Ontario high school students: the school system had little influence in reducing prejudiced attitudes.

When asked to respond to the question of whether or not the unit had any effect on his thinking, Beric says that it did not; he will "always think negatively of *them* [emphasis mine] no matter what I read or learn." He expresses his prejudices, not only against Aboriginal people, but also against gays and Jews, saying that "there is no need for a gay person anywhere, they should all be killed, right there. I'm serious, same as the Jews...." When I remind him that we have looked at Holocaust literature and seen what racism can cause, he says he doesn't agree with the methods used in Auschwitz.

We don't want to torture them, we want to get rid of them, 'cause like I could never sit in the same...like if there's a Black person over there and a gay over there, I could never sit here and be comfortable with that.

When asked where his prejudice comes from, he does not know. He does not know any gays, or Jews, but that doesn't matter, "they should all be killed."

Beric's comments demonstrate that as Sefa Dei (2000) points out, race, class, gender, and sexuality are interrelated concepts, systems of oppression that intersect. Racisms work differently for individuals and groups, depending on their history, culture, and identity. Beric, as a White, heterosexual male, the representative of, in Bedard's (2000) opinion, the Canadian identity, is frighteningly comfortable expressing his hatred for those of different skin colour, religion, and sexuality.

Kenny says that the unit did not make any difference to his attitudes. He "was racist before and still is." He defines racism as "not liking them," and goes on to say "it's not so much hate as the stereotypes. Even though most of them are true that you see, I know that they're not true about all Natives...." When I express the shock that I feel at the idea that it is all right to be racist, Kenny tells me:

If they didn't want to be made fun of, they should have been born the same as us. When the first Black guy or Indian or Jewish guy or gay guy came along they should have known this was going to happen, they should have discarded them there. As long as there's differences there will always be people making fun of others.

Kenny continues,

Oh yeah, we have to see them. That's invading my visual space. I don't want to see them. Just like with Black people, it's just like having a drawer full of white socks and one single black sock with no partner for it. That's my analogy for that.

He discusses the repugnance he feels towards non-Whites because of their physical differences in more detail, saying "there is just something about them. Like if Brittany Spears tanned her skin, she wouldn't be hot. I have never seen a hot Indian." When Kyle suggests that he has seen attractive Native people, Kenny replies, "No, they are all disgusting, because their skin colour is red, not hot." When I ask how he has managed to stay in the room with me as a teacher "with this hand" he replies, "I don't know. I don't want to say anything because you are an authority figure over me." My comment that, "It is another defect, so I should be exterminated, too. That kind of scares me," brings his reassurance, "Well, you're not like an Indian. Is it like a birthmark or something?" When I answer in the affirmative, he says, "We all have birthmarks, maybe some small." "So you can tolerate it on that account?" I ask. And he advises that, "If you wore a glove no one would know there is something wrong with you." He sees nothing wrong with this statement, even when Kyle interjects, "But she would always be wearing a glove."

Kenny, who is not living at home even at the end of the semester and whose graduation fees I waive in order that he may participate, seems to exemplify the individual whose prejudice meets two kinds of personality needs (Farley, 1994, cited in DeBose, 2000). He scapegoats members of ethnic or religious minorities, displacing the anger and frustration that cannot be expressed toward their true sources. He also exaggerates the faults of minority groups, denying or minimizing his own personal shortcomings by projecting them onto others.

Kyle's responses, though no less frightening, are more measured. He feels that the unit made him identify racism more: before, when "joking about Natives you didn't really notice it was racism as much. Now you kind of say, 'Oh yeah, it is racism.' But basically I don't care." He doesn't think racism is wrong, but "kind of in-between. It's not totally wrong because there is nothing you are able to do about it." He says though, that "he probably could get along with Natives, blacks, or any one if he really had to," despite still having racist feelings. He doesn't "absolutely hate them....It's not so much hate; it's a dislike, not a hate. I think there is a difference."

The girls decide to be interviewed together. One thought they agree on is that the unit was too intensive: "If you had spread it out over the term it might have been much better, 'cause now we're all tired of hearing about them so now we're a little bit more racist towards them." They also point out that much of the literature we looked at perpetuated the stereotype of Aboriginal people as victims: "We only looked at the negative sides; we didn't look at any positive sides. We didn't hear about them going to school. Their lives aren't all bad."

Janine disavows the guilt that she feels: "All too often they keep saying how it was the White person's fault; we're the whole source of their troubles. We're not that bad." And Brittany agrees: "No, because it happened a long time ago. We weren't even born back then."

The resentment that these children of mainly working class parents feel about any programs designed to even the playing field between Aboriginal people and Whites comes to the fore. "There's programs for college...and it's like, if you don't work hard, there's programs to help you get into college," says Eva. Chelsea, who plans to enter the military to pay for her education, adds:

Sometimes I think White people have it harder than Natives, honestly. Because we have to work harder to get into school, they're accepted. We work harder to pay our taxes, to get money. They get money given to them and tax breaks, things like that.

Eva, who has worked almost full time while going to school, who will receive no help from her family for her education, and is applying for a first-year student loan of 13,000 dollars, feels that all people have the same opportunities that she does:

Like my brother and sister. They didn't go to school, but I'm going to. We were all raised the same, but we're three completely different people even though the same parents raised us....Like you see in your own family what could happen to you. It happens to Natives all the time, but they don't do anything...they should be able to see and try and do better...they should motivate themselves.

She is upset that "they will pay for everything for [an Aboriginal student] to go to school. But I will have to get student loans and work and everything..." Brittany adds,

We don't really know much about it. If we were taught that, maybe we would have some understanding, but right now all we get is the worst end of it. Oh, well, they're getting the money and we're not. It sucks.

These girls illustrate all too well that consciousness of race and difference is related to existing conditions of privilege and lack of privilege, the structures of material production, distribution, exchange, and representation. The intersections of race, class, gender, and economic issues cannot be downplayed in our society (Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000). Discussing White privilege, Chater (cited in Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000) cautions that "the experiences of White working classes, women, disabled people, gays and lesbians indicate that we must interrogate seriously any generalizations of White privilege" (Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 29). My students, children of working class or, in some cases, parents whose jobs are barely at subsistence level, have not had the same experience of White privilege as, for example, my children, the daughters of two middle class professionals, have had. While Sefa Dei concurs that "Whiteness is not the universal experience of all Whites," he, however, insists that though some Whites may be disadvantaged in society, "the benefits of Whiteness are available to all dominant groups, regardless of class, gender, and sexual positions" (p. 29). Those who do not enjoy the benefits lack them "not because of their race, but in spite of it" (Harris, cited in Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 29).

My students are not alone in resenting what they perceive as economic benefits available only to Aboriginal people. Robert Altemeyer, working at reducing prejudice in right-wing authoritarians at the University of Manitoba, says that the biggest complaint

his White students make about Aboriginal people is that "they get everything free, and are still demanding more handouts and special treatment" (Altemeyer, 1994, p. 141).

Most of the girls feel that the unit did not change their thinking: "Maybe if we were younger...but we're older...and we have this set in our mind." Others comment on the lack of real information they have about the treaties and special programs: "We just read the stories and it's all speculation. We don't know anything." When I comment on the empathy and understanding they showed in their projects and ask if those feelings were false they attempt to explain:

Sometimes when you look at the bad side you have to be a little more empathetic.

But it's really hard to say that our projects are all a lie because it really depends on what we're looking at and how we're looking at it.

For example, "If we just read a story like *April Raintree* about how everything was so terrible, then we'd feel bad for them." "But that doesn't last," I suggest.

Well, that depends. You can read the story, but then you can go out and see how some of them aren't doing anything for themselves. They're just drunk, passed out in parks, and you think, "I'm not going to feel sorry for you because you did this to yourselves. It depends."

The interview is dominated by Eva and Nola, the two most outspoken girls in the class. I suspect that if I had interviewed the girls in smaller groups, some might have been more comfortable expressing a softer, more understanding attitude. But it seems as though once the tone of the interview is set, I am unable to change it.

In an interesting postscript to this, when I am marking the English 30-1 exam in Edmonton, I read an essay on King's "Joe the Painter." It starts with a quotation from



Ferguson's "Apartheid: the Policy of Treaty-Making": "What we choose to forget is just as revealing as what we choose to remember" (p. 153). Though I cannot, of course, be sure, I think it is one of my students, one of the girls. I copy down the thesis: "The manipulation of history can bring about hardship for generations," and am equally delighted when I read the lines, "History has a way of being manipulated to fit the ideals of the majority," and "Native people have endured many hardships, generation after generation."

In their interviews, the remainder of the boys expresses views consistent with what they had expressed in class. Danny says that the unit gave him a "better perspective" on how Aboriginal people are treated and how they view that treatment. Up until the unit he thought of Aboriginal people only in terms of derogatory stereotypes, formed, he says, by the contact he has had with Native people in Pincher Creek. Brian and Jason talk about how playing hockey with Native players on their team has changed their views and how their team is regarded differently because of the mix of players. They are called the same derogatory names that the Native players are and though they are unaffected, they "can see why they get upset sometimes over that stuff." They point out that "reading about it is not the same as being directly involved with it, in real life."

Brandon, who has written in his project, "If there is one thing that I've learned from this study it is that not all stereotypes are true, but the stereotypes that have been proven true are true for a reason, and we must take responsibility for it," admits to being "pretty prejudiced to start with." He formed his prejudices from the behaviour he experienced when he played teams in Brocket, especially in junior high:

They all waited outside after basketball games for us and we would get walked out by teachers, sometimes police, just to get to the bus....They actually got kicked out of the league one night because their girls were carrying around knives and threatening our girls....We couldn't help but judge. We were only in grade eight.

Yet despite his very negative experiences, Brandon is able now to look beyond the stereotypes, and more importantly, accept responsibility for the conditions that cause their formation.

James, who talks humourously about some of his negative experiences with Aboriginal people while working in Pincher Creek, also has the moral maturity to look beyond those experiences, though he cannot say exactly why—"There are so many reasons why." He does not attribute his attitude to home influences, but to the opportunities he has had to "see both sides." He talks about making a presentation at the school in Brocket:

We went in there with all our presentation stuff and we put it in this room and we left for about fifteen minutes to find the principal and when we came back it was gone. We locked the door. They took everything, even our pamphlets and stuff...I just thought that confirmed a lot, but there were Natives who went to the school who helped us with the project that they were presenting and they were great. They totally were not the stereotypes, so there are both sides....They're just like any other race. They have their problems, they have good qualities.

Brian here is reminded of a time when his hockey team was in Standoff for a practice and stole tee shirts belonging to players from a different team. He describes this

now as "pretty ironic because we are always thinking they are stealing from us and we lock the door on our dressing room, and here we take their tee shirts."

During the 1960s there was "an almost mystical faith" (Amir, 1976, cited in Davidson & Davidson, 1994, p. 33) that desegregation, getting to know each other would alleviate racial tension between White people and African-Americans. Contact theory developed from a small experiment that showed short-term reduction in prejudice when participants worked together to achieve a goal in a situation of equality (Davidson & Davidson, 1994). Unfortunately, the hope that increased contact would lead to reduced prejudice has not been fulfilled. Instead, Billig and Tajfel (1973, cited in Davidson & Davidson, 1994) suggest that "unless there is some proposed reason for behaving otherwise, people generally prefer to interact with people like themselves" (p. 34). They found also that contact even intensifies initial attitudes, especially if they are strongly held. DeBose (2000) found that if interracial contact is to reduce racist attitudes in Whites, the contact should not take place within a competitive context and it should be sustained rather than temporary. It also must be personal, informal, and one-to-one. The setting in which it takes place must confer equal status on both parties.

The boys' attitudes reflect these findings, but the broader view expressed by Brandon and James also suggests that moral development may also influence their feelings. Both Brandon and James are able to look beyond behaviour that reinforces their preconceived expectations and see behaviour that does not. In terms of Kohlberg's (1981) stages of moral development they would appear to be moving to the higher stages of principled behaviour.

### The End of the Day: The Grade 10 Class

It is with some trepidation that I await the arrival of the 10-1 class, the university entrance grade 10 stream. I have not taught this class for close to 10 years, having been assigned the 10-2 (non-university entrance, grade ten) class instead. Will I be able to relate to these students, I wonder? I have heard that they are a handful and have been separated into two groups because of that. As a result, I have only sixteen in the class, nine girls and seven boys. What I do not know is that this class will be an absolute delight. They are wonderful—interested, funny, alive, and eager to learn. They put their hearts into everything they do. Had this been the only class I worked with, I would have assumed that I had, indeed, shown my hypothesis, that reading Aboriginal literature will reduce stereotyping, to be true.

Pre-Tests and First Responses. I use the same procedure with this class as I have with the other two, explaining the project, handing out permission letters, administering the survey and the free-association exercise. The survey results show that as with the other classes, the girls are less prejudiced (scoring 9.56) than are the boys, who have an average score of 12. (Females: mean =  $9.56 \pm SE = 0.24$ ; Males: mean =  $12 \pm SE = 1.53$ ) (see Figure 3, p. 126). On the free association exercise, 31% emphasize the misuse of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco; 12.8% theft; 7.6% make reference to anger, size, and "toughness;" 15.1% list a series of other negative stereotypes, from "bingo players," "lateness," "begging," to "racist." Others, 5.1%, mention "creative," and "peaceful," and 7.6% comment on the retention of traditions. This is the only class that sees Aboriginals as victims—20.5%.

By the time I have done the free-association exercise for the third time, I am much better at debriefing. After listing the responses to "Teenagers all/always..." on the board—"lazy," "irresponsible," "partygoers," "drinkers," "full of attitude," "liars," "susceptible to peer pressure," "stubborn," "rebellious," "immature,"—I ask for reasons why others hold these stereotypes and listed them on the board also: "very visible," "judge too quickly," "only the bad ones get the attention," "never hear about the good." The class very quickly applies those criteria to the stereotyping of Aboriginal people. They, too, voice their reluctance to say what they feel. I hear "I've got some pretty bad thoughts here," "Are we going to read these out?" and, "Can I say *almost* rather than *always*?" We discuss the difference between me not liking what they are saying and not liking them; that they have to trust me not to penalize or judge them because of what they are saying as I was trusting them to be honest with me.

In the discussion that follows after reading "Stereotypes Are for 'Others,'" the class mentions their reluctance to voice the stereotypes they have heard and read because just doing so "makes them more true." In her response to the prompt, "Aboriginal people and stereotypes," Trina writes:

Native people are known for all their bad qualities. Most people think that I am a Native and when they bug me about it I get very defensive. This is because I know how Natives are thought of as being, and I don't want that to be what I am believed to be like. It is embarrassing and uncalled for. This is also me stereotyping Natives because I look at their image and think that is not what I want to be like.

The rest of the class discusses the ease with which we as Whites stereotype Aboriginal people. Many say that the stereotypes are applied to all when "there are many Native people who are quite educated and play an important role in their community and company." But many also share the feeling that though "stereotyping may be wrong, in some cases the Native people bring it on themselves." George disavows belief in the common stereotypes, but adds that he "doesn't really care." Mary talks about the "special privileges" Native people have that "are taken for granted," and confesses that "although I try not to judge on first impression, the assumptions are always there." Carol writes that Native people "feel they need to look tough because they know what we think about them and how we stereotype them." Beth reveals her unconscious stereotyping with her comment that, "It's a lot harder for Natives, even if they're as clean and healthy as us, to get a good reputation and respect from other people." Hazel comments on the stereotyping that each group does to the other and concludes that it is "a battle being fought silently, without people meaning or realizing it is being fought." Mark writes that he is a cause of stereotyping "because of our culture."

We read an excerpt from Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'n Me* (2000), in which Wagamese describes the way his character and his siblings were taken from their family, virtually kidnapped, and put in an unfeeling foster home, from which the protagonist alone is removed. He is not reunited with his family until he is an adult. I had done this story earlier in the year with the 10-2 class, and it had a great effect on many of them. One boy told me learning about "them being taken from their homes like that" changed the way he interacted with the Aboriginal hockey players he came into contact with. "You wouldn't want to know what I used to call them," he tells me. I ask this class to

write a narrative from the point of view of any of the characters. Rose writes from the perspective of the school bus driver who regularly picked up the protagonist's siblings: "Thanks Mrs. Matthews,' he answered and gave her a warm hug before stepping off the bus into the cruel atmosphere of racist culture." Hazel writes from the perspective of a foster brother whose mother has told him, "Don't feel sorry for them. They don't have feelings," who wonders, "If they didn't have feelings, how come they cried when they first came?" Kory writes from the perspective of the grandmother: "If those children and I were White, this would never have happened." Kevin, playing the role of the children's father, talks of his futile efforts to get his children back: "Soon they were out of my vision and as the door slowly closed, I finally looked around to see what was holding me back. It was a White man." Carol, taking the role of a foster sister, writes; "I went into the house to try and talk to Jane again. She refused to talk to me. I could see the hatred in her eyes. And I didn't blame her." Allen, writing from the perspective of the young protagonist, says he will write a book that tells the story of the unfair treatment Aboriginal people receive. "It will be all about the hardships of a Native boy's life and how they are always living life against the wind." Karl writes as the unfeeling farmer who fosters the children as a way of getting cheap labour:

As I approached the sandbox, I could see the half-buried toy dump truck the littlest Indian used to play with sticking out of the sand. I cringed at the thought of the Indian kids and threw the truck on the ground. I stomped on it, shattering it, and hopefully my memories of the Indians forever.

The companion piece we go on to, Wagamese's "Shinny Game Melted the Ice," (2001) tells of the protagonist's reunion with the brothers and sister he has not seen since

he was a toddler. It ends with the line, "We are all Indians" (p. 89), and when I ask why "we are all Indians?" it is Ben who answers, "because we all share laughter and tears." The students discuss the possibilities of writing to Richard Wagamese to find out more of his life. I had ordered the book for the library in December, but it had still not arrived in June.

As an introduction to Roald Dahl's story, "Poison" (1974), the students respond to the prompt, "Prejudice is..." and in small groups list on chart paper as many metaphors and similes as they can. Trina sets the tone with "Prejudice is a thorn stabbing me in the back," and we fill the end wall with their lists. Prejudice is "a steel ball tied to our ankles, holding us down," "a shadow that stalks us, shading our inner being," "an evil that lurks beneath the surface, appearing suddenly, without warning." Ironically, in a response that the girls make them erase, some of the boys write, "Prejudice is gay," unwittingly expressing their own prejudice and an unconscious awareness of difference "structured along the power-asymmetrical relation of class, race, gender and sexuality" (Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 12).

We read a variety of Aboriginal selections, King's "Magpies" (1993), Lee Maracle's "Charlie" (1994) about a young boy who runs away from a residential school, poetry by Rita Joe and other Aboriginal writers, listen to Native storyteller Dayton Edmonds' tapes, and watch *Dancing with Wolves* before going on to Thomas King's *Medicine River* (1989). At this point, I had planned to conclude the study with this class and teach Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). On the course outlines I listed both *Medicine River* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but after rereading King's novel, I wonder about its ability to hold the grade 10's interest. I tell them I think it may be a bit slow



moving for them and we should probably do what the other class is doing. Besides, I say, it's generally taught in English 30-2, grade 12. That is enough for the class. They are, of course, adult enough to handle a grade 12 novel in grade 10! And it is *Medicine River* that seems to have the greatest impact on them.

As I introduce the novel, I talk about the similarities of people over the ages, the shock of recognition we feel when we realize that people of past generations, of hundreds of years ago, have the same feelings and aspirations as we do—that we are still the same people. This is what King is trying to do, I say. He is not preaching at us, but rather trying to have us do away with the sense of "Other" we have when looking at people who are members of a visible minority or different ethnicity. And so we start. Half way through the period I do a check. Allen likes the authentic dialogue: "I play basketball like shit," and Barrett says, "This book is about me."

In her first response Hazel comments that the book is "confusing," "hard to follow," and "boring." The others do not repeat her sentiments, but I suspect that they share her thoughts at least in part but do not want to admit it. Many are able to relate to the book because of its setting, just 45 minutes from us. In their comments about the characters the students indicate the way they are appreciating them as people: "I would really like to have someone like Harlan as a friend." "Although [Harlan] is noisy and sometimes annoying, he is my favourite character." Allen likes the way the novel deals with "the troubles real people have." "There are many different types of people in the story," writes Jack. Mary writes of the sympathy she feels for January,

who is beaten repeatedly by her husband, because she hides behind a fake world.

She pretends her life is perfect, but is deeply wounded inside... This is a wise

thing to put in a novel, because most people have been depressed or have considered suicide....

Even at this early point in the story the students indicate an increased sympathy for Aboriginal people and a growing awareness of how badly they are stereotyped. Karl writes that King uses a "'two stories in one' method to prove many stereotypes of Native people false by comparing the Native people of Medicine River to White people." Beth says, "It's the writing of this man that makes us see how stereotyped we are about the Natives" and that the book "has been an influence on my thoughts about Native people." Kory writes that, "Reading this book made me change my mind, and think differently...Native and White people appear differently, but truthfully, they aren't; they are both the same." These thoughts are repeated in further writings and in their essays on the novel.

As the class works on their end of unit projects, they watch the 2003 Aboriginal Awards. When Tom Jackson appears, the class responds with a delighted cry, "Look! There's Harlan!" though they did not like the film version of *Medicine River*. It leaves out too many of Will's youthful adventures, which from their perspective are a very important aspect of the story. And, "a lot of people learned about stereotyping from the book and the movie didn't show that."

The class responds to the topics of racism and stereotyping with a variety of responses: narratives, generally from an Aboriginal person's point of view; research essays that present information about the harm of prejudice; posters, and poetry:

### Run Away

I am the one who receives the many looks all at me:  
 I am the one glued standing afraid to speak  
 Afraid to stand up to the ones that ridicule  
 I don't fear them:  
 I am the one jealous of them  
 Jealous of their skin and heritage  
 Ashamed of my own

I am the one sitting alone at recess  
 Watching the other kids play  
 Afraid to ask if I can join  
 Avoiding further discrimination  
 I am the one confused  
 Wondering who I am

Bell rings to go home  
 I find myself on the highway  
 Hand raised in a quick uncertain gesture  
 Nowhere to go  
 Just two legs for walking, two eyes for talking  
 And the sun sinking fast  
 I am the one desperate to escape my predicament

Carts whiz by the dark pavement  
 Only ditch grasses  
 Hundreds more pass by fast on a fixed destination  
 One stops and examines my face  
 I am the one approaching a strange vehicle  
 The car sees me in its lights sees my skin  
 And drives away

I am the one standing on empty pavement  
 Alone watching speeding lights  
 Wishing I was home

(Barrett, April 2003)

Interviews: Voices of Grade 10. Students repeat their thoughts about *Medicine River* in their interviews. It is "the book," more than any other selection that has influenced their attitudes, has made them "realize things are not true. Natives are not

what people think they are." They are "just normal people like everyone else. It just reinforces the idea that all the stereotypes were not true." Even those who have read *To Kill a Mocking Bird* as an extra project agree that *Medicine River* "was way better," at least in part because "it was a grade 12 book...it's not the sappy stuff; it's not like they covered up stuff; it's the real stuff." Kory says that before reading the book, she

didn't understand how the Native people felt...that I heard a lot of bad things about the Native people, and they would always come out before the good things. Like, after I read the book, the good things came out first.

Trina comments,

I was always making jokes...and then after I read the book, I kind of like understood that they are just like us. They go drinking, we go out drinking, and you think that they are alcoholics...because they are not White... I always used to see them and listen to, "Oh, go through Brocket, lock the doors," like that's what I always used to do. The book made me kind of understand that they're just like us.

Though these students are judging from the perspective that theirs is the norm, "*they're just like us*" (emphasis mine), it is a first step toward thinking of all people in terms of their sameness rather than their differences.

When I check with Allen, Rose, Sarah, and Diane to see if their attitudes will carry over to their actions, if they will they tell racist jokes about Native people, they are not so firm.

Allen: "Well, you would still tell them, but they wouldn't be as bad. You might laugh at them out loud, but in your head you would be thinking, 'That's not

correct."

Rose: "The same kind of jokes is made about us too; it's not just the Natives all the time."

Sarah: "Depending what I heard...I would have to say something like, 'Hey, that's not true.' I would stick up for them."

Diane: "I think it's all right to make the jokes...like you don't call a kid names, you don't mean it. It's just at the time...it's a cop out."

In response to the same question, Jack, Ben, Barrett, and Karl, who first talk about the way the unit and especially the book changed their thinking, indicate the same inability to act on their beliefs.

Jack: "Well, I don't think it will change me. It might have changed my point of view, I'm not gonna try to, like if I hear someone saying something, I'm not gonna be like, 'Oh, don't say that. Go read this book and then you'll know...I'm not going to preach about it."

I. G.: "But are you talking about...?"

Jack: "Yeah, it will stop me from telling all the stupid jokes about Native people, but I'm not going to preach to other people about them not doing it."

Karl: "I'll probably still do that, I guess. It won't be, I don't know, kinda for a laugh, not really any hard feelings or intentions. I won't do it in front of a large crowd, but if there was just a couple of us and I hear a joke and it's funny, I will probably still laugh."

But if people were making fun of someone, I don't know..."

I. G.: "It's easy to take part in that, isn't it?"

Karl: "Well, it's easy to take part, but a lot harder not to take part and hold back."

I. G.: "Even as an adult, it's hard to show your peers that you disapprove..."

Barrett: "Like, I've always disapproved of jokes about other races and stuff, but I never tell people that it's wrong. I never stand up."

When asked whether racism is bad, Mary says that it is "normal. It's a part of everyone, like no one's perfect," and qualifies it by saying, "If you are trying to do something about it, it's good. You are trying to become a better person. But if you don't, then I think it's a bad thing."

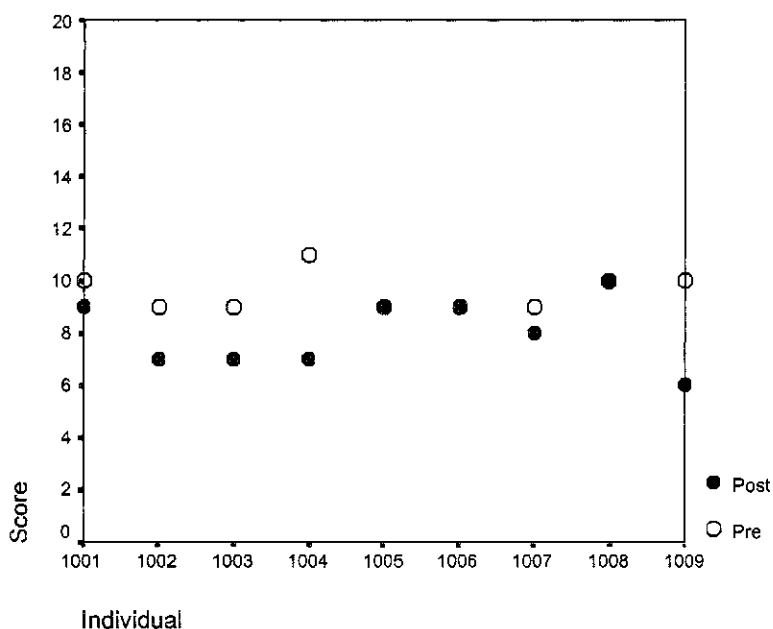
Rose's comment that implies that Native people make jokes about Whites echoes those made by many other students who discuss their resentment about being called "Whitey," and the antagonism that has been expressed to them by Native people. One of my current students, whose grandparents have fostered Native children, and who spends a lot of time on the Peigan reserve is frank in his discussion of the hostility that Whites sometimes meet in Brocket and warns of the dangers of walking down the streets alone. What these students fail to realize is that people who are subject to prejudice and discrimination are not passive victims who are unable or unwilling to try and deflect the negative consequences of encountering prejudice. They develop strategies for dealing with prejudicial situations and make choices in their lives about when to face potential prejudice and when to challenge or confront prejudice (DeBose, 2000). The choice to act in a racist manner is one that is open to all groups, not just Whites. What is frightening in this context is the possibility that this choice can lead to further avoidance and more misunderstanding between both groups.

Post-Test Survey and Free-Association Exercise Results. The post-test survey results show a decrease in prejudice levels: the girls' average drops to 8 and the boys' to 10.71 (Females: mean = 8 + SE = 0.44; Males: mean = 10.71 + SE = 0.97) (see Figure 3). In the post-test free-association exercise, students emphasize the need to treat Aboriginal people as equals (34.1%), though one student qualifies by saying they should have "no more or less rights than anyone else;" 17% comment on the negative aspects of stereotyping; 17% see Aboriginals as victims; 17% comment of the importance of Aboriginal traditions; 7.3% see Aboriginal people as self-conscious; 2.4% as ambitious, 2.4% as angry; and 2.4% as boring. The one student who mentions alcohol use says, "Their drinking is the same as White people's."

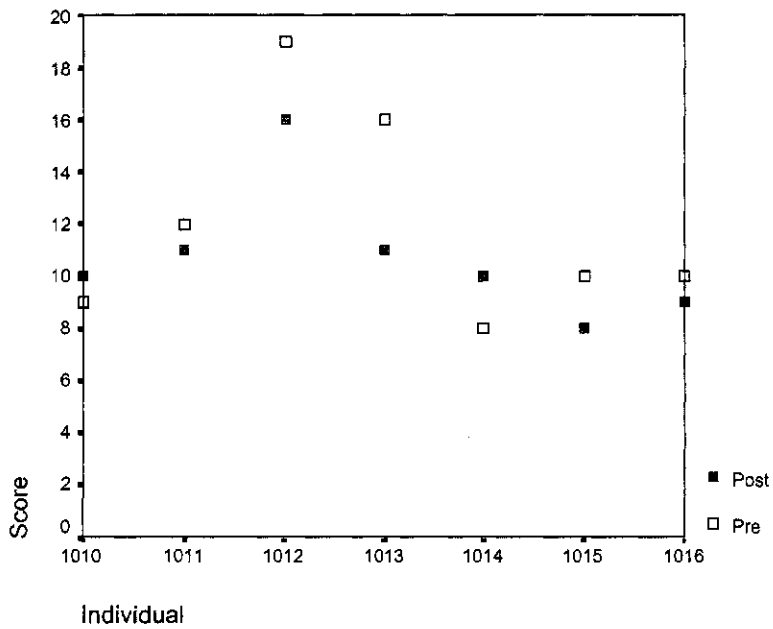
Figure 3

## Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Females and Males in Grade 10

## A. Female



## B. Male



With the Grade 10s I see a difference in attitude that is encouraging, and after the disheartening and frightening attitudes revealed by the grade 12 class, heartwarming. Though I can not give a totally accurate picture of the socio-economic background of each of these students, I know that over half has at least one parent with education beyond high school. Their parents include a teacher, a teaching assistant, a social worker, an accountant, a geologist, the chair of the school parent council, a minister, a laboratory technician, a contractor, as well as mine workers. Sarah's mother sends Rupert Ross's *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (1992) and a note telling me how much it challenged her prejudices and how much she "supports my endeavors." On parent-teacher night, I see more parents from this class than any other.



According to Davidson and Davidson (1994), however, the effect of social class on prejudice seems to be smaller among young people than on many adults. Glock, Wuthnow, Piliavin, & Spencer (1975) found economic deprivation accounted for only a small amount of the variation in prejudice within a school. The expectation that relatively deprived teenagers would be prejudiced as a reflection of their parents' prejudices was not realized. By adolescence, however, family status indirectly influences important measures such as IQ and academic achievement, which are related to prejudice (Davidson & Davidson, 1994). The Glock study authors suggest that students with the motivation and abilities to perform well in school "are typically affected more deeply by sophisticated understandings of social life and arguments in favour of democratic values, both of which militate against prejudices they may hold" (Glock, et al., 1975, p. 42). The failure to thoughtfully bring positive values to bear on attitudes also correlated with a lack of interest in school and a lack of learning. These "lower track" students are, in turn, less likely to be challenged by sophisticated ideas than are their "higher track" counterparts. Thus, in the view of the Glock study authors, "it is academic deprivation which appears to be a major source of prejudice" (Glock et al., 1975, pp. 151-160).

Though I do not include results of the work I did with the non-university entrance English 10-2 group in this study because of the short time I actually used Aboriginal literature with them (two weeks), the boys' scores on the social scenarios pre-test were much higher than the scores of the boys in the three other classes—17.16 compared to 12, 10.67, and 12.45 for the 10s, 11s, and 12s, respectively. The girls' scores were actually lower than the initial scores of the girls in the other classes—9 compared to 9.56, 9.714,

and 10 for the 10s, 11s, and 12s, respectively. These findings suggest that gender differences as well as socio-economic factors are at play.

Perhaps more importantly, I found that my behaviour as a teacher and the corresponding behaviour of the 10-2 students changed during the lessons I had hoped to use as part of the study. Over the last few years I have found teaching these students very challenging. I have felt that the students made no real connection with the literature we read and did only enough work to keep me from harassing them. In the two weeks we used the Aboriginal literature, I found a difference in their behaviour and my expectations. In a journal entry I write:

*First the class. One of the best and it feels so good to be able to say that. Is it because of the material we are taking, or because I feel this is important, and thus am able to convince them? The material or the teacher? (January 17, 2003).*

## Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

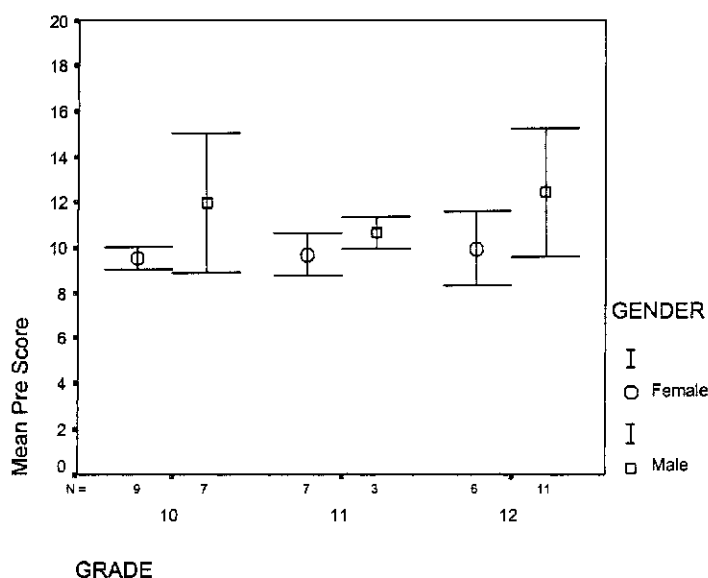
### Differences in Levels of Prejudice

Only some of the quantitative data of this study support my thesis that it is possible to reduce prejudiced and stereotyped thinking by exposing students to literature written by Aboriginal people. Both the boys and girls in the grade 10 class showed a reduction in their levels of prejudice as did the grade 12 class as a whole. Both the boys and girls in the grade eleven class showed an increase, rather than a decrease in their levels of prejudice. Within each class and gender are individual reductions and increases in the level of prejudice that reveal the complexity of both the issue and the responses.

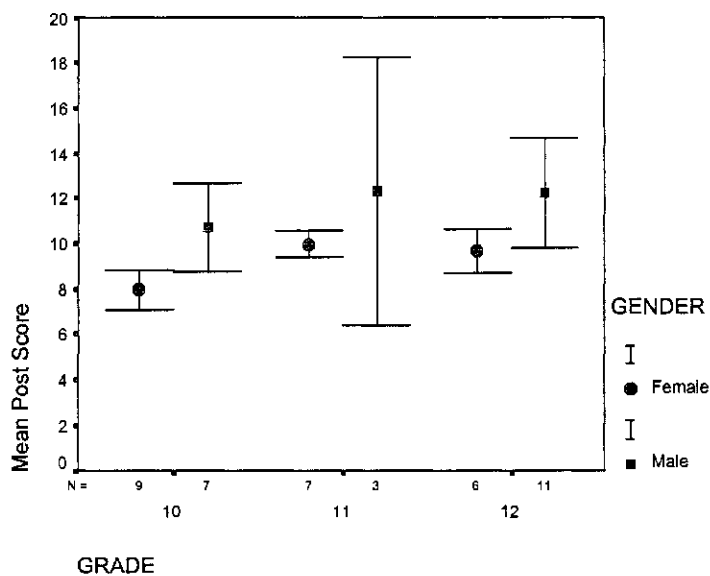
Figure 4

Mean Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Females and Males in Grades 10, 11, 12.

#### A. Pre-Test Scores



### B. Post-Test Scores



One factor that may have influenced the scores is the instrument itself. Two of the social scenarios students were asked to respond to (the classroom and the apartment rental) asks that students tell a teacher that his/her behaviour in ignoring an Aboriginal student is wrong and tell a friend's parents that his/her actions in not renting to an Aboriginal person are wrong. This caused a conflict between what some students saw as the respect and politeness they felt they should show to an adult and their desire to identify that adult's actions as prejudiced. This is consistent with what Wilkinson found when he administered the scale to high school students in Sudbury, Ontario (2000). The scenarios that received the lowest proportion of verbal non-prejudiced response were those dealing with interaction with adults—the classroom and apartment rental scenarios.

On the other hand, there is qualitative evidence to suggest that the process of engaging in the literature, writing about it, and discussing it brings about an awareness of issues that had previously been unrecognized.

### Differences in Male and Female Levels of Prejudice

According to David McClelland (cited in Gilligan, 1982), gender is one of the "most important determinants of human behaviour" (p. 14). One striking result of my study is the difference in measured levels of prejudice in male and female students. In all three grade levels, females scored significantly lower than did males. Wilkinson (2000) found that gender was the most important of all the variables in his study. Females in his study were less prejudiced than males in all scenarios and at all grades (nine to thirteen).

Why the differences? Carol Gilligan (1982) found "two ways of speaking about moral problems, two modes of describing the relationship between other and self" (p. 1) when listening to males and females talking about morality and about themselves. She suggests that men and women see life from very different perspectives; they have "different ways of imagining the human condition, different notions of what is of value in life" (p. 5). This difference has been ignored by psychological theorists including Freud, Piaget, and Kohlberg, all of whom "implicitly adopting the male life as the norm...have tried to fashion women out of a masculine cloth" (p. 6). Freud blamed women for what he considered their developmental failure (Gilligan, 1982). According to him, women have a different conception of what is ethically normal than do men, a lower sense of justice, and their judgements are more easily influenced by their emotions (pp. 6-7).

Nancy Chodorow (cited in Gilligan, 1982) argues that the general and nearly universal differences that characterize masculine and feminine personality and roles are due to the fact that women are largely responsible for childcare. As this early environment is experienced differently by males and females, basic sex differences recur in personality development and the female personality defines itself in relation and

connection to other people more than does the masculine personality. Girls, in identifying themselves as female, experience themselves as like their mothers, thus fusing the experience of attachment with the process of identity formation. Boys, on the other hand, in defining themselves as masculine, separate their mothers from themselves, reducing their "primary love and sense of empathetic tie." Male development thus entails "a more emphatic individuation and a more defensive firming of experienced ego boundaries" (p. 8). Chodorow argues that this does not mean that women have weaker ego boundaries than men, but that girls have a basis for empathy built into their definition of self in a way that boys do not. What Freud saw as a negative, Chodorow sees as a positive:

Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (or of thinking that one is so experiencing another's needs and feelings)...girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world, and as differently related to their inner object-world as well. (cited in Gilligan, p. 8)

Piaget (cited in Gilligan, 1982) in his study of children's play, found that boys were more interested in the legal elaboration of rules and the development of fair procedures for resolving conflicts than were girls. Girls were more tolerant in their attitudes towards rules, more willing to make exceptions, and more easily accepting of innovations. Thus, their legal sense, which Piaget considers essential to moral development, is far less developed (p. 10).

The childhood games girls play, in which competition is indirect and disputes fewer, since one person's success does not necessarily signify the failure of another, afford fewer opportunities for moral development than do the games boys play. Girls tend

to play in smaller, intimate groups that replicate the social pattern of primary human relationships in that its organization is more cooperative. It engenders the "development of the empathy and sensitivity necessary for taking the role of 'the particular other'" (Gilligan, 1982, pp. 10-11).

This empathy and sensitivity is, in Gilligan's opinion, at the root of the deference often found in women, the difficulty they may have in speaking publicly in their own voices, their tendency to self-doubt and qualification. Yet, she says,

Women's deference is rooted not only in their social subordination but also in the substance of their moral concern. Sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgement other points of view. (1982, p. 16)

Though he is working in a much later time period, Kohlberg (1969, 1981), like Piaget, bases his stages of moral development only on the study of boys. Kohlberg's six stages of moral development exclude females from the higher stages where relationships are subordinated to rules (stage four) and rules to universal principles of justice (stages five and six); instead, his structure leaves them at the third stage where morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing others (Gilligan, 1982, p. 18). Paradoxically, as Gilligan points out, "the very traits that traditionally have defined the 'goodness' of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development" (p. 18).

Wilkinson (2000) theorizes that males may be exposed to different learning experiences that condition them to tolerate discrimination in a way that females do not.

He found that males in his sample were far more likely to have seen and heard instances of student discrimination and name-calling than were females. The male social environment seems to be more accepting of these behaviours and these behaviours are thus more common in male environments. The Social Dominance Model (Sidanius et al., cited in Wilkinson, 2000, p. 40) explains symbolic racism as a legitimizing myth for egoenhancement and egomaintenance. Males may be more prejudiced because they have lower self-esteem.

Working under both Kohlberg and Gilligan, Florence Davidson (Davidson & Davidson, 1994) failed to find any significant gender differences in moral development in either of her studies. Davidson designed her study in two parts, the first a broad, cross-sectional study of 154 students in schools around Boston to test for an inverse correlation between moral stage and prejudice; and the second, a long-term study of 22 students from fifth grade to the end of twelfth grade (Davidson & Davidson, 1994, p. xxii). She did find, however, a strong statistical correlation between lower moral stage and higher prejudice. The evidence I and others have found that female adolescents are less prejudiced than their male counterparts suggests that Gilligan is correct in her theory, that males and females view the world from a different psychological perspective. Thus, if moral development in both males and females is to be accurately measured, then a scale that reflects not only the male but also the female way of seeing the world needs to be developed.

Wilkinson (2000) suggests that the attitudes of students at elementary school be measured to see when and how the attitudes of each gender change. It would also be interesting to repeat my study and measure each student's moral development before and



after his/her exposure to the anti-racist curriculum. I suspect that individual differences in both genders would be more significant than gender differences alone. My students have shown that individuals of both genders are capable of reducing their prejudiced attitudes and viewing the world from a more moral perspective. Unfortunately, not all students are as receptive as others.

### Recommendations

If educational institutions are, indeed, one of the most important places for producing societal change and transformation, then the concepts of White privilege and anti-racism must permeate the curriculum. The goal to eliminate racism must become an active goal of all teachers, not an ideology given lip service, identified on school plan development days, and then conveniently dismissed. It cannot be relegated to the English and social studies departments; it cannot be compartmentalized. We all need to undergo the experience of coming to terms with our own Whiteness, if we are to help White students understand the concept of institutionalized racism and the part we play in maintaining our privileged positions. White people tend to view racism as an issue that only people of colour face and have to deal with, not as an issue that involves us. But, as Ruth Frankenberg (1993) suggests, viewing racism this way has serious consequences. It allows us to "see anti-racist work as an act of compassion for an 'other,' an optional, extra project," (p. 6), something external to us. We have to accept responsibility for our racism and help our students to do the same.

Our own identity formation plays a crucial role in our teaching (Blades, Johnston, & Simmt, 2001). While this study addressed prejudice directed against Aboriginal people, it quickly became apparent that prejudice against Aboriginal people is linked not

only to issues of race, but also of gender and sexuality. If the academic discourse of Canadian schools is to be one that provides an inclusionary perspective of all who are marginalized in Canadian society, then teachers need to actively engage in the process of self-understanding. This process, Britzman (1992) warns, is dependent upon "a persistent interrogation of one's own deep investments in, resistances to, and desires for challenging the status quo" (p. 28).

Native and other non-White teachers are also needed in our schools to serve as models not just for non-White students, but for White students who find it all too easy to hold onto stereotyped beliefs. One of the grade 10 students working on his collage depicting Whiteness observed, "There aren't any Natives in the Sears catalogue." Nor are Native people depicted with any regularity in advertising in Canadian publications, though other minority groups are. Only one Aboriginal person is to be seen reporting the news on the CBC or CTV networks, though many of other ethnicities are. This lack further marginalizes Aboriginal people and makes it easier for White Canadians to hold some of the stereotypes they do.

While my students expressed resistance to "always reading about racism," they deserve to be exposed to a world view that includes not only the themes and archetypes of the Western canon of literature—love, hate, loss of innocence, coming of age, cycles of nature, death—but also "the themes of history—conquest and subjugation, anti-colonial struggles, racism, sexism, class conflict" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 6). Reading literature that provides an Aboriginal perspective is a way of starting an exploration into the reality of the human condition, not just the White European male condition. The changes to the Program of Studies for English in Alberta (Alberta Learning, 2001) have

generated a wealth of new resources that reflect a desire to include a more inclusive perspective. Almost all of the Aboriginal literature used in this study is readily available in approved textbooks. Studying Aboriginal literature with students does not, unfortunately, automatically reduce the negative stereotypes that many students hold about Aboriginal people. It does, however, provide an opening into a dialogue that must take place.

#### A Final Reflection

It is winter now. The green fields and mists of Ireland are only a memory, replaced by the monotony of grey, brown, and white that is November in southern Alberta. The mountains, Crowsnest, Sentinel, and Tecumseh, still stand sentry over the western entrance to the valley, but the Aboriginal people who so long ago camped in their shadows by the side of Crowsnest Lake every summer and hunted the abundant wild game have not returned. Their descendants form an invisible and unnamed section of our community. The mining tradition established by the first people in the valley in their search for a material from which to make arrow heads and continued by those who for almost a hundred years made their living mining coal is dying. Many of the names that reflect the ethnic diversity that was so much a part of my childhood can still be found in the Pass, but many are inscribed on grave markers rather than on post boxes. The many ethnic areas, "Little Italy," "German Town," "Little Slovakia," are now nameless except to the oldest residents of the Pass. They have been replaced by "Snob" and "Hamburger" Hills, areas distinguished by their affluence, not ethnicity. Yet a new staff member, arriving from the West Kootenays, comments on how everyone is so different and the

food so varied. But, as a recent arrival from Fort McMurray points out, in comparison to the ethnic diversity there, we are noticeably a White community—everyone is the same.

And that is my great fear —that we have found it too easy to slip into the comfort and complacency of a too White community, forgetting the diversity that exists outside of the Pass, especially the Aboriginal people to whom the Pass was so important. I am ashamed and saddened by the racism that I detect in my students. I want to tell them that they have a responsibility to the people who came before them, men, women, and children who fought a hard battle against economic and social oppression and in doing so established a community that, for at least a while, accepted diversity as a way of life. This valley is where I have lived my pedagogy (Aoki, 2002), a pedagogy I hope is "oriented towards remembrance and the activism of voices rendered silent by contemporary narratives" (Smith, 1999, p. 134). I have listened to what my students have said and hope that what they have not said is just as important; that through what we experienced together they have been challenged to live well (Jardine, cited in Aoki, 2002) and that they will respond to that challenge in the future. I am confident that they will; they graciously and enthusiastically engaged with me in a difficult but genuine "conversation about life," a conversation which I hope has enabled them to see that there is "more to life than what appears on the surface—that there is indeed an Other side to everything...an absence which is always present" (Smith, 1999, p. 134).

I think back to the beginning of the journey my students and I started a year ago. I am not the same person I was then and my students, in this very fluid stage of their lives, most certainly are not. Where has this journey taken me? I have been deeply ashamed as I acknowledged my own racism, racism that was expressed not only in unthinking acts of

unkindness, but in my total lack of awareness of the power that is granted to those who happen to be born White. My hardest moment was reading the writing in which I relive my racist acts as a good friend, an Aboriginal member of the MEd cohort, listened. I am sensitized to evidence of the power we as the dominant White society wield and continually ask myself and my students to consider from whose perspective we see the world. How is it different for those who are not White?

For my entire teaching career the questions central to my inner dialogue have concerned who I am as a person and as a teacher. David Smith warns us not to "speak and act as if one's (professional) discourse is already closed" (1999, p. 128). By remembering who I was and, through my writing, facing myself, I was able to re-define my self, both as a person and as a teacher. Writing became the means by which I began to learn, as Ngo so eloquently writes, "who I was in the past, who I was then, and who I wanted to be in the future" (cited in Peirce, 1995, p. 27). I continue, knowing "that understanding is never complete but is achieved as one lays oneself open to the conversation of life already in progress, instead of hiding within a set of fixed formulations marked, perhaps, as virtue" (Smith, 1999, p.130).

This fall semester, I teach only a few of the students who participated in the study. Ashley, now in grade 12, arrives late almost every morning, tired from balancing her job as a waitress and her studies. Breakfast is a coke and a bag of chips. Carol has come into her own—more confident, still bright and effervescent. Ritchie still has his cocky grin and even blonder spikes. He has not been late for one first period English 30-1 class this semester and still delights in challenging me with his original perspective on many of the issues we discuss. Linda is quietly preparing for next year, sitting entrance and

scholarship exams at post-secondary institutions. When I ask them to reflect on what participating in the study last year meant to them, all except Ritchie articulate ways in which it changed their thinking about Aboriginal people. They are still "way more" aware of stereotyped thinking and racism. To my delight, they say they are not afraid now to object when they hear racist remarks—"We're grade 12s—who's going to stop us?" Ritchie is still unabashedly racist. Though he says he would never do or say anything to hurt a Native person, he "does not like them."

Mark, Karl, and Carol are the only three of last year's grade 10s included in this semester's English 20-1 class of 30. Mark never misses a chance to tease me about the curriculum: "So it will be about racism, then Shakespeare, then racism...." But we have a serious discussion about King's *Truth and Bright Water* before I introduce it. Carol, in a response to the novel, asks, "What will make Native Canadians more noticed as a part of society? What will allow them to be treated as equals?"

Tim and Alexa, in last year's English 10-2 class, have switched streams and are now in the English 10-1 class. They beam with delight when I tell them that the grade 10 class showed the largest change in attitude and it is with their class that I concentrate my efforts this year, taking into account the advice of many of the students to add more variety to the selections. Thus, I include more multicultural literature, though my perspective remains firmly anti-racist.

Thomas King (2003), writing of the late writer Louis Owens, says that he and Owens were both "hopeful pessimists" who wrote "knowing that none of the stories we told would change the world. But we wrote in the hope that they would" (p. 92).

My hope is that reading works by Aboriginal writers will give students empathy for Aboriginal people, empathy that will translate into understanding, acceptance, and an end to racism. In that way, too, the world will be changed.

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## Appendix A

## Survey Questions

Please answer the questions below by checking the most appropriate response. Do not put your name on the survey.

1. You are at a party with several of your friends and there are many people there whom you have never met. A person whom you do not know has had a few drinks and begins to make fun of the Native teenager on the other side of the room. It is evident to you that the Native teenager has overheard the comments. Under these circumstances,

I would approve of what the individual did and say so -----.

I would approve of what the individual did but not say anything -----.

I would disapprove of what the individual did but say nothing -----.

I would disapprove of what the individual did and would say so -----

2. You are waiting in line to be served at McDonald's on a busy Saturday afternoon. At the moment, the counter-lady is serving a Native person who appears to be having difficulty deciding what to order. The woman beside you is noticeably impatient as you can hear her sighing. You then hear her comment about how Native people are always causing trouble. Under these circumstances:

I would agree with the woman beside me and tell her -----.

I would agree with the woman beside me but not say anything -----.

I would disagree with the woman beside me but say nothing -----.

I would disagree with the woman beside me and tell her so -----.

3. You are going on a school trip for three days to Calgary with other students. You are to share a hotel room with one of the other students. When you are paired up, your partner is Native. Under these circumstances

I would be uncomfortable and say I objected to sharing -----.

I would be uncomfortable but not say anything -----.

I would be comfortable but not say anything -----.

I would be comfortable and say that it's fine -----.

4. For some time now you have been very attracted to Kelly. You are both fifteen years old. You have dated other people but like being with Kelly the most. The only thing stopping you is that Kelly is Native. You often hear your friends at school mock and say unsettling things about Native people. How would you respond?

I would tell my friends they were wrong to say these things and date Kelly -----.

I would date Kelly but not say anything -----.

I would not date Kelly but not say anything agreeing with my friends -----.

I would not date Kelly and would tell my friends I agree with them -----.

5. Sitting in a new class, you notice that a teacher continually asks other students to participate but does not ask two Native boys/girls. Under these conditions:

I would disagree with the teacher's behaviour and tell the teacher -----.

I would disagree with the teacher's behaviour but not say anything -----.

I would agree with the teacher's behaviour but not say anything -----.

I would agree with the teacher's behaviour and tell the teacher -----.

6. Your friend's parents have in their house a basement apartment for rent. A Native person comes to see about renting the room. Your friend's parents say that the apartment has already been rented. You know this is not true. A day later, your friend's parents rent the apartment to someone else. Under these circumstances:

I would disagree with my friend's parents and tell them -----.

I would disagree with my friend's parents but not say anything -----.

I would agree with my friend's parents but not say anything -----.

I would agree with my friend's parents and tell them so -----.

Circle the response you feel is most true:

7. I have heard others make discriminatory remarks about Native people.

Often              Occasionally              Seldom              Never

8. Have you made discriminatory remarks against Native people?

Often              Occasionally              Seldom              Never

## Appendix B

## Interview Questions

1. Did you enjoy reading \_\_\_\_\_? (name of selection)  
If yes: 2. What did you like most about it?  
If no: 3. What did you dislike most about it?
4. Which character did you like the most?
5. What did s/he do that made you like him/her?
6. Which character did you dislike the most?
7. What did s/he do that made you dislike him/her?
8. Was this a good book/story to have picked for English \_\_\_?
9. Why?
10. Why do you think I chose it?
11. Did reading this book/story have any effect on your attitudes toward Canadian Aboriginal people?
12. Would you say you were prejudiced toward Canadian Aboriginal people before reading this selection?  
If yes: 13. How prejudiced do you think you were?
- 14: What are some of the beliefs you had that you consider to be prejudiced?  
If no: 15. Why don't you think you were prejudiced?
16. Would you say you are prejudiced toward Canadian Aboriginal people now?
17. Would you like to read more literature by Canadian Aboriginal writers?