

Autobiography: Stories by a Sioux Teacher

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ABSTRACT

Human science research is a form of writing. Creating a phenomenological text is the object of the research process (Van Manen, 1990). In the case of this project my writing and research serves as pedagogy. Anecdotal narrative as story form is an effective way of dealing with certain kinds of knowledge. Anecdotes can teach us. The use of story or of anecdotal material in phenomenological writing is not merely a literary embellishment. The stories themselves are examples of *practical theorizing*. *Anecdotal narratives (stories)* are important for pedagogy in that they function as experiential case material on which pedagogic reflection is possible. H. Rosen (1986), points out the significance and power of anecdotal narrative:

- (1) to compel: a story recruits our willing attention;
- (2) to lead us to reflect: a story tends to invite us to a reflective search for significance;
- (3) to involve us personally: one tends to search actively for the storyteller's *meaning via one's own*;
- (4) to transform: we may be touched, shaken, moved by story; it teaches us;
- (5) to measure one's interpretive sense: one's response to a story is a measure of one's deepened ability to make interpretive sense (Rosen, 1986).

Famous works shared by the likes of Van Manen and Rosen (and many others) have encouraged me to communicate my stories; to validate my life; to heal.

I tell my stories through my Sioux mind and heart. I provide a mere snap-shot of what its like inside my world. My personal experiences reveal, who I am, where I came from. *My past helps provide a map for my future journey. This work reflects yearnings, desires, dilemmas and questions to uncover possibilities for a better understanding for educators and for any one who imparts knowledge:*

My work is grounded in the cultural and spiritual knowledge of Sioux and Blackfoot traditions. My eyes see differently. I am engaged in different conversation with things. Some anecdotes describe spiritual conversations with my Maker in the form of prayers, songs and ceremony. Others are harsh realities informing the reader about racism,

sexism, oppression and deprivation. You will read about endurance, survival and inextinguishable identity.

This writing has been my journey to freedom. Through my investigation and reflection I called forth a more confident inner voice of my own. I emerged with self-confidence and power to control my own life. The narratives I share are dedicated to the Marlenes and Audreys not to be forgotten during busy days in classrooms everywhere.

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CHAPTER ONE: MY BACKGROUND

I Am Sioux

I am a Sioux woman; a Lakota/Dakota. The two tribes to which I belong are Minicouju (Plant by Water - Lakota) and Wahpetonwan (Camp Among the Leaves Dwellers - Dakota). The name of the reserve where I grew up is Standing Buffalo and the reserve where my mother and grandfather lived was Wood Mountain.

The Lakota from Wood Mountain came to Canada after the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1886. The Dakota from Standing Buffalo came to Canada during the Minnesota Wars of 1862. At that time in history there was a lot of conflict, mainly because of the encroachment of white settlers on Indian lands. The Sioux defended their traditional territory (lands stretching from what is now the state of Minnesota to the Dakotas and south eastern Montana) against farmers, ranchers and gold-seekers. As a result of the fighting, both of my tribal ancestors fled from the United States and sought protection across the Canadian border. As a result, our tribes have always been treated somewhat as foreigners or refugees. In the early 1920s, when the two tribes refused to return to the United States, they were given Canadian citizenship under the term, "Status Indians." Earlier in the nineteenth century when the Federal Government made treaties with other Canadian plains tribes, our tribes were not included. Our "status" gives us rights that are almost equal to Canadian treaty tribes. One of the benefits we are excluded from is the annual five dollar payment which every treaty Indian receives in July.

My Parents

My father, Alexander Goodwill, was born on September 14, 1914. He was the fifth oldest of a family of nine. He had six brothers and two sisters. My father told us of his childhood experiences, working with his father and brothers on their farm, while hunting, fishing, gardening and raising chickens to supplement their family's income. As a child, he attended Qu'Appelle Indian School, a federal school operated by Roman Catholic priests and nuns. There he obtained about a grade six level of education. Along with schooling, he had to learn farming, animal husbandry, and carpentry. It was the curriculum of those schools at that time.

My father's memories of boarding school were mostly negative. He told us stories of how he was subjected to cruelty; he was treated like a prisoner; they all were. Whenever they ran away they would be sought out and returned. Upon returning the principal would publicly strap them as an example to the rest of the students.

He also told us stories of life and freedom after he left school. He seemed to enjoy baseball the most. He and his brothers had a team which was quite famous in that region. They played for a number of years in every small town in Saskatchewan. He was a left-handed pitcher, a strike-out king.

My mother, Stella, was the second daughter of John Okute Sica. She was raised by her paternal grandmother Emma. My mother never received formal schooling. She was sent to Qu'Appelle Indian School when she was eleven years old. She recalls being sick for months, for some unknown reason, and spent all of that time in the infirmary. Her father went to pick her up and they returned to Wood Mountain. As a result my mother never did learn how to read and write.

My mother spent her adolescent years under the guidance of her grandmother and her father, and learned the traditional way to live off the land. They lived out on the open prairies for most of the warm season, camping, hunting, and trapping. They traveled with horses and a buggy carrying all they owned. They had saddle horses and hounds which they used for hunting. In the winter time, they settled on the outskirts of the town of Moose Jaw. This was where the Lakota who were left in Canada came to winter. By this time their numbers had dwindled drastically due to starvation and disease. During those hard times, some survived by eating the cast-off parts of animals that were slaughtered in the town's abattoir.

My grandfather became the first Lakota to own land in that area. He filed for a homestead where he settled with his family in 1946. Later, his land and surrounding area became the Wood Mountain Reserve.

My mother learned many skills working on her father's ranch, by assisting him with chores and helping her grandmother perform domestic tasks. She became an excellent horsewoman, entering challenge races. She would ride for miles by herself looking for cattle, hunting, or picking up mail and supplies in town. She developed her talents at

creating traditional designs in her crafts and clothing with beads and quill work. She tanned hides and made moccasins and jackets. She gathered herbal medicines and learned of their specific uses. She uses her herbal knowledge to help sick people to this day.

This is how my mother and father met - her family made frequent trips to Standing Buffalo to visit her relatives. During one of those trips she became acquainted with my father. Although, a family named "Yuzicapi," actually arranged for her to marry one of their sons (arranged marriages were still practiced at that time), she was allowed to break tradition and she did. Her father supported her wish. Years later, my father began visiting her at Wood Mountain. It was then that they decided to get married. They had a Catholic wedding ceremony in my grandfather's house on April 4, 1939. They then moved to Standing Buffalo to live.

At Standing Buffalo Reserve, my parents owned a farm which was passed down to my father by his father. My grandfather, uncles and father worked very hard cutting and clearing the land to prepare for farming. It was the days of horse drawn implements. This farm was where all thirteen children (of which I am the fifth oldest) grew up. I have eight sisters and three brothers, (one brother is deceased). Eleven of the thirteen are married. Our immediate family consists of eighty members. My mother passed away on February 6, 1998 at the age of 79 years. My father passed away on April 6, 1972.

My Maternal Grandparents

The Lakota in Canada would not return to the United States for fear of their lives. The American Lakota had convinced them that they would be killed if they crossed the border. By this time Sitting Bull was dead, and the Massacre at Wounded Knee had occurred. The remaining Lakota, less than three hundred in all, continued to roam southwestern Saskatchewan and parts of southern Alberta, avoiding the United States government officials. The Canadian government allowed the Sioux to stay once they agreed that they would remain peaceful. Under the watchful eye of the Northwest Mounted Police the activities of the Lakota were closely monitored. Among the remaining members were my great-grandparents, Tashunka Nupa Wi (Her Two Horses) and Waucapsne (Hard To Shoot At).

My maternal grandfather, Okute sica, (John was his English name) had married three times. His first marriage was to a Cree woman named Emma Cote, whom he met at the Regina Industrial School. After their wedding, they went to live at Wood Mountain. They had a daughter, Adeline, who was eighty-two years of age at her passing just before Christmas of 1992. A short time after Adeline was born, her mother died of tuberculosis, a disease to which many aboriginal people had succumbed at that time. My grandfather sought his parents' help in raising his young daughter. He was widowed for nine years.

Years later, he visited Standing Buffalo reserve where he met Helen Tawayaika (Carry Their Own Feather). They married and my mother was born on June 3, 1918. When my mother was only three months old, her mother died of the Swine Flu, an epidemic that killed many native people at that time. Once again, my grandfather relied on his parents to help him raise his second daughter.

As my mother and her sister, Adeline, grew up they helped provide for themselves and their grandparents by performing domestic labor on nearby ranches. But their labor was not always confined to the house; they sometimes had to break horses, tend to cattle and hunt to provide food for the families with whom they lived.

Ten years later my grandfather, John, married for the third time. He married Christine Laswisse (He Sings for the People). She was also from the Standing Buffalo Reserve. They had four children: two sons and two daughters. My grandfather passed away in 1961 at the age of 76. My step-grandmother Christine, who is now 92 years of age, still lives in Wood Mountain with her youngest son Gus who cares for her. The other family members, my aunts and uncles, have families and live in various parts of Canada and the United States.

My recollections of my grandfather, John, are wonderful. He was a tall man, around six foot three inches, and a handsome gentleman who was also very kind. He displayed a wealth of knowledge, mostly self-taught. He was particularly skilled in writing. He documented Lakota history, wrote poetry, legends, letters to family and friends, all of which explained our culture and his beliefs and values as a Lakota.

Whenever he came to visit us or we went to visit him, (we lived three hundred miles apart), he would be very happy to see us. I remember he would tickle us with his

whiskers before he kissed us or gave us a hug. When I was little I used to sit cradled in his arms. He never seemed to tire of me or put me down unless I wanted to run off to play. He showed us a great deal of love. I was fourteen years old when he passed away.

Our grandmother, Christine, was just as kind and loving as our grandfather John, was. She gave of herself tirelessly with what appeared to be little or no effort. She was an exceptional cook! When we visited her, she provided us with plenty to eat. The sharing of food is customary, but after 92 years it must come automatically. She had not only raised her four children but helped raise my mother and my aunt Adeline, and later, four of Adeline's children. She also helped my uncle Gus raise his three sons.

My grandmother hosted a family reunion every Labor Day week-end in September. All her children attended with their families. The week-end was spent feasting, telling stories, singing and crying. It was a healing experience; an event everyone looked forward to.

I admired my grandmother for her patience, kindness, and wisdom. She is an example of how I would like to be.

My Paternal Grandparents

My grandfather was a Dakota from the Wahpetonwan band. His Dakota name was Tawatche Waste, which means "Kind One." When he attended the industrial school he was given the English name Joseph Goodwill.

My grandmother was a Lakota from Wood Mountain. She came from the family who were given the name "Lethbridge." Her brother William still resides at Wood Mountain with his wife Kathryn.

My paternal grandparents were a little different. They did not show us the same kind of love and affection that we received from my mother's side of the family. We lived within a mile of them and yet we visited only rarely. I don't really know why, but as I grew older I realized that they had their "favorite" grandchildren, and none of us were their chosen ones. I also thought that as there were so many of us in our family they were unable to keep up. There was a child born every two years, and whenever we went to visit them they couldn't identify us. One of them would say, "Which one are you? Come close and

let me see your face." We would approach them shyly and tell them our name. My grandmother, Mary would give us a treat from a bag she kept hanging on the kitchen wall. Their house was always warm and smelled of sage and sweetgrass.

My grandfather, Joe, was always sitting in his favorite chair, looking out the window, or if it was summer he would be working in his garden. He always wore an old yellow straw hat, a plaid shirt and bib overalls. He even made a scare-crow that looked exactly like him. Sometimes, from a distance, we couldn't tell the difference. He grew the best vegetables in the Qu'Appelle Valley and sold them to the tourists during the summer time. He also grew gardens of many flowers. I can picture him now, resting proudly among his plants, admiring the fruits of his labor. Out back of his place, he always had a coop full of chickens. He sold fresh eggs to the community.

Our grandfather and grandmother met at the Qu'Appelle Industrial School, at Lebret, Saskatchewan. They were the first generation to attend the newly built school. Attending the Industrial School, meant learning to labor as well as learning to read and write. The men learned to farm and take care of dairy cows, pigs, chickens, horses, and beef cattle which supplied the school with food. The girls learned domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, sewing, and knitting. Students often remained at school for the entire year. Some of them were allowed to go home at Christmas and summer vacation, otherwise they had to remain at the boarding school in order to maintain the farm and care for the livestock.

In those days it was customary among the tribes to arrange marriages. While students were under the care of the missionaries, the missionaries assumed this responsibility and practiced it at the school. There was reservation land set aside by the Department of Indian Affairs for these arranged marriages. It is called File Hills Agency. This was how my grandparents were married.

One day the nuns chose three young women including Mary, at the same time as they chose three young men for these women. The three couples were taken to the principal's office where he explained that it was time for them to be married. The principal told them the arrangement for each partnership. At that moment it was decided that Joe Tawatche Waste was to marry Mary Lethbridge. The two other couples were arranged as

well. At hearing this degrading pronouncement, the women burst into tears; tears of shock and resistance! The men remained silent, probably in great humiliation. However, regardless of the wishes of the individuals involved the weddings took place at the school with a Roman Catholic church service and a banquet. Two of the couples were sent to live on the land which was reserved for relocation, but my grandparents came back to Standing Buffalo to live. There, they remained all of their lives until their passing. My grandmother died on the day of the birth of one of my sons, May 28, 1976, and our grandfather died three years later.

I grew more fond of my grandparents after my father died. They were the link to the memories of my father. It was then I began visiting them often. They told me stories of my father and his brothers, of various humorous events, and of the history of our people. I particularly learned from them the traditional views and values. I felt that I was just getting acquainted with them when they died. I never told them that I loved them, something I deeply regret.

There is a large family on my father's side, many of whom still live at Standing Buffalo. We have many celebrations and gatherings, where we practice and maintain our distinctive Lakota/Dakota ways.

Childhood Experiences

I had a happy childhood. Growing up in a big family, there was always much to do. As children, we played many games, mostly ones we invented. We very seldom had store-bought toys, instead we made our own. The boys carved out of wood such figures as guns, trucks, and animals. They made sling shots, slings, bows and arrows, hockey sticks, and stick horses. We had dolls made from rags, or if we were lucky we received a store-bought one for Christmas. We sewed and knitted clothes for our dolls. We played endlessly, imitating parenthood, playing cowboys and Indians, school, and even church.

Some of the games we played we invented ourselves. They were: memory games, spelling games, charades, and something like 20 questions. We played a lot of card games, especially during the winter. In the summer there was more to do out of doors like riding horses, swimming, fishing or camping. While camping we imitated tribal customs

of dancing, feasting, and give-aways. Our tents were made of blankets. Our regalia were made of old cast-off clothing and materials. Our ceremonies were always managed by our eldest brother who knew the appropriate protocol and songs. Sometimes we would carry on for days at a time. We would even pretend we had to move camp, to relocate for a special ceremony. We'd have fun until a rainstorm or a high wind would throw our camp in disarray, then we would simply collect all our playthings, "move camp" and rebuild again.

We learned our tribal customs by observation and imitation. Only when we felt we were ready would we join our parents and elders. We were never forced to take part in anything unless we wanted to. We learned mostly by example and we strove to follow the role models of our tribe or in some cases, role models from other tribes.

Our parents taught us both traditional Lakota/Dakota spiritualism and Christianity. Our mother taught us Christian prayers and saw to it that we made our sacraments in the Roman Catholic church, while our father taught us traditional Lakota/Dakota values, songs, and dances. I never heard our parents argue about religion; instead they each allowed us to grow and form our own beliefs. As we became adults, we chose which way we wanted to worship. Each of us, myself and my brothers and sisters, has chosen our own way to worship and we each respect the other's. I am most grateful for that.

My father farmed, fished, hunted, trapped, and did carpentry and masonry for a living. He fixed farm machinery and vehicles. He passed his skills on to my brothers who worked along side of him.

My mother did beadwork making Lakota/Dakota crafts which she sold to supplement our income. She also worked for people in the nearby town and the tourist resorts. She did house cleaning, laundry, cooking or babysitting. My older sisters stayed home to care for the younger ones. When I became old enough to accompany my mother, I helped her with the work-load. Sometimes I would be paid as well. I would buy a little treat for myself and give her the rest to buy groceries for the family. When we would arrive home with good things to eat, the family would be happy and we'd all enjoy our meal together.

As I grew up, I was taught by my mother how to weed the garden, pick vegetables,

gather and cure wild berries and identify and gather wild herbs and roots. She also taught me how to cure meat and fish, sew, knit, crochet and darn woollen socks. At a very early age I learned how to sew my own clothes as well as knit socks and mittens for the family. I had to hand-wash clothes with a wash board in a galvanized tub. I ironed by heating up a cast iron on top of the black wood stove. I had to carry water from a rain barrel for family use. In the winter, we melted snow or blocks of ice that were carried up from the lake. Our lights at night consisted of coal oil lamps, gas lamps or candles. Our home was heated by wood and coal. We were taught how to work collectively, so that our combined efforts would preserve our family.

Every summer from the time I was fourteen years old, I worked as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant in our home town of Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. With the money I earned, I bought my clothes for school and I gave money to my mother to buy groceries or pay the family bills.

When I was in the last three years of high school, my father began to use alcohol quite heavily. He began to get sick or he became sick because of the alcohol; I don't know exactly which came first. He didn't preach to us when he was sober, only when he was drunk. He would say things like, "Don't get into trouble!" meaning "Don't get pregnant while you're not married" (referring to his daughters), "Get an education," or "Get a job and hang onto it," meaning "Be ready, for in the future, you will have to work to support yourselves financially." He always meant well.

Life must have been very difficult for my mother and the rest of the younger children as my father's abuse of alcohol increased. I left home right after graduation. I continued to work and send my mother money to buy whatever they needed. I am grateful that my mother never took to drinking and never abandoned her responsibilities for raising the rest of the family. She kept money coming in by doing odd jobs. My father would often drink for days on end. His illness was mentally and emotionally exhausting. My family suffered a lot of embarrassment, stress and hardship. My father's health deteriorated rapidly, and he died from a massive heart attack on April 6, 1972, two days after their thirty-third wedding anniversary.

My Education

Our reserve was fortunate enough to have a one-room school house so we didn't have to leave home to attend the Roman Catholic residential school. We numbered around twenty-five students, from grades one to eight.

I still recall my first day of school. I was so enthusiastic that I could hardly sleep the night before. To ready myself for school, I put on my new clothes and shoes (this was my first remembrance of having new clothing and shoes). I felt very proud! I walked to school with my sisters, the teacher rang the bell, and we all filed into class. My first teacher was Mr. Kleptch. Up until this time I had had little experience in speaking to a white person. I was afraid so I behaved cautiously, watching and following what others did so as not to make any mistakes. The new teacher's voice was gentle. He passed out new pencils, crayons, erasers, scribblers and text books. I was so thrilled to have so many new supplies! With help from my sister I wrote my name on them.

From then on the most memorable thing that happened to me was that I learned to read with Dick and Jane. Their storybook lives were so different from ours that some of the stories didn't make any sense, but it was a powerful sensation to read, "Go, Jane. Go Dick. Go Spot. Go. Go. Go!" We must have sounded silly to the older students whom I could hear snickering as we read. I became embarrassed to read out loud.

I always did my assignments as quickly as possible so I could listen and watch the older students do their lessons. The stories they read were much more exciting; they told about real life adventures!

There were always a lot of workbooks or mimeographed sheets with blanks to fill in. We also did a lot of copying notes from the board. I do not recall ever doing any creative writing or having free reading time. We never had a library in our school.

Our classroom behaviors were somewhat strange. One of the peculiarities was that we almost never spoke out loud. There was always silence, except for reading, and even then we read in whispering tones. (Sometimes the younger students would be too shy to even ask to use the bathroom; they would wet their pants). When we were asked questions, we did not make eye contact with the teacher but would sit with our heads down, if we answered at all. An attempted answer would often be only a futile whisper.

As a result we never asked questions and our interactions with the teacher were very limited. The teacher did all the talking while we listened and obeyed.

Practicing for the Christmas concert must have been frustrating for the teacher. We would barely let out a sound. The teacher would make us rehearse over and over again, often giving up in exhaustion. Every year we enacted the nativity scene. I always had the part of "Mary," and my classmate, Andrew, was "Joseph." The rest of the students teased us. Andrew and I became enemies. I hated him and he hated me! But it never failed, every year we would be chosen to play the same roles.

We had a new teacher every year. The Department of Indian Affairs would send in someone new every September. I wondered why. At the time I didn't know the politics or understand the circumstances. We operated on what was provided by the department. The teachers lived in a teacherage attached to the school. There was an outhouse out back, no running water and the furnace needed constant firing up, especially in the wintertime. It sounds primitive but that's the way it was in the 1950s and 60s on an Indian reserve.

Our new teachers were mostly of French descent. We noticed they spoke differently. Whenever they tried to make us speak like them we never seemed to pronounce the words "correctly." We would get reprimanded for it. It was often very confusing.

Throughout elementary school, the teachers treated us pretty well, I thought, although the threat of the strap was always there. We called it, "Black Myria." The boys were not afraid of it. When they were strapped they refused to cry. The girls were very afraid of it and as a result, we were afraid to do anything wrong. If it was used, our parents would usually come in the next day. We would all be shivering in our desks, listening to shouts and threats coming from the hallway. Discipline in our home was not like at school. We were taught the Lakota/Dakota way. If we did something wrong, we were not punished by a spanking or a whipping; instead we were given a lecture. It was the way our parents spoke to us, stern and gentle at the same time. Sometimes I felt worse than the person I did harm to. We learned how not to do things. Times changed all that.

I do not recall reading any storybooks at home. While growing up, our parents told us stories. The stories were about legends of Eyah, the monster; Octomi, the spider; and

the history of our people. My favorite stories were about Octomi. Evening or night time was the time for stories, for it was customary not to tell stories during the day.

By grade eight, I was faced with leaving my reserve to attend the D.I.A. (Department of Indian Affairs) residential school fourteen miles away (the same school my grandparents and father had attended). Up to this point I had heard many stories about what it was like there. Some of our neighbors sent all their children away each year. We saw them only on holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. I was frightened at the thought of being away from my parents and home, for up until this time we had never been separated. As the time drew near, I became more apprehensive. Often students in the reserve school would fail their grades to avoid going on to boarding school. They would rather repeat a grade or two so they could remain at home on the reserve until their sixteenth birthday when they could quit school legally. I didn't want to quit school.

When I arrived at the boarding school that September, I was fourteen years of age. Had it not been for my two sisters I probably would have had a very difficult time. They were there to help me which made it easier. I followed them wherever they went, except to class or to bed. When it was bedtime, I had to go to the intermediate girls' dormitory. After the lights were out, I would lie there in that cold dark room, thinking. The feelings of loneliness would overtake me. What made it worse were the muffled sobs that I could hear. I had a very difficult time adjusting to life in the boarding school. I felt like everything that mattered to me had been stripped away: my family, my relatives, my friends, and the joy of freedom. I felt what it was like to be imprisoned. We were all given numbers; mine was #103. I had to embroider this number on all of my clothing.

We were surrounded by brick walls, cement, and iron gates that were always locked. The school operated on a set of strict rules, and we were subject to punishment or expulsion if we did not adhere to them. We had to be obedient, eat bad food, attend church (sometimes every day before Christmas or during Lent), do chores, line-up and march where ever we went: to class, to meals, to bed, or outside. Some students ran away, and hitch-hiked home. If they were found, they were returned and given extra work duties or stripped of special privileges. Misbehavior was not tolerated.

The priest preached fire and brimstone every Sunday. He spared us during the

week. We thought his Sunday sermons were so exhausting for him that he needed to rest up for the following week.

The boys sat on one side of the church while the girls sat on the other. Interaction with each other was discouraged. We rarely had mixed social functions; in fact the only time we were integrated was in the classroom.

Students were allowed visitors on Saturdays and Sundays. There was a special parlor available for our visits. It was simply a large room painted white with heavy brown wooden chairs placed along the walls. The windows were covered with steel bars. In one corner there was a canteen surrounded with a steel cage to prevent entrance. My favorite treat was sweet orange pop, a Coffee Crisp chocolate bar and Cheezies. My body memory craves these tastes from time to time.

One day in October, our father came to visit us during the week. He was actually bringing us the news of our mother's illness. As we saw the car approaching the parking lot, my sisters and I ran out to greet him. We had just returned from a walk and the gate was left open. Our supervisor, a young nun, who could hardly speak English, chased after us screaming that we could not pass the gate. She did not even acknowledge our father, instead she was more concerned about the rule we were breaking. As it turned out, my father became very upset with her. She tried to make us go back, while my father insisted that we remain. She threatened to get the principal. They made a big scene shouting at one another. Meanwhile, all three hundred girls stared at us! My father, in his stubbornness, told her to get the principal. She left and he followed her. In a few minutes he returned and said that we were going home. My sisters and I were kicked out! We quickly packed our things and left.

My sisters seemed to be as confused as I was. I felt for a moment we had been liberated but where could we go? My sisters could quit school because they were of age, but I was not.

What I felt next was humiliation, confusion, frustration, and anger. I didn't understand all the rules. I felt hate. We were controlled by institutions, principals, and Indian agents. We had to succumb to them. My father's rights and responsibilities as a parent had been questioned that day. He had stood up to fight a system. He knew what it

was like because he had gone through it. We rode in silence all the way home.

During the week, I thought about many things. I wanted to continue my schooling, I wanted to find out what the world was like off the reservation. I wanted to return to the residential school because there was nowhere else to go. I dreamed that someday I would graduate and travel. Up until this time, my father's youngest brother was the only one from our reserve to reach grade twelve. I wanted to be like him. If I stayed on the reserve, I would end up getting married and being stuck there forever, as that was the thing to do then. The following week, the principal came to our house. He apologized and asked us to return to school. My father spoke to him for what seemed like a long time before he agreed to let us go back. Just two of us returned. One sister decided to stay and look after the family, as our mother was recovering from surgery.

While I was at the residential school, I continued to learn; not academically perhaps but, rather, how to survive. We had to figure a way to make our days more enjoyable. We did this by playing tricks on one another, stealing food, hiding out, deceiving the teachers and supervisors. We learned how to be cunning and the best part was the joy of not being found out.

"Being silenced" was the primary means of control in D.I.A. boarding schools. As far as reading, writing, and speaking were concerned, they weren't much different from reserve schools. I was never encouraged to engage in discussion, question, or argue, but rather to "listen" and "obey." We had to maintain silence as we marched down the hallways to class, church, the dining room, or the dormitory. Our silence created a feeling of powerlessness.

The year I was going into grade ten, my father arranged for me to attend the public school in our home town of Fort Qu'Appelle. There were four of us who transferred from the residential school. There was no bussing in those days so we had to be placed in homes in the town with people who would provide us with room and board. It meant adopting a set of new ways. It was embarrassing for me because I didn't know how to run a bath, use the telephone or operate the television set. We had no such luxuries at home.

In my new surroundings, I once again withdrew into silence. I basically learned from observation. I was too shy to ask questions let alone speak up. School seemed more

difficult here. There were more demands. To make things worse, this public school had never had native students before. The other students stared at us a lot which made me very uncomfortable. I tried hard to keep up with the work-load, and eventually, I completed grade twelve and graduated with senior matriculation, as they called it at that time. I was proud of my accomplishments. But now, when I look back, I don't believe I received an adequate education. I was lacking many skills and much information. I had no self confidence and a very poor self-image. I believe that I was passed from grade to grade because of my "good behavior" for I was "silent" and "obedient," the example of a "good citizen." There was a guidance counselor at the school. We never exchanged a single word in the three years I attended Fort Qu'Appelle Composite School. My future or life goals, if they thought I had any, were not of importance to anyone at that time. The counselor probably thought I would never make it anyway. I was the first and only member of my family to graduate from high school.

Two years later, after working at odd jobs, I decided to try college. I thought I was too dumb for university. I was so naive! But I didn't know any different. I had never known anyone personally who had attended university. I decided to move to Calgary, where I attended Mount Royal College. There I made new friends. They were Blackfoot, Blood, Stony, Peigan and Sarcee women my age. They were students, a lively group, influenced by the sixties. They knew Harold Cardinal, a politician and author, and they quoted him regularly. They knew the budding politician and Indian lawyer, Wilton Little Child. They were fully aware of the political situation for aboriginal people. They had their own opinions and arguments about the White Paper, which was a Canadian government policy initiative to terminate federal responsibility for Native people. As well, they supported the Red Paper, which was the counter proposal put together by aboriginal people. I found it exciting to be in their company for it gave me a new-found confidence. They helped me view the world from another perspective. We remain friends to this day.

The modern culture of the plains tribes is a mixture of rodeo and pow-wow. For much of the later sixties I spent summers with my friends attending such events in and around Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the northern United States. It was through rodeo that I met my husband. His skills as a cowboy attracted my attention. After courtship we

became engaged and were married on December 28, 1968. We have one daughter, three sons and one grandson. We still travel the rodeo circuit and attend summer pow-wows. Whenever we attend pow-wows, we dance or if the men want to sing, they join in with a drum group. It is a form of entertainment and recreation that we enjoy; it is a place where we can meet our friends and families.

In 1980, I became acquainted with an outstanding young Black woman, named Glenda Simms, who worked for the newly formed Native American Studies Department at the University of Lethbridge. She enquired as to what my interests were and I explained how I was involved in education. When I wasn't substituting in the schools, I was working for Ninastako Center in adult education. She told me to see her if I was interested in entering university. When my youngest child entered kindergarten, I eventually did. I immediately became a full-time student, and was commuting a round trip of 120 miles a day. My motivation for obtaining a degree was: first, to make a difference in providing for the students' needs in the Blood Reserve's federally operated school system, and second, to support the Blood Tribe in achieving Band Controlled education. I completed my degree in December, 1986.

I worked five years for the Blood Tribe Education Board. In 1991, I decided to go back to university to seek more information in the area of reading. I entered in the Diploma Program majoring in Language Education. I attended one semester when one of my professors, Cynthia Chambers, discussed with me the possibility of entering the Master of Education Program. It was beyond my wildest dreams! I literally allowed her to physically lead me to the admissions office. I was so scared, I was shaking! I obtained the forms and information that were required. I applied and was accepted! The completion of this project means the completion of my program. My goal is within my grasp!

CHAPTER TWO: SACRED RELATIONS

Dakota Oyate Oyea

(A gathering of people to help one another)

In August of 1990, I took a trip back to my birthplace at Standing Buffalo reserve, which is located in the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley, forty-five miles east of Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan. As a result of my visit I continued to travel to Wood Mountain, in the southwestern part of the province. There I visited my step-grandmother and family and took part in a prayer meeting at the place of Sitting Bull's last sundance in Canada. This event became a catalyst for me. The stories which I had heard from my mother and from my grandfather when I was young were being retold.

That August, Standing Buffalo Reserve held a large gathering of the Sioux Nations: Lakota, Dakota and Nakota. They assembled for the purpose of forming an alliance. The gathering was called "Dakota Oyate Oyea," which means "people gathered together to help one another." The assembly began with the symbolic lighting of a fire. The fire was to burn constantly throughout the event to signify the importance of the discussions of the Seven Councils who were gathered there. The Seven Councils are the seven tribes which comprise the Sioux Nation. As the discussions began and carried on throughout the entire week, I listened intently. Each tribal spokesperson had a turn to speak. Their speeches revealed common themes such as their existence in relation to the effects of colonization, enculturation, and assimilation. They expressed the need to strengthen cultural awareness and traditional spirituality. After four days, the assembly closed with a commitment to bind the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Nations socially, politically and economically, in order that their combined efforts could be strengthened and their concerns better voiced to the governments of both Canada and the United States. At the closure, the symbolic fire was allowed to burn out. Several ashes were collected in a container and presented to the elders from the Standing Rock Reservation who had agreed to host the next assembly. The week long celebration ended with a pow-wow, which meant feasting, give-aways, and inter-tribal dancing.

On Monday, the last day of the gathering, a caravan was formed to travel to Wood Mountain to visit Sitting Bull's last sundance place. The purpose was to seal our alliance

as a Sioux Nation with prayers and the power of ritual. My mother, being one of the few who knew the location, led us to the valley they now call Medicine Lodge. It was mid afternoon when we reached the secluded site in a deep valley with a stream running northward shaded by a few cottonwood, poplar trees, and saskatoon and choke cherry bushes. Buffalo brushes were scattered across the hillsides to the east, and the west was blanketed with a thick growth of poplars from the valley's floor to the summit. Upon entering the site, the men quickly spread out; some scoured the area for signs of the sundance lodge, others gathered wood to build a fire, some collected sage, while the two holy men made a tobacco offering addressing the four directions.

Immediately the space was filled with a spiritual presence. Four eagles appeared from the west while, four from the east flew out of the buffalo brushes. They joined and circled above us. One man who was on his hands and knees unearthed something; he suddenly alerted us in Lakota, "Ho, wanka toh, heyewpo!" ("come here, look at this"). Everyone gathered around as he continued to sift through the dirt out of which he took several oval smooth rocks called "woape" (rocks with symbols made by the Grandfathers who are spiritual beings). The woape were marked with eagles. The people passed them around and prayed with them. We learned that the rocks were taken from the very pit where Sitting Bull's Sundance fire had burned over one hundred years ago. From this location one of the men paced out the east entrance of the ancient Sundance lodge. When he located a hole in the ground, he asked a person to stand in that spot. From there every few steps where holes were located a person was placed. Each hole was where one of the poles of the Sundance Lodge had stood. Brushes tied to the poles formed the walls and the roof. The sacred tree stood alone in the centre. On this day as we held hands we formed a human circle that symbolized the sacred Sundance lodge.

There, we rebuilt the sacred hoop, the hoop that Black Elk, a Lakota wiseman spoke of in his vision, of all nations being joined one day! Indeed in our Lakota/Dakota congregation there were a mixture of human races: German, English, Irish, Chinese, Japanese and French, all joined hands as one. (Curious ranchers from the surrounding district showed up. They were invited to pray with us). As we stood and watched, some men built a fire, others erected a large branch which symbolized the center pole of a sacred

Sundance lodge. They tied the offerings of two eagle feathers and pieces of red and yellow cloth tied with tobacco. While the drummers took their places, certain people of honor were seated in the sacred circle: my mother, my grandmother, my uncle Gus, Lloyd Good Track, and the rancher whose land we were on. Everyone sat down, while the pipe was being offered to the four directions and the offering songs were sung. The drummers then sang the sacred Sundance songs, while sage and water were given to each person in turn, signifying purification. Then we turned and embraced each person, moving clockwise around the circle, as we do at the end of a Sundance. When this was completed, the elders gave prayers once again for this reunion; they instructed us to return every year to make offerings by putting tobacco and water at this sacred place and to pray that all of those present remain strong and united. By this time there were more eagles flying overhead, a good sign. We left Medicine Lodge with fewer tears for there was much lightness in our hearts that day.

That journey back to Saskatchewan rekindled the fondness I felt for my grandfather Okute Sica, who left us thirty-one years ago. In 1991, I came across some of his written work. He had written many articles, book reviews, interviews and letters to his friends in the latter part of his life. My mother had collected them over the years and shared them with me. As I began to read through them, I came to realize how my grandfather lamented the loss of his homeland, the same way I did. He describes his feeling of loss and defeat. In one of the poems he wrote:

America The Land of Mystery

To America the land of mystery I came south of the Sun
 Where first our nations were born.
 With my shell knife and a knotted club I conquered my trails.
 In a deadly combat with an Eyah, something beneath my step rolled.
 I fell. There I found the battle-stone.
 A stone, a weapon Mother Nature had formed for me.
 With the stone, over three hundred years I defended my America.
 America, my land of Mysteries, I forever lost.
 With America I died. I leave no mark, no sign behind.
 Like the buffalo I vanish.
 I've gone on to another Land of Mystery, there to unite
 Where I am with the Great Mystery - "Ate" forever.

John Okute Sica (Don't Shoot Him Down)

July, 1954

My grandfather witnessed incredible change in his life time. In this poem, he describes the end of an era, particularly, with the Native American and their traditional lifestyle. This loss of land and of traditional ways, he describes as the "defeat" and "death." The only reward, as he sees it, is in physical death, then his Spirit will enter into another life.

My grandfather's stories became my mother's stories. My mother's stories became my stories. As they are being read and shared today, his legend, like the Lakota legends, will be remembered forever.

Sitting Bull's Monument

In 1992, after a rigorous year of studying, researching and pounding out papers on my micro-computer, traveling that round-trip from the reserve to Lethbridge, I wanted to do something where I wouldn't have to think or make decisions. Pow-wow therapy was on my mind. My husband and sons packed our trailer and off we went to relax for one month on the rodeo and pow-wow circuit. We began by going to my home reserve Standing Buffalo, to the Crow Agency Fair and Rodeo in Montana, and on to the Black Hills, Pine Ridge, Rosebud Fair and Rodeo, and Wakpala, all in South Dakota. Wakpala has a small community of Hunkpapa whose ancestors returned from Canada after following Sitting Bull across the border. That is how I ended up at Sitting Bull's Monument on the knoll, crying in the rain. It is a beautiful location; a perfect look-out for warrior, holy man, and great chief. One can see for miles around. I found myself mourning for the first time, the death of this great hero. As the rain gently fell, it blended with my tears. I cried out to his spirit,

"Tatanka Eyotaka, it has been more than one hundred years since you left.
 You are at peace.
 I apologize, I pray my cries do not disturb you.
 Strangely, I have come upon your grave today, but I know the reason for this visit.
 For several years, I have thought about you many times through the memories of my mother and of my grandfather, Okute Sica, the grandson of Tashunka Nupa Wi and Waucap sni, who went to Canada with you after the Battle of Little

Big Horn.
 Through the difficult times, of my great grandparents, grandparents and parents,
 I have survived.
 I am grateful for my life! My tears are falling on this soil today because I'm
 lonely for my people, the Lakota.
 Since our tribes have been separated, I have lost so many relatives!
 We are now very few.
 In Canada, we live like orphans, existing on fragmented memories of the past.
 I feel good to be here.
 It affirms who I am.
 I humbly ask you, Tatanka Eyotaka, for guidance and wisdom to make the rest
 of my journey through life, and that I will be able to leave my children and my family
 with the ways of the Lakota."

I felt like I had traveled a full circle. I began this story telling you of my journey
 three years ago to Sitting Bull's last Sundance at Medicine Lodge in Wood Mountain,
 Saskatchewan. Now, three years later, I was standing by his grave, weeping. My tears
 were for joy and for sadness at the same time. Sadness for the loss of my people, and joy
 for the lives of my people. This is what it is like to be Lakota.

A Disagreement

My mother, Stella, was eight years old when this event occurred. It happened in
 the summer of 1926. A family disagreement between my Grandfather, Okute Sica (Don't
 Shoot Him Down) and his mother, Tasunka Nupa Win (Her Two Horses) took place.
 Tasunka Nupa Win became so upset that she decided to secretly leave the tiospaye (her
 village) and take my mother, her granddaughter, away with her. Together they would
 journey on foot from southern Saskatchewan to Wolf Point, Montana, several hundred
 miles away. Tasunka Nupa Win loved my mother dearly; they were inseparable. She had
 begun raising my mother shortly after her birth as her mother had died from an epidemic
 that swept through the country at the time, wiping out a great number of their people.
 Mother loved her as deeply as she was loved.

During the night, Tasunka Nupa Win awoke my mother directing her to get dressed
 as quietly as possible and not to speak a word until they left the house. After they walked
 some distance from the house, to the safety of some bushes, Mother was told that they
 were going to walk to Montana to live with their relatives. Their relatives would take care

of them. They would travel by night, rest by day and preserve their food and water supply. Without question and because of her sleepiness, Mother did not object. When Mother became tired from walking, Tasunka Nupa Win hoisted her upon her back, secured her with her shawl and continued to walk south toward the U. S. border.

Not long after daylight they stopped to rest in some thick bushes well hidden from view. Tasunka Nupa Win did not want to be followed, lest she be found and brought back to the tiospaye. When darkness fell upon them they were once again on their journey. Tasunka Nupa Win knew the country very well.

Along their journey they came upon a settler's cottage, which consisted of a mud hut with white flour sack windows. Next to it was a barn with corrals with a few livestock. Mother became frightened as a Wasichu (whiteman) watched them as they cautiously approached him. Tasunka Nupa Win told her not to be afraid, she was only going to ask for a little food and water and they would continue on their way. She took a chance that the settlers would not harm them. The Washitu called for his wife. She came out of the house and appeared very surprised to see them. Tasunka Nupa Win explained they needed food and water and that they were just traveling through to visit their relatives further south. Without question they were taken in and given food and water. They learned that the homesteaders were Dutch people. The man told them he would take them part of the way in his wagon. After a short rest they were once again on their way. The Wasichu traveled south with them for several hours. When he could go no further, they got off, thanked him and continued walking.

Mother could not really recall how many days and nights it took them to reach a camp near the Missouri River where Poplar, Montana is today. As Mother and Tasunka Nupa Win approached the camp, people noticed them and came running to greet them. When the relatives of Tasunka Nupa Win recognized her, the women began to wail. They were happy to see them but the circumstances under which they arrived bewildered them. Tasunka Nupa Win explained that she had a dispute in her tiospaye and she sought refuge with them. She and my mother were soon taken care of by relatives. They were fed and given a place to sleep. They spent the rest of the summer in the camp.

One day in early autumn Okute Sica appeared, driving a small buggy drawn by a

team of his finest horses. Trailing behind the wagon was his saddle horse. Mother was so happy to see her father she ran out to greet him. She had long forgotten why they separated in the first place. As a small child she didn't quite understand the circumstances which had led to their leaving home. The very next day, all three of them were on their way back to Canada. Mother sat next to her father on the buggy seat while Grandmother sat in the back with their belongings. As they traveled Mother chatted continuously with her father but Tasunka Nupa Win did not exchange any words with him. Whenever they stopped to cook and sleep there remained silence between them.

Days passed slowly but each day brought them closer to home. As they were making their way through a long valley Mother noticed a coyote following them. Coyote pelts were worth a lot of money in those days, a commodity they could trade for food and supplies. Immediately, Grandfather handed her the reins, as he had done so many times before. Clutching his rifle, he climbed in the back of the wagon, untied his saddle horse and swiftly mounted, ready for a hunt. The coyote darted off in the opposite direction with Grandfather chasing after it. Mother brought the horses to a halt where they set up camp to await her father's return. A little while later her father returned with the coyote dangling across the front of the saddle. By this time Tasunka Nupa Win already had a fire going and was preparing a meal. Mother was so happy to see that her father was successful in his hunt she began trilling, (a high pitched shrilling shout made only by females to express their jubilation and to honor success). Seeing Mother so happy forced Okute Sica and Tasunka Nupa Win to speak to each other. The rest of the journey home was joyful, just like old times.

Singer of Sacred Songs

Songs are a very important part of our socialization, recreation, education and spirituality. In our culture the use of songs is a necessary means of expression. There is power in the songs. The songs help give meaning to a dance or ritual. There is a connection among the songs; one compliments the other. Often songs are sung in order to begin a ceremony. Some of the significant songs used in Dakota/Lakota are: the honoring song which is followed by a give-away and/or a feast; the grand entry for a pow-wow,

initiations for rights of passage, greeting songs, thank-you songs, working songs, and the ceremonial songs. There is a special song sung by men when they fill their pipes. There are contact songs which are sung during healing ceremonies; they are sung to communicate or beckon the Grandfather/Grandmother spirit helpers. There are songs for the elements, like the rocks, the wind, lightning, thunder and rain, and the universe which includes the sun, moon and stars as well as the constellations. There are songs for all animals individually and specifically, like the grizzly bear, the spotted eagle; for every color of horse, the smallest of creatures like the mouse, and spiders; the fishes of the lakes, rivers and ocean; and even the illusive sasquatch.

Most of the Dakota/Lakota songs contain words. Word songs describe courage, loyalty, bravery, honesty, freedom, and accomplishment. For example there are many different types of honoring songs; such as name-giving songs or songs for a soldier who served in the war, navy or police service. There are specific songs to send a person off to war and there are victory songs to honor them when they return. The highest honor bestowed on anyone is for a returning soldier after a war or for a person of great accomplishment (benefiting human kind). They are particularly the most significant because of our traditional focus on survival. People continue to recognize a military person or one who achieves great success as a modern-day warrior; it is considered as a form of counting coup. This type of honor can be bestowed on both female and male. Leaders - such as chiefs, councilors, educators, care givers, and elders - obtain recognition in this manner. None of this is instantaneous; it takes time. A person will be recognized only when the community, family members or clan members feel that they deserve it.

A type of honor song that is often used is one which is sung by a man or a woman specifically for another person. This kind of song in Dakota is called "ewakche," which translates "a praise song, sung for one alone." It is for a highest honor. When it is sung, it is often followed by a shout from men or the singer himself; or, if it is sung by a woman, she completes the song with an ear-piercing trill, which is another form of honoring.

There are special ways to recognize children. A name-giving ceremony is one way. Usually the person chosen to give the child a name is the grandfather, grandmother, relative or respected elder. The name-giver chooses a name from a dream, vision or accomplished

deed. The name is sometimes bestowed with a song. Another type of honoring for a child is their being initiated into the dance. Usually a special outfit is made for the child for this particular occasion. The choice of drummers is made by the parents or grandparents. It is an honor to be among the chosen drummers. When the honor song is sung, the person being named leads the dance with the relatives and friends dancing behind him/her, demonstrating their support. For all above rituals, a give-away follows, and sometimes a feast prepared by the family and relatives. Before the ceremonies begin prayers are usually offered and a "thank-you" song is usually sung at the end.

Today, with the use of tape recorders, songs of every tribe appear to be exchanged instinctively. New songs are created for socialization like the regular pow-wow songs and kahomany songs (which are the courting songs). Other tribes have different names for the kahomany, like the owl dance or the round dance. Each year it is exciting to attend the first pow-wow to hear the new songs composed during the wintertime. These are sung by the lead singers and the ones which become popular, like the top ten hits of Country Music, are the best pow-wow songs of the season. I often leave a pow-wow with the drum rhythmically pounding the new tune in my ears.

My father was a singer of Dakota/Lakota traditional ceremonial and entertainment songs. Although my mother, in her shyness, didn't sing in public, she accompanied my father in our home. I learned many songs at an early age; the words, the tempo, as well as the different types.

Singing is a gift. My father was truly gifted! He was able to sing any type of song at any given moment. He knew many, many songs. When he returned home from a long day's work, he'd routinely wash up and pick up the baby. Often he would bounce the baby on his lap singing a happy song. If we weren't on his knee as well, we'd be dancing in front of him... to gain his attention, of course. One of the songs he sang all the time, was a Lakota love song. Several years ago, I heard that same song on a tape which I purchased. I never heard that song for at least thirty years! I was driving to Lethbridge when I had to stop the car and park on the side of the road, for, in the recording I could hear my father's voice. I thought not only of my father but my mother as well. I thought of the love they shared, what they taught us, and what they sacrificed for us. Also for the

first, time I understood the words in a different way. It made me so lonely. The song goes like this:

Dear -
I'm going home now
Don't have a sad heart
I will remember you as life goes on.

To me this says that his death didn't mean the end, that he will always remember us, as we will remember him in everything that he taught us, and that he will watch over us and protect us throughout our lives.

When I was about twenty-two years old, I attended my first Yuipi, a ceremony where a holy man is bound in a blanket and tied up with rawhide. During the ceremony the man is untied by his spiritual helpers as he communicates with them; he receives the answers to the questions he has requested. During this ceremony I asked my father to help me to understand and not be afraid, as I knew he understood all of these types of ceremonies. Since that time, I have come to rely on my father for guidance in many ways. I believe he directs me to the right answers.

My mother is very precious to me, because of her love and devotion to me she has taught me so much. When she visited me at Christmas time in 1993, we didn't have too much time to talk. There were too many of us. We didn't have "private talks" like we sometimes do. On New Year's Day I wanted Ivan, my brother-in-law to sing the song we sing to begin a new year. But due to the cold weather his family did not come over that day. So I asked my mother to sing for us. She did not recall the song; I told her I did, but I didn't know the words. Together we sang. The words go like this:

All the Nations be happy
That we come to the New Year!
We struggled to get here.

These words appear simplistic in the English translation. Even the time of the year we sing this song has changed for us. It is now sung like Auld Lang Sign at the stroke of midnight. In the past years, before Christianization, I heard that the new year for the Dakota/Lakota Nations began immediately after a Sundance. This was the time of a new

beginning. One of the last songs sung at the end of the Sundance was the New Year's song.

For the Blackfoot people, their New Year's, as I have come to know, begins at the end of the Sundance as well. In most of their prayers, people pray to make it to the Sundance each summer. This is the time of the year when people fulfill their vows. When the Blackfoot Sundance is over, a new cycle begins.

Cranberries For Dinner

It was Christmas Eve in 1996. I took my mother shopping for a few odds and ends to trim our turkey dinner. All my brothers and sisters would be home for Christmas to celebrate the occasion by feasting and sharing gifts. As I wheeled the cart through the aisles we discussed her menu, what she already had and what we could purchase. We picked up some special Christmas cookies and cake, extra candy and nuts for all the grandchildren. As we filled our cart with fruit and vegetables to make a special salad we decided it was enough. I approached the check-out counter and proceeded to unload the groceries when my mom exclaimed that we had forgotten cranberry sauce. She disappeared down the aisle as I continued emptying the cart. When the clerk finished tallying the groceries I began to wonder what was taking Mom so long. I went looking for her. She was in the last aisle at the end of the store frantically picking up cans and looking at the labels. I immediately remembered, "Mom can't read!" As I approached her she said, "I know the cranberries are here somewhere, I just can't seem to find them." I asked her to return to the till saying that I would find them. I was choking back my tears and it took me a few minutes to compose myself. I didn't want Mom to notice I was crying. I returned to the till commenting that "the cranberries should be put out in clear view, especially during the holiday season."

My mother was seventy-eight years old in 1996. She had not attended school a day in her life. She grew up on the prairies with her family, a small party of relatives and friends who struggled to survive. They roamed southern Saskatchewan in their search of a livelihood and home. When my mother was twenty-one years of age she met my father. After their wedding they moved to my grandfather's farm. They had thirteen children. In

all the years of raising children, working at cottage crafts, and cleaning houses for other people, none of us took the time to teach her to read. Although my mother is not able to read she has excelled in loving, caring and teaching us about life. My mother was an incredible lady!

Perseverance

There is a constant struggle between First Nation's traditional ways and the modern society in which we live. We somehow manage to make everything possible because of our perseverance, our commitment, our pride and dignity, and our love for our family but it isn't always easy. We share with others: our wealth, our time (in our jobs, in recreation and in a spiritual capacity), our home, or anything that we have to give. I'm not afraid to give away or share whatever I have. Sometimes people become jealous and say such things to us as we are "trying to get rich" or we're "forgetting about our ways." I get upset whenever I hear that kind of talk, but I think, I deserve what I have because I feel I have sacrificed my time and effort to earn whatever I have. It's what is in my heart that counts.

Our old people say that education changes us. They are afraid of losing us to the larger society. But I think if we look at education as a tool and use it to our benefit in making an honest living for ourselves and our families, and by giving back to the people, then we shouldn't feel guilty about obtaining an education. Traditionally, we will never forget the way we were taught, especially if we "live it." I always maintain that it is what's in our hearts that counts; if we do not forget the traditional teachings and live by them then we should be able to live in both worlds. A university degree doesn't mean much when we get back to the rez, the people look at how we do our jobs and maintain the traditional philosophies.

When Wilton, my husband, and I were in the sacred Horn Society, our role as leaders was that of "father" and "mother;" the people were "our children." During the years we were involved, we were treated with utmost respect. It was a great, great honor but at the same time it was a very humbling experience! I am unable to explain. I witnessed many, many beautiful miracles affecting life. It was absolutely powerful!

I learned more about the feminist movement. I appreciate what I learned. It has

given me some new insight, in that it made me think more seriously about my involvement or lack of involvement in women's issues. I have since become curious about feminism in the matriarchal societies of American aboriginal people. I have been reading two authors who give their perspective, Paula Gunn Allen and Carolyn Neithammer. Neithammer states,

"conditions varied greatly from tribe to tribe and Native American women as individuals and groups had a great deal of power and authority over their lives. Men and women worked in partnership to most effectively exploit their environment -- there were men's tasks and there were women's tasks, and both were valued and necessary for survival. In matrifocal societies, the mother role is culturally elaborated, valued, and structurally central. In matrilineal societies the line of descent is reckoned through one's mother." (Neithammer, 1977 p xii).

In Blackfoot, Lakota and Dakota culture, these practices are maintained today. Women have spiritual, economic and decision-making powers in our societies. In our ceremonies, women hold the highest positions; for example in Lakota/Dakota culture only a virgin woman may hold the sacred pipe during the Sundance, likewise in Blackfoot culture, only a virgin woman or a woman who has known one man, can put on the sacred Okan (Sundance). Blackfoot and Lakota/Dakota women have spiritual powers. They own pipes and sacred objects. They exercise their powers through the use of herbal medicines (they cure people of illnesses), they have visions and dreams which are interpreted and adhered to, they have the right to name children, they tell of their brave deeds (a way of counting coup), and they are the keepers of the most sacred bundles in our societies. During rituals, the men are the servants. (We sit like queens, while they respond to every command; they perform the hard tasks; they take care of us. They show respect). When a woman joins a society, she becomes a "Mother" in the physical and spiritual sense. She is respected throughout her lifetime. If a woman chooses not to join a society, she is still treated with dignity but not with the same respect that she would gain if she joined a society. Our societies are hierarchical. Joining a society gives a person certain rights; the more societies one joins, the more rights one has. One could lose respect by "wrongdoing" like mistreating or doing something that will hurt or damage the entire tribe. There is much more to be said about this but here I'm merely giving some examples.

Because our societies have been influenced by the dominant society, our roles as

Native American women and men have changed tremendously. The discontinuance of some of our traditional ways began with Christian indoctrination, political influence and economic pressures. This led to enormous changes in lifestyle. Some Native women suffer from oppression as do white women or women of color, particularly single women, single mothers, handicapped women, uneducated women, women on welfare, etc. We share the identical problems of poor pay, sexism, racism, etc. because of the dominant society's influence. In the dominant society, Native women are often treated with less respect than white women or women of color. We're at the bottom of the barrel.

I am more aware of the feminist movement than I was before I began my Master's Degree. I was sceptical at first because I didn't know too much about it. I associated the movement with the radicals I saw and heard. I didn't believe their claims because I learned and lived differently and I didn't want any part of them. All I wanted was to raise my children according to traditional teachings, such as I discussed earlier, to live in a way that they would encourage them to respect both women and men - to live in harmony - to take the good teachings from both cultures and live by them. Our family is growing in understanding. We have had family discussions about these issues. We need to keep open minds.

Around the Kitchen Table

We have a big kitchen on the ranch, where we always seem to gather. Perhaps it's the breaking of bread that helps us to become comfortable and talkative. We have shared more talk there than anywhere else in our home, not only with our children but with our family and friends. Around the table is where we answer our children's questions, and it is where we ask questions of them, of ourselves and of others. We tell stories, share secrets, discuss and debate topical issues. It is a place where we share our newborn dreams, conflicting ideas or individual concerns. It is our choice to act upon the suggestions of others, plant the seeds or let things go. It is a healthy and a safe place.

Name Giving -The Power

When I was born I was christened with the English name Evelyn Alexandra. When

my people were Christianized by the Roman Catholic Church some of our customs were lost - one being the giving of Lakota/Dakota names at birth. As we grew older, usually by the time we became teenagers, our parents, extended family and elders acknowledged our passing from childhood to puberty by honoring us with the giving of a special name in the traditional way. My father told me he would like me to carry my paternal great grandfather's name, Ta Watche Waste (Good Will), so he named me, Ta Watche Waste Wi (Good Willed Woman). Since I have been living in Blackfoot country my name locally is Kimmapiiaakii (Kind Woman). I carry these names with pride for I believe that names are given not only to honor deceased relatives but to receive from them the power and attributes contained in the meaning of the name. For this reason names are very sacred.

Nowadays, we name our children with a traditional name as soon as they are born. My children all have names which were given to them by relatives and elders. We name them because it is believed that the Creator will recognize them by their name.

Our first born is our daughter Nadine. Her traditional name is Misamohkinniaakii which means Pretty Necklace Woman. This name was given to her by a highly respected, knowledgeable elder of the Blackfeet, Larry Plume. He gave her this name because his wife assisted the Holy Woman who had the special privilege of putting on Sundances and each time she became involved, she was given the right to wear a Sundance Woman's necklace. Larry said that his wife, Annie owned many necklaces. He promised that when our daughter became of age he would give her a necklace left by his deceased wife. Unfortunately, this never happened, Larry died suddenly when he caught pneumonia one cold winter a few years ago.

We have watched our daughter blossom as in the beauty of her name. As the sacred Sundances continue she may one day decide to become an assistant to a Holy Woman and earn the right to own a Sundance necklace.

Jason our first son was born in autumn. The night of my labor, my father-in-law Piinaakium (Seen From Afar) had a dream. He dreamed he was riding a sorrel horse alone on the plains when suddenly he realized he was being pursued by a group of riders. Since he could not recognize them, he sensed danger and fled. His horse being swift, he left the riders far behind. After covering a long distance, he thought he would escape them entirely

but they would not give up. Still, his horse never tired so on and on he went. Whenever he looked back he hoped to see they had given up but the chase continued. Finally, he came to the ridge of a large river valley and realized that, if he tried to follow it the riders would catch up to him. He hesitated only a moment before he took the plunge hundreds of feet below into the river. His horse remained firm and strong. When they plunged into the water the horse immediately struggled to the surface without panic. His power and strength took them safely to shore. When they reached the river bank, Piinaakium stopped to look up. The riders had not dared to follow but remained standing at the top looking down at him. He rode away thanking his horse for carrying him to safety.

The next day Piinaakium visited us at the hospital and told me of his dream. He said when I returned home he will give my baby his name in a sweat lodge. It happened as he planned. During the ceremony Piinaakium told of his dream. He named our son Imaohkowa'siina (Sorrel Horse Rider). He also gave him the sacred sorrel horse song. The words in the song are:

Sorrel Horse, your travel is sacred.
Sorrel Horse, your travel is powerful.

Our son, Imaohkowa'siina has since grown to be a wonderfully powerful young man who walks the sacred road.

Our second son, Chris, was also named by Larry Plume. He called him Siipiainihkii which means Night Singer. Larry, a spiritual leader of the Blackfeet for many, many years sang the sacred songs for all the ceremonies and taught many people the ones which continue to be sung today. One of the most sacred of ceremonies is one that is held during long winter nights when many of the sacred songs are sung - hence, Night Singer.

Siipiainihkii has already shown his gift to recall and sing many songs. He sings ceremonial songs for us in the sweat lodge. He also sings the social songs for pow-wow and the round dance.

Our third son, Joshua came to us at the age of four. His grandfather George, who is a spiritual leader, named him Omahksahkomaapii which means Big Boy. Big Boy was a

spiritual leader and an accomplished leader of the Blackfeet. The grandfather grew up around Big Boy. Big Boy was very kind to him and taught him many things. The grandfather bestowed this name because he wanted his grandson to receive power, wisdom and strength from his late beloved friend. Omahksahkomaapii is a gentle, kind, loving and intelligent young man. He shows patience and wisdom in everything he does.

My husband, Wilton, received his fourth name several years ago when he became spiritual leader of the sacred Buffalo Horn Society. He was named Ootahkooksikinakim which means Yellow Skeleton. Larry Plume, our spiritual grandfather, named him. Yellow Skeleton was Wilton's great grandfather who was also the spiritual leader for the Horn Society many, many years ago. Ootahkooksikinakim displayed steadfast qualities during his role as a leader. He continues to share his traditional knowledge passed down from the spiritual grandfathers and grandmothers.

Our first grandchild was born during the Sundance in 1986. We received word of the birth shortly after midnight as we sat in the ceremonial lodge in the center of the encampment. I could hardly wait for the ceremony to end! As soon as we were able to leave, my husband and I started for Lethbridge, busily talking all the way. Suddenly, we noticed a blue light shimmering over the city. We thought it was a plane, but when it remained in the same position for quite some time we wondered if it could be a UFO. As we drove closer, the light began to change shapes; it appeared oval, oblong, and round, remaining in the same spot. As we approached the city lights it disappeared. Although we gazed in amazement, we put it out of our minds because we were intent on getting to the hospital to see our grandson. I cannot find the words to describe my feeling upon seeing him - so perfect - the miracle of life. As he lay in his crib, soft and warm, gently cooing, I couldn't help but thank the Creator for his precious gift, Mitakosha (first grandson in Lakota). After keeping him awake for several hours, cuddling and kissing him, we left the hospital to allow him and his mother to rest. Because our daughter had had a long labor; she was exhausted. In contrast, we were not tired at all; we went to an all-night restaurant where we continued to discuss our grandson and share our wishes for his future.

A dear friend, and elder, Dan Weasel Moccasin, named our grandson, Niisoopi which means "He Sits In Four Directions." This name came from the elder's many, many

years of involvement in the Blackfoot Sundance. The participants must, in a sacred ceremony, sit on the ground at each of the four directions outside the encampment to pray for the people. The name, Sits In Four Directions, will enable our grandson to live by the sacred laws of the Blackfeet traditional ceremonials. He will be centered and grounded as the four directions support powerful sources of life. For Niisooopi's first birthday we honored him by sponsoring a feast at the Sundance. Our daughter prepared the traditional food as a sacred offering of thanksgiving for her son. We fed elders and family members in our lodge. Niisooopi has a special, special place in our hearts. That is the way it is with a first grandchild.

The Trail of Coyote Woman

Among our people it is customary for the young to spend time with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and elders. It is the time to develop a bond between the young and the old. It is also the time to share legends, history, songs, and the traditional stories that teach values.

This story was shared with a young man and woman who were about to be married. The father of the bride-to-be is a very good friend of ours. He sent his daughter and son-in-law to pray with us, and to talk about marriage, particularly from the traditional perspective. This is one of the stories my husband shared with them.

"As a little boy, he was having difficulty going to sleep one night. He noticed the brightness of the stars, particularly one group of stars that seemed to form a line across the sky. He asked his grandmother about the stars. She sat beside him and told him this story.

A long time ago there lived a beautiful young girl; her name was Coyote Woman. As she grew to be a young woman, everyone noticed she was very special. She was generous and always willing to help others. Her talents in all that she did was far superior than those of other young women. Because she was so special, eligible young men wished to be chosen to be her partner in marriage. At last one of them, best known for his bravery and skills as a warrior, was selected by her parents. At the beginning, he treated her very well; however, as time went by, he began to treat her badly, in an unkind way. Soon she became sad and would often cry because she had never experienced this kind of treatment before. He began to spend more time away from her. One night as she lay alone in her tipi, she cried herself to sleep. She dreamed and in her dream appeared an old woman who spoke to her in a gentle voice. First, she instructed her to stop crying. She then told Coyote Woman that she didn't deserve to be treated in this manner because she was a special person. The old woman went on to tell her that she must teach her husband a lesson because of his unacceptable behavior toward to her.

She instructed Coyote Woman to pack her personal belongings and walk toward a hill to the south of her village. When she reached the top of the hill, she would hear a song sung by the old woman. She was to close her eyes and listen for further instructions.

When Coyote Woman awoke the next morning, she was alone. She recalled her dream and thought about it all that day. She knew that often special messages are given in dreams. By the end of the day, she decided she would follow her dream message. By this time it was almost dark and the stars were starting to become visible. She packed up a few of her favorite things and headed towards the hill. After she left, her husband returned home and noticed she was not in their lodge. He became very angry. He frantically ran about looking for her. As he looked to the south, he saw Coyote Woman in the distance walking towards the top of the hill. He ran after her shouting as loud as he could. As Coyote Woman neared the hilltop she heard the old woman's beautiful song and closed her eyes. In the meantime her husband was desperately trying to catch up with her. When he reached the hill, he too could hear the song. Coyote Woman continued to walk, leaving the Earth as she entered the sky. As she walked across the sky, she left a trail of beautiful bright stars. The trail of stars became known as the Trail of Coyote Woman.

The husband became very remorseful. Loneliness engulfed him as he gazed upward, for now he could only admire Coyote Woman from a distance.”

The Trail of Coyote Woman is also known as the Milky Way.

I Lost My Power

I awoke at three a.m. one morning with a sharp pain on the left side of my abdomen. The pain was so intense that I couldn't breathe. It jarred me right out of bed. I sat there for a moment gasping for air. After quite some time the pain ceased. I got up to walk around a bit then, settling back into bed, I began to wonder, “what was that all about?” I had experienced menstrual pain during the last few months. Awhile later as I was lying in bed, slowly waking myself up, I touched my abdomen and I felt a huge hard lump about the size of my closed fist. It didn't hurt as I measured it in my left hand, moving it from side to side trying to imagine where it was attached. I kept it a secret for several months until it seemed to be larger than before. I finally decided to tell my husband and he persuaded me to go for a check-up immediately.

I went about carefully selecting a doctor I thought I could trust. I finally found the only woman gynaecologist in a nearby city. My appointment only confirmed what I had dreaded - a tumour in my womb. She announced that it was much too large for any alternative procedure; the only possibility was surgery - a hysterectomy. She informed me that the heavy bleeding and pain I was experiencing would stop. "Imagine," she exclaimed, “no more periods, no more pads, no more pain. It's a fairly simple procedure,

lots of women have it done." Hearing this news my head felt light; I felt like fainting. I swallowed hard to fight back the tears as I asked her if there were any other options. She said this procedure was very common; if I wanted another opinion, I could see another doctor. I said I would have to think about this and left her office. I was dazed. I recalled my mother having a hysterectomy thirty-five years earlier, at the age of forty. She had nearly died. Four of my sisters also had had to have this surgery, two of them before they were forty years old. Was this just my turn? In reluctance I delayed two months before consulting with another doctor. After my examination, he concluded the same thing, I required a hysterectomy. He remarked, "you'll never have your period again, imagine all the money you will save - you will no longer be buying pads." I was infuriated. How insensitive! How would he ever know how it feels not to have a womb? I loved having my period, it reminded me of who I am - a woman! Being able to give birth has been the greatest gift I've had. I have experienced childbirth three times and have borne three beautiful children. I am a grandmother, a keeper of a holy bundle, a spiritual leader and a cherisher of the traditional ways of my people - this period means everything to me. How can I ever experience joy in cutting it out and throwing it away? I sat there and cried. He tried to be sympathetic. He said I did not have to have the operation right away; he realized it could be traumatic for me; I could go away and think about it for a while and come back to see him when I was ready. He would make all the arrangements. I left his office feeling devastated. I wished I could turn back the time to when I first knew something was wrong. If I had not waited so long, I could have gone to a medicine woman. Now I felt like I had no choice.

Several months later, I finally sought out another doctor. By this time the tumour was so large I couldn't fit my clothes properly and I was very uncomfortable. In fact I felt pregnant. The third doctor I sought out was an elderly man. His manner was very gentle, as he explained the procedure - I no longer felt I had control. Surgery had to be done, I simply gave up.

I had to prepare myself for surgery. I began reading, trying to find out what the implications of having a complete hysterectomy were. I was scared of what would happen if I lost my ovaries and started menopause immediately. I wondered what taking artificial

estrogen would do to me. I was saddened at beginning a new phase of life for which I wasn't ready. I heard and read many horror stories about dealing with the "change of life." I was scared.

Worse yet, I feared losing my power as a woman. Our traditional teachings maintain that women possess power during moon time. The essence is so strong that it can undo prayer and healing. Women must not hold a sacred pipe, attend ceremonies, partake of rituals, gather herbs or prepare food for ceremonies during their time. Moon-time is not a time to feel bad, but to rejoice in the power. It is a time for a woman's natural cleansing, keeping in mind that it is her power that gives life. Women are like Mother Earth who sustains life - the beauty and wonderment of all living things. My thoughts centered on the loss I would soon experience and I deeply feared what my life would be after surgery.

I experienced nightmares leading up to my surgery. Some nights I dreamed I was pregnant. My body memory supplied all the feelings - a swollen abdomen, a child moving inside. I would wake up covered in sweat only to feel my flat stomach and a lingering ache inside. Sometimes I would dream that I was cuddling a baby to my breast, feeling its softness, its sweet scent, and gentle movement. In other dreams my body would set off a memorable signal - the beginning of my period. I would awake thinking I needed to rush to the bathroom only to find there was nothing there. I had empty, cold sensations.

When I recovered from the surgery, the first thing I asked was if I had my ovaries. To my relief, the nurse confirmed that I did. This meant menopause would be delayed.

Each night after surgery I had more nightmares. I dreamed my baby was desperately crying and I couldn't get to it. My baby would always seem to be out of reach. The pain and loss were unbearable. I returned home with great emptiness. I did not pray or partake in ceremonies for quite some time after.

I consulted a spiritual grandmother (teacher) to help me deal with my loss. With gentleness and wisdom she told me I had to heal myself with acceptance of my loss; prayer would give me hope and strength. A new phase of my life had begun. In time I would regain my power, I would have sacred dreams, and I would be able to hold a sacred pipe again. There was no other way.

Spiritual Healing

Often issues that cloud my mind are those about people and my place in the community. I worry about my children, my family, my husband's family, my husband's work, my studies, and the interconnectedness of family life on the reservation. I recently experienced the loss of my great aunt. Feeling lonely and discouraged, I began looking for a way to heal my wounds.

One evening, my husband and I went to visit our spiritual sister and brother who live in the city. They fed us dinner, treating us so kindly, as they instinctively knew how much I hurt. In their presence, I felt like a helpless child, seeking pity and comfort in this secure environment.

When the dinner table was cleared, our sister made a smudge (burning of sweet grass, in preparation to offer prayers to the Creator). The pungent aroma immediately sent signals to my brain. How I missed this ritual! I had practiced traditional ways for years; learning about life through ceremony. I had recently neglected this ritual. I was so numbed by pain that I failed to remember this special ceremony. I then let go of my pain. Tears streamed down my face, I humbly asked the Creator to take my pain; to have pity on me because I could no longer bear the suffering. I asked him, to make me whole again, in order that I may walk in happiness and do whatever it is I have to do. I asked him to make room for good things to come into my life. I asked for prayers for all my relatives and friends especially the ones I have lost, and for our work here on this earth to be purposeful, to help us to understand what's going on and be able to make something good come out of it. I asked for guidance for my self and my husband, and protection for our children. Mitakue Owasin (we are all related). This is a powerful way for me to obtain help.

The Sweat Lodge

The wind is blowing gently. The fire crackles as burned pieces of wood fall from the pyramid. Sparks jump into the air and the heat waves change direction. Some people are talking quietly to one another, others are laughing as they share stories, while children are playing about. The holy man calls for the rocks. When the rocks are taken into the sweat lodge, we enter. One by one we smudge ourselves in order to cleanse our bodies

and make our spirit receptive. We are ready to talk to the Grandfathers and Grandmothers.

After the greeting from the holy man, we each in turn tell what we have come to pray for. When it is my turn, I ask for forgiveness for those of my thoughts, feeling, and actions that were unkind and for those times I unknowingly hurt others. I weep, feeling humble before my Creator because he knows ME. I say that I'm here to pray for my family, to give thanks for them, our good health, and well-being. I pray for the sick, the homeless, the people without work, the imprisoned, the people who are suffering from alcohol and drug abuse, the people in government, and the people who work for the reserve. I ask for help for myself. I ask to be given patience and understanding. I ask for blessings for the children I teach and for the help in performing my duties well. Everyone present takes their turn. When we are done, the incense is sprinkled on the rocks. Our prayers twist upward in smoke. The ceremony begins.

If we have chosen to live by the traditional customs, we renew our spirit in this ceremony. This purification ritual cannot be separated from what we do from day to day. We live and act by traditional laws (these laws are not much different from morals and values of the larger society).

What is Knowing?

In my view, we shouldn't try to explain everything. There are experiences that don't need to be explained and reasons that don't need to be identified. If we have faith in a higher power, we should just believe in it, trust it, even rely on it. Chuck Ross, a Sioux philosopher, calls it collective conscience. He uses it to explain how holy men are able to reach the spirit world, to have visions, to be able to find lost people or items, to talk to the Grandfathers and Grandmothers, to communicate with the environment. It is true, I have experienced it myself many times. One incident occurred lately. My uncle passed away suddenly. We were to attend his funeral in Saskatchewan but before we went we attended a sweat lodge. During the sweat, I asked the eagle spirit to take him home, to show him the way to the land of the Grandfathers. As I was making my prayers, there was water being poured onto the rocks, a gentle warm gust of air engulfed me. It was like the feeling of fanning yourself with an eagle fan. The eagle spirit came into the sweat lodge to answer

my prayers. I was so ecstatic I cried. I was very thankful!

On the day of the funeral, a large golden eagle followed the funeral procession home from town all the way to my uncle's yard where he was laid to rest. As my uncle was being buried, the eagle continued to circle above us. Suddenly, out of the clear blue sky it vanished. I believe the eagle spirit took my uncle to the place of the Grandfathers.

CHAPTER THREE: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

My Professional Semester Experience

In 1986, as a Bachelor of Education student, I was doing a practicum at a city school in a grade five classroom of thirty-five students. Classes began at 8:15 a.m. I had to get up at five a.m. in order to be ready and on time. I drove 95 km from the reserve to the city. In time I found out my Teacher Associate was known as the "General." She didn't know that everyone - even the students - called her by that name. I soon found out why. Her way of discipline was very strict; she didn't give anyone a chance to step out of line. We had to stick straight to her schedule. It was her way of maintaining control. She expected me to do the same. She hardly ever smiled or laughed, and never joked. She superficially called the students "Dear" once in a while. She constantly kept an eye on me. I had to do an assignment called "observation" for which I had to pick two students and keep a journal of classroom behaviors and behavior analysis. The first time she saw me writing, she hurried over to me and looked at what I was writing, then she exclaimed, "I thought you were writing lesson plans." After that, every time I was writing she would walk around the room and she would inconspicuously try to see what I was writing. She was obsessive about lesson plans. Every lesson I taught I had to hand in to her for her approval before I taught. I thought that was the way it was. I stayed up at night sometimes until three o'clock in the morning making sure they were perfect.

There was one little Kainai (Blackfoot) girl in our room. Her name was Marlene. She was so frail looking, she was pitiful. She reminded me of myself when I was little. She never volunteered answers, she almost never spoke up during class. My TA said she was always late for class because they didn't own a clock in their house. She said it sarcastically. I befriended Marlene during recess as I did with other students. It seemed like a good time to talk, laugh and play. Soon the General was on to that. She accused me of smiling at Marlene more than the other students, of looking at her, and talking to her more than the others. She even wrote it in my daily evaluations. I had to be conscious of every move I made in the classroom from then on.

One day after school I had planned with Marlene to take her to the library. I had her address so I picked her up. She lived with her aging grandmother in a dilapidated old

house. The kitchen and living room were sparsely furnished with old bits of furniture and I could not see a clock in sight. The grandmother was kind to me and offered me a chair to sit down. We chatted for a while and I told her we were going to the library. She smiled graciously and agreed it was good for Marlene to go there to read. We went through the process of obtaining a lending card for her, then we walked around looking at the different sections and locating books. We sat down and read for a while. She then picked out some books and we checked them out. I took her home.

In my final evaluation my TA noted that I needed to project my voice, to get the attention of the students. She recommended that I take "Voice and Diction," a class given by Sarah Stanley at the university. I highly resented her recommendation but I followed through when I returned to the university to complete my course work.

Teaching Days

I got my Bachelor of Education Degree in December of 1986. My first job was teaching grade one at Stand Off Elementary School on the Blood Reserve. What concerned me most when I was in the classroom was the students - I tried to meet their needs. I kept a jar of Vaseline, lotion, comb, band-aids, ointment, and extra lunches in my desk. In the closet was a bag of extra clothes particularly lots of socks, several blankets and cushions. In the morning I was there to greet the students. If I saw that they needed any of the items I would subtly offer whatever they needed. In time the students became comfortable in helping themselves to the comb or brush, or putting Vaseline on their chapped lips or hands. I could tell when they hadn't slept well the night before or they weren't feeling well, I would take out the blanket and cushion and make them comfortable on the floor. I believe caring about my students was my first priority, creating a warm, friendly, learning environment was second and teaching the curriculum was third. When I complete my graduate studies I may have my own classroom and I will probably do the same as before, except I might make different curriculum choices - relative to the students needs. But I'll also be more aware of gender practices, relate more themes to environmental issues, encourage more discussion, take more time to listen, do more reading and writing, and participate more as learner and facilitator.

As for the Alberta Curriculum and the Program of Studies, I question why a band-controlled school has to follow them at all. We say we do, because we haven't developed any (very little) material to replace them with. There is also "the standard" which we profess to maintain. I have witnessed progress at the elementary school level. I believe change will take some time. The students who are now in grades one to five are the students who display positive effects from a different atmosphere and style of teaching. The CTBS test results of June 1990 indicated an improvement in test scores as compared to previous years. It would be interesting to record our progress to assist us in making decisions for curriculum changes for the future.

Teaching Practice

The Way To Start A Day

by Byrd Baylor

Some people say there is an new sun every day,
 that it begins its life at dawn and lives for one day only.
 They say you have to welcome it .
 You have to make the sun happy.
 You have to make a good day for it.
 You have to make a good world for it to live its one-day life in.
 And the way to start, they say, is just by looking east at dawn.
 When they look east tomorrow, you can too.
 Your song will be and offering -
 and you'll be one more person in one more place
 at one more time in the world saying hello to the sun,
 letting it know you are there.
 If the sky turns a color sky never was before just watch it.
 That's part of the magic. That's the way to start a day.

I read this poem to my class from time to time. It helped us to focus our presence, and put us in touch with what is fundamental. We began our ceremony by forming a circle and joining hands. We bowed our heads as each person expressed his/her thoughts and prayers for the day. We also gave thanks for all that we share and that which we have. We asked the Creator to give us blessings throughout the day in all that we would do in work and play. Then we'd sing a morning song. Afterwards, we would greet each other with a handshake or a hug. The children sat on the carpet.

We did the calendar, announcements of special events and so forth. Then we would go into choral reading. We read our "Special Person Story" from a colorfully

decorated and lighted bulletin board. The story was obtained from an interview of a student. The chosen student would have special privileges all week, for instance, they were to be first in line, they chose class helpers, they delivered messages and received them, I brought them special foods, and they were the topic of discussion for the entire week. The day after the interview, the class wrote what I like about the special person and drew a picture. Their work was displayed and read each day. At the end of the week, I typed up the story put a copy in with all the other comments and pictures of the special person and they decorated the cover, titled "I AM SPECIAL," with smelly markers and stickers.

This "Special Person Story" activity serves multiple purposes. For reading it helps teach: phonics in context, story structure, sentence structure, how to conduct an interview, choral reading, vocabulary, sight words, capitalization, etc. It assists students by enhancing his/her self esteem and pride in his/her family; and it recognizes his/her contributions to our classroom community. The students see themselves as learners, teachers and respectful citizens.

When every class member had a turn, including myself, we interviewed the teaching assistant, the Blackfoot instructor, principal, school counsellor and sometimes the janitor. At the year end I had all the stories typed up to form a booklet, which each child received. I have heard from parents that their child treasured that book and read it with pride and success.

I liked to teach Language Arts. I enjoyed preparing and giving lessons using stories with aboriginal content. I liked to integrate the stories, not only in reading but in other subjects as well. In some of the activities we use dramatization, mime, role play, dance, and song. The students incorporate the use of the Blackfoot language as well as English. They get practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The use of self-expression is always encouraged, for so many students are very shy and sharing their stories is very difficult for them. I structure the classroom environment so students feel free to experiment and learn with one another.

I willingly adopted the new Program of Studies for Social Studies particularly for grade one, because the sequencing made much more sense in that there was no more repetition carried over from kindergarten. In Topic A, the students learn about the school

environment and their community. In Topic B, they focus on family and in Topic C, they study Five Canadian families. I do topics A and B as they are presented, but I have modified the beginning of topic C. I started with the study of the Kainai, and the Blackfoot Nation. We discussed the territory and the commonalities of the other three neighboring tribes: the Peigan of Brocket, the Blackfoot of Gleichen, and the South Peigan of Browning. We then developed the research questions. I guided them for the first study to make sure they included the main topics, i.e., food, clothing, shelter, recreation, celebrations, customs and traditions, and employment. I feel that the students need to learn about their own background, to scaffold in order make sense of other cultural groups.

I enjoyed teaching students about our traditional and contemporary background. This is so unlike my schooling; I never had the opportunity to learn about my people. Instead, we were made to feel ashamed of our heritage. There was nothing in our studies that made us feel proud to be Native Americans. The little mention about Indians in our text books were vague and often incorrect. At the time I was growing up, there was a lot of stereotyping. The movies showed painted savages riding ponies, killing and pillaging the settlers. The Indian was always portrayed as the villain. This led me to believe that I was bad, and our people were bad. When we played as children, some of us never wanted to be the bad guys, the Indians.

Today, in the classroom, I stress that there is pride in being Native. We have many wonderful gifts and talents that we can share and contribute to our communities.

Science is a subject that I have had concerns about in the past. I disliked teaching it. In my first and second year of teaching, I swapped classes with another teacher. She taught science and I taught Social Studies. It worked out great! When I moved to Levern School, I was once again in a quandary about science. I tried everything, experiments, field trips and walks outdoors. Then a new curriculum called "Seeds" came along. Although it is only on the recommended list, it became valuable material for me. After that I discovered Keeper's of The Earth (1991). It is full of excellent ideas and suggestions for students from kindergarten to grade six. It uses Native legends for the purpose of learning and working together for ecological, economical, and social reasons. Both materials proved very useful to me and the students appeared to enjoy them, particularly because of

the Native content.

When it was time for Blackfoot lessons, normally I would have a spare, but often I would become involved with the class, particularly when special events arose, like preparing for a presentation for general assembly, Treaty 7 Day, or the Christmas concert. I would assist the Blackfoot Instructor in preparation for the function. On several occasions, the situation reversed. I planned an event and the instructor would provide the assistance. If we did a dramatization, song or dance, there needed to be extra things made or outfits (regalia) that had to be brought in. We would also get the parents involved. They always supported those events.

One year when I taught grade one we were doing our Social Studies unit on the Blackfoot, the grade threes were on the same topic. We decided to involve both classes and plan a special Elder's Day event. At the culmination of our study we had a feast and dance. I cooked some of the traditional foods, while parents donated some. The grade three teacher taught the students to sing special songs for the parents and elders. The Blackfoot teacher taught them the dances and nursery rhymes. The organization and delivery of the program went very well. On the day of the event, the students performed their best! The parents and elders expressed their appreciation. It made us feel like it was all worthwhile. Without the combined effort, it might not have been so successful.

I have felt most successful when we brought parents, grandparents and community together, especially when we were involved with a cultural activity. Those functions or activities were always well attended. The people appeared to feel comfortable and safe coming to join us. They always showed approval and appeared pleased that their children were experiencing integration of culture and traditions within the schools.

I have always expressed my opinion about integration and themes and their use in the classroom, but when I first began teaching, I was overwhelmed by all the curricula we had to follow. I was afraid that if I didn't follow the curricula, the students wouldn't be prepared for the next grade. It was some time before I relaxed and realized I had choices and that I could choose how to select relevant and appropriate material for my students. It was only then that I really began to enjoy teaching. I began developing my own teaching style as well as teaching to the students' needs.

An idea I used for integration was to simply follow the cycle of the four seasons. There are certain events and celebrations in traditional lifestyle which take place specifically during each of the seasons. Therefore it makes a lot of sense to use those events and build themes around them. Children are aware of the events and the use of his/her background knowledge can be utilized.

Three of my priorities as a teacher were to have a positive attitude about my work, to share or compare notes with my peers, and to plan ahead either on my own or collaboratively. We collaborated by staying on Friday afternoons. Often great ideas emerged as we shared. Sometimes instead of planning we would just talk, sharing our family stories or events and happenings in our lives. I considered many of the teachers I worked with to be my friends because living out in a community such as ours doesn't give us time to visit or have much of a social life.

On the negative side, I hated to teach music and health. I disliked music because I cannot sing or play a musical instrument. In order to make up for my shortcomings, I used tapes, records, videos, and a wonderful invention called a "music machine." The children loved the machine because it had an echo feature and a microphone. We all sounded wonderful on it.

In health, I had a terrible time. It was not for the lack of teacher aids or supplies. We had a wonderful set of tapes about "Tigger" who showed us how to be health-conscious, a set of posters with teaching modules, and a complete set of "Health and You" texts for every child with teacher guides. I had all that, but I still didn't like teaching it. I recall integrating several lessons with language arts when we read stories about winter. I included lessons on how to dress for the weather, how to select healthy foods for energy, and how to prevent colds or what to do on coming into contact with one. Then there would be no health period for some time. But then there were times when I got into the health mood. We would take out our text books, we'd read them and do the lessons, two or three at a time just so we could cover the curriculum. The total program had approximately twelve lessons in all. We would manage to finish them before the end of the year. I don't know if the students learned as much as they should have doing it that way.

The lack of parental involvement was one of my major concerns as a teacher on the

Blood Reserve. As a staff, we tried many, many different ways to get parents' attention but without success. We had a Parent Advisory Committee which appeared to be detached from the school yet they could possibly be the means by which parental involvement could be improved.

An aspect of parental non-involvement which caused me great concern was failure of parents to help their children learn to read. I tried different strategies to help parents such as, sending home reading materials and providing reading incentives where coupons and calendars could be filled out after parents had read to their children. Students could trade the coupons in for rewards. This strategy would work for a short time, then it would be forgotten. I resorted to having other grades come in to read to my class. All students benefitted from that strategy.

At the end of each teaching day, I would close with that same warm feeling we began our day with. I would stand by the door as students trailed out. There was always time for a hug. The students and I would say the Blackfoot term for "goodnight" (have a good evening), or "we'll see you again."

In Response to Elizabeth Ellsworth

I'm reading this article trying to understand the message. I read several pages and came upon the section - "The Repressive Myth of the Silent Order." For the first time I have read something that speaks about the silence I have experienced! Ellsworth explains the concept of "silent voice" and its use to make students autonomous. She states,

The discourse on student voice sees the student as "empowered" when the teacher "helps" students to express their subjugated knowledges. The targets of this strategy are students from disadvantaged and subordinated social class, racial, ethnic, and gender - or alienated middle-class students without access to skills of critical analysis, whose voices have been silenced or distorted by oppressive cultural and educational formations. These include being misunderstood and/or disclosing too much and becoming too vulnerable; memories of bad experiences in other contexts of speaking out; resentment that other oppressions (sexism, heterosexism, fat oppression, classism, anti-Semitism) were being marginalized in the name of addressing racism - guilt for feeling such resentment; confusion about levels of trust and commitment surrounding those who were allies to another group's struggles. (Ellsworth, 1989 p 308).

I feel resentment because I am expected to disclose "more" and once again take on the burden of educating white students/professors about the consequences of white middle-

class privilege; and white students feel resentment at having to prove they are not the enemy. When occasions arise during which I feel like I should say something, I often clam up at one point or another for all of the above reasons. I have memories of things which happened to me or someone close to me; many of these still hurt. I am an emotional person and as much as I try not to, I cry. I have the stupid notion in my head that crying is a sign of weakness, that I should show courage instead. So I suppress my feelings. I sometimes cry when I'm alone, when there is no one to hear me. It has to do with my pride as well and how I appear to others. I always try to look like I'm an "altogether person." What am I trying to prove? I try to present an image, one that reflects well on my race. I try to disprove the stereotypes of Native Americans; to demonstrate that we are not all drunks - we work, we live in houses, we drive cars, we are competitive professionals in most sports and in the working world. I'm at the point right now, of having feelings, deep hurts which I have recently begun to look at. Almost everything I read is related to my feelings and things that have happened to me or others close to me. But these things have happened to other races as well. I look at how critical pedagogy tries to deal with the situations and I'm learning others' views. I am trying to understand.

Ellsworth (1989) says of empowerment that "the goal is to give students the analytical skills they need to make them as free, rational, and objective as teachers supposedly are to choose positions on their objective merits (p. 311)." I do not have any recollections of rational teachers who made me feel free, rational or objective. Upon reading this, I have become more aware of what happens in a classroom. I have a better understanding of what has happened to me and I definitely hope that when I get back to the classroom, I will remember critical pedagogy and provide an atmosphere whereby my students can openly explore and question and find answers without my giving them direct answers, or manipulating situations, or limiting them.

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to survey, read, and discuss or listen to discussions regarding pedagogy. It raises so many questions I want to explore and answer. It is, indeed, not easy for me. In my past educational experience, I did not question anything, I accepted everything. I was educated in the "dark ages," when it was not cool to speak. Now, I'm really suffering because of it. "I am free or am I not?" but I

don't know how or when to utilize my freedom because doing so takes knowledge as well as courage. I don't know how long it will take to overcome this - to become "humanized" as Paulo Friere (1990) would say.

A Plea for Help

My heartbeat quickened as I approached the Anglican church. There were a few men standing outside, among them two men in brown suits who looked like the men from Salmon Funeral Home. They greeted me and one of the men took the flowers I carried. The other man gestured for me to sign the guest book as he handed me a card with the picture of John Richard Calling Last. My breath caught in my throat as I looked at his photograph. He had that same look of sadness, loneliness, desperation and hurt in his eyes as the day I had last seen him, just several days earlier when I had picked him up as I was travelling home from my summer class at the university. John had become quite talkative during the drive to the townsite where he lived. Sharing with me a picture of his son whom he hadn't seen for some time, he had stated that he wished to be with him. John had separated from his wife and she had moved away, taking their son with her. Climbing out of my van John had said, "I'm going to finish myself off tonight." Thinking about his statement I had decided to call the police as soon as I got home. But, continuing on to the next town to meet with a friend who had recently returned from the North West Territories, my mind was on setting up a schedule of meetings for the following week. When I reached home, I prepared dinner and continued with my household chores, forgetting all about the young man who had hitched a ride with me that day. The next day, as I travelled to my class, I had heard on the radio that John Calling Last was found dead in the basement of his home, having apparently hung himself. How had I forgotten? I had felt guilty for not having called the police as I had planned. Calling them when I got home I had apologized for not having called them the day before. I had not known this young man, his history, his family, etc. I had only given him a ride home from the city. They had told me he had been a troubled youth with a history of alcohol abuse. I just couldn't forgive myself for hearing a cry for help and taking it so lightly!

I chose to attend the funeral because I wanted to explain to some family member

how sorry I was. As I entered the church, a man was singing the gospel hymn, "God Has Called Him Home." His voice was both mournful, melodious; it made the words especially meaningful. I began to tremble as I read the card which contained the pallbearers' names and a prayer. It seemed like the service lasted a long time. Then it was time to leave. The casket was taken out as the people filed behind it. I could not tell who the parents or the brothers and sisters were. I dropped my head as I heard soft whimpering as they went by. Outside the church I recognized only two people. I went to shake their hands and offered my condolences.

I drove out to the grave site about ten miles from the church. Everyone assembled near the grave. Now I could see who might be the parents, for they were seated near the grave. As the reverend began to offer final prayers, loud screams came from two older women in the front row. They were speaking in Blackfoot as they cried. More people began to cry. The women wailed more loudly as the casket was lowered into the ground. People began to move away and leave the site. I stood by the only lady I knew there. I offered her some kleenex. I asked her to point out John Richard's mother and she did. I waited until the woman reached the car, then I approached her. I took her hand. I told her that I had talked to her son on Monday. She could not understand me as I spoke English. A lady beside her began translating for me. The mother did not seem interested in what I was saying: she began to moan and talk to her deceased son in Blackfoot, as she gazed toward the grave which was being covered up with dirt. The translator asked me what John had talked about. I told her that he had spoken about his son; he had wanted to find him, he had urgently wanted to see him. John had threatened to take his own life if he didn't see his son soon. She said that he had told several relatives the same thing, but no one had believed him. I told her how sorry I felt. I didn't know what else to say, except that I felt guilty for not having told the police or anyone else. She told me not to feel bad; John had been very troubled and he had been planning his suicide; but no one believed it would really happen. I took her hand and squeezed it as tears rolled down my cheeks; just then I felt someone touch my arm and I turned to look. It was the man from the funeral home. He smiled as I patted his hand and walked back to my vehicle. Most of the cars had driven away by then. I slowly made my way back home.

What did I learn from this? The first thing is that whenever anyone tells me something as serious as this, I should pay attention and do something about it. I can't understand why I didn't call the police right away as I planned to do the moment I arrived home. I go over and over in my mind the events that occurred that day. Was he drinking or on drugs? Did he feel that nobody cared? What made me forget about the young man? I didn't know him? That I thought he wouldn't do it?

I suppose I will never stop picking up hitch-hikers or stop asking stranded people if they need my help, but I will always think twice now. This terribly sad memory will be with me forever.

Why do I always pick up hitch-hikers? I have been picking up people for years as I travel to and fro. My reason for picking them up is that they must be a resident of the reserve (I know some residents but not all of them) and they must be going in the same direction as I am, although I have been known to make detours. I believe their reason for walking must be important. I talk with them, often they tell me their reasons for going to certain places. Their reasons are usually valid such as: to get groceries, to do their laundry, to see a doctor, to pick up medications, to visit sick relatives, to go to or return from jail, to attend a funeral, to look for work outside of the community, to run away from an abusive spouse, or to look for a runaway child. The reasons are many and often desperate. If I can give them a ride in the comfort of my vehicle I feel I have helped them in some small way. These are my people and, if I want to make a difference, I can't just read some fancy research that talks about critical pedagogy, hegemony and oppression and then say ooooh! I should do something, and I do.

A Lesson About Life

I was attending an eventful pow-wow celebration at Standing Buffalo First Nation in the summer of 1992. We had just completed an honor dance, (a Sioux ritual specifically for a member who becomes a chief) for my oldest brother. He donned a colorful eagle headdress, while a special song was sung. The honor dance was followed by a "give-away" (gift-giving to relatives and guests) and a feast (a special meal provided to relatives and honored guests). After relaxing for a few minutes, we all gathered under the arbor to

witness the last "grand entry" (all dancers enter the arbor with their categories dancing in single file, led by honored guests, dignitaries, members of the police and military, following men who carry flags from the Americas and an eagle staff). Suddenly two tribal policemen appeared, looking for our mother. We knew right away something was wrong. We all gathered at her tipi in anticipation. The policemen delivered news of the death of her nephew, Peter. Peter was only twenty-three years old. He took his own life after a quarrel with his girl friend. He shot part of his stomach out with a high powered rifle. He told the ambulance driver before he died, "Tell my daddy I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do this."

It was very, very sad for my uncle, his two other sons, our grandmother and for all who loved Peter dearly. Little Peter was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome at birth. My uncle never forgave himself for bringing him into the world with that condition. When he learned what made Peter the way he was, he quit drinking. My uncle was divorced from his wife when their three sons were just babies. He looked after Peter and raised his sons as best he could.

Why has my mission been to find out about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome? This is my field of study because of its importance to me, its effect on my life, and how it will continue to affect not only my life but my children, grandchildren, and future generations.

What I Like About School

Every September teachers and student begin the new year with excitement and anticipation. I always thought of it as a new challenge. I loved the preparation but the first day of school is always the best. The children always appear with smiles, wearing new apparel, carrying new lunch buckets and sporting the latest hair styles. They are so proud at receiving their new school supplies and having their names put on them. Every task given to them is done so carefully and efficiently, I could almost feel their enthusiasm.

Audrey and other students like her are very, very shy. When I first approached Audrey and spoke to her, I could tell that she understood me but she refused to respond. One student said to me, "She doesn't talk." I found it very strange but I didn't force her to speak. I thought she would talk when she was ready. It took longer than I anticipated -

seven months! One day when I was helping her to do math, she answered one of my questions. I tried not to act surprised for fear I'd scare her back into silence. She began little by little to speak to other children and, by the end of the year she was very talkative. I taught three of the four children of that family. They all behaved the same, but by the end of the year they spoke. Their spoken language at home is Blackfoot. I'm sure that they wanted to be sure of correct English usage before they attempted to speak the language.

All the classroom teachers at Lavern School got along very well. We supported one another. We shared ideas, resources and duties. We exchanged classes for various subjects; and on Fridays, our special day we had "Clubs." For one hour we divided the students into mixed groups from grades one to six and they visited our classrooms where we had planned a specific activity. The last year I taught at Lavern School our theme was the environment. My club recycled paper. From the recycled paper the children wrote letters to their friends and made specialty cards. It was most enjoyable.

In my classroom, we started every day with a prayer, a song and a hug. I wanted to make everyone feel loved, and to help them appreciate every day we worked and shared together. Most of my students have never forgot that. When I meet former students we share a hug and catch up on what they have been doing.

Reading was one of my favorite subjects to teach. I used reading, not just to teach the skill of reading, but to inform students about other things; also as an enjoyable past time, a form of entertainment. All children love a story. I used that to my advantage, approaching the written word through forms of storytelling: drama, puppetry, visual aids, and art among others. Learning to read is the most exciting event in grade one.

I look forward to returning to the classroom someday. I appreciate the uniqueness of each individual. I receive gratification from the students' every success no matter how big or small.

Metaphors in the Blackfoot Language

Native American discourse, an important connection between language, society, culture, and individuals is now recognized as important literature and as having precise and complex linguistic patterning. In Native American languages, metaphors are used extensively. The use of metaphor is the understanding and experiencing of one kind of

thing in terms of another. In Native oratory, metaphors are combined in poetic imagination and rhetorical flourish - a matter of extra ordinary rather than ordinary language. Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action as well.

Our metaphors structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.1).

Human thought processes are largely metaphorical, therefore within the Blackfoot language lie the philosophies by which the people live. Recorded here is a short list which I have compiled as an example. I will present the literal translation and then explain the situation, context and philosophy for which it is used. The terms are categorized into sections according to their similarities.

Defence in Warfare

Iitsisoinitsp - Literal translation - because of their lack of planning we were all killed in battle. This term refers to a person who is a poor strategist and is disorganized. It also refers to an unreliable, irresponsible, person who will never be depended upon nor regarded by their peers as a leader. This type of person shouldn't be trusted. This expression is used when trying to discourage people from making decisions that may endanger the people. In times of inter-tribal warfare, the people had to be very keen, and precise in their planning; if they were careless, the entire tribe could be terminated. They had to ensure the safety of their people at all times. In modern times, this expression is used in a teasing manner - to ensure that we do not become careless.

Maatotaisaatotspa - Literal translation - The enemy's aim is not very accurate. The enemy does not shoot straight arrows therefore they will not harm us. It is not necessary to run yet. This term says relax, take your time, you don't have to leave right away; we have time to do whatever. This term may be used in decision making or planning. It is not recommended to make decisions in haste, one could make a grave mistake, therefore one is cautioned to take time to consider all the details when making decisions.

Nitsiika'kspikaatayaaw - Literal translation - I'm standing in a position of readiness for self-protection. This term refers to feelings of uncertainty with a group of people

whom you don't readily trust. Consequently, you stand poised to either defend yourself or to make a quick retreat. This expression also means to be on guard, to pay attention, in order that you may not be fooled. It means to be prepared at all times.

Long ago, these expressions were coined in terms of warfare. Because life and survival were of utmost importance, terminology evolved which related to ensuring them. This "matter of speaking" has continued because of its appropriateness, and the importance of our continuing to exist. People today, use these expressions in education, in politics, and in teaching the traditional ways, because our ways are constantly in danger of extinction. We are in a constant struggle to preserve, our language, our treaty rights and our land.

Expressions Used When Teaching

Mattsowaapohpiit - The literal translation - do not fall, stumble, or falter. This expression makes reference to the teaching of others about something important. This is a caution that, in order not to make a mistake in what you are teaching, you must be explicit. You must not falter in your presentation for if you do, you teach your student to falter as well. This is particularly important when teaching a historical story or a holy song. The need to be precise and accurate, for in oral cultures the traditions must be passed on exactly as received. One must never add one's own interpretation or version of a story or song. Accuracy must be consistent when teaching the history, legends or teaching about the sacred societies. There is no room for error.

Saisoksiitamiiniki - Literal translation - you are not breathing well. This makes reference to: you being in a foul mood or not feeling good. If you are not completely comfortable with yourself, you should not go where important things are being discussed, for you will affect everyone in a negative way. If you are not feeling good, then you are affected by something negative around you. People will caution you not to go where there is gentleness, or teaching, for you will have a negative effect on what is going on.

Sootamitsistsiiwaasiya - Literal meaning - there is a large gathering of sparrows. This term is used to refer to a large gathering of people, children, parents, teachers, politicians, etc. Sparrows gather in flocks as do people.

Iitaopiapikssiw - Literal translation - to alight like a bird. This refers to the habits of a

bird, fluttering about. This term is used to describe the behavior of a young child who are active, energetic, and constantly on the move.

As some of the old expressions indicate, teaching or passing on knowledge was sacred. Therefore precautions were taken when one was teaching. In teaching the ceremonials, the people went to great lengths to make sure that everything was set just right. By this I mean that every part of the teaching experience had significance and meaning. To ensure the exact message was transferred, nothing negative was to interfere.

In our teaching, our negotiations with government authorities and our business transactions we emphasize setting the proper atmosphere, creating the optimum environment for the activities to take place.

Many animal behaviors and characteristics are highly valued. In referring to them metaphorically as belonging to people we are accepting them as gifts which animals can and do give us. This is possible because men and women, plants, minerals and animals are all connected spiritually.

Expressions Indicating What "Real People" Are

Niita'pitapiiwa - Literal translation - refers to a person that is "real," "true," "complete," "genuine." A "Real Human Being" is a term referring to a person who is sincere or genuine. People are very perceptive, particularly the young; they are able to "read" or assess a person by their behavior. It is believed that we must live according to the teachings of traditionalism and spirituality. When our knowledge is displayed by the way we live, only then we become "real." If we do not live according to the teachings, they use the expression, " that person is not real."

Ikskimohsata - Literal translation - stiffly, ill at ease - an uncomfortableness because a person is not at ease. When we encounter a person who is not "real," we behave in a very cautious way. We are cautious about a person who makes us feel uncomfortable because this person could lead us astray.

Nikakaotsstapohtokak - Literal translation - makes reference to being misled; feeling as if you are going downhill and out of control; not in control of a situation. When you find yourself in bad company you are to leave. We need to be very cautious about being around people whom we perceive as not being "real," for we could get led astray.

Nitsimatawaaniitskapakko - Literal translation - my body is almost being pulled apart. This expression makes reference to when many people ask for your help. It refers to giving of yourself, your time, talents, and efforts. It also means the giving of yourself in kindness, gentleness, and patience; behaving like a "real person."

In the Indian way of life, living your life according to what is taught to you is of utmost importance. I believe cultural teachings are imperative because life depends upon them not only one life but those of the entire tribe. I guess it is a way of making people conform, but it is essential to our cultural survival. Collective efforts were and are necessary for tribal continuance.

Metaphors of Living as Sacredness

Ksahkommitapiaaki - Literal translation - is "Woman of the Earth," "Mother Earth," or "Sacred Mother." This is a reference to the earth as our mother: one who nourishes, one who provides, one who heals, one who teaches, one who protects. This term is often used in prayer, indicating the necessary harmony in all that lives in our environment. Our Universe is living, therefore it is sacred.

Ksahkommitapi - Literal translation - "people of the earth." Refers not only to Mother Earth but all others who have passed before us, all who had special connection to the earth, the environment and the real people.

Aamostsi miistakistsi nohpapiihpi - Literal translation - "these mountains are my brothers and sisters." This refers to that necessary harmony that exists between the real people and their environment. Blackfoot believe that people and nature coexist as brothers and sisters.

These expressions or references are similar to ones I mentioned earlier, which say the Earth is sacred, everything on it is sacred, thus humankind must live in harmonious relation to the Earth. We must stop destroying our Mother Earth! The Iroquois story of creation best describes our situation. The story says that at the time life on Earth was created, two twins, spirits of another dimension, were in conflict. One was creating animals, plants, and other life forms. The other was unhappy with his development and sought to destroy these life forms. Eventually the evil twin sought allies in his work. He

approached the deer and the bear and said that if they would help him in his cause, he would help them to dominate all life on Earth. They refused to listen. Then he approached a human, and the human agreed to help in the evil twin's endeavour.

The moral of this creation story is that humans have a potential to destroy life on Earth. The way to avoid this fate, according to the story, lies in the consciousness of humankind. The creation story urges people to continue to be aware of the complex relationship of humans to the forces that support life on Earth. Ceremonies and spiritual traditions offer a way of attuning people's consciousness to their collective relationship to nature. The sacred teachings must continue in order that we survive.

Abandonment

Istomopiipsp - Literal translation - a campsite deserted after all the people have left; a site that has been abandoned. When a person is all alone or is basically rejected by the group. One who is ignored because of their own wrongdoing.

Iktaokiosiw - Literal translation - he turned into a pine tree. A similar reference of abandonment as explained above. A person can bring abandonment upon themselves. In our teaching, we stress kindness, gentleness, patience, understanding and love. Those who do not live according to these values, create disharmony for themselves.

The "lone pine tree" is an expression originating from a Napi story in which the Trickster has bad luck because of his indecisiveness. In this story, Napi wants to marry a beautiful woman he has met on the prairies. For some reason, man and woman become separated. Each live in their own camps. Napi arranges for the men with whom he lives, to marry the women of this camp he has discovered. After speaking with their leader, the men agree that the marriages should take place whenever the women are ready. The men all become excited and are ready to get married. The women prepare themselves and approach the men. Each woman is selected by a man who becomes her partner. Napi feeling rather shy, hangs back. Soon all the women are spoken for. To his dismay, Napi is left out. He feels so humiliated, he turns himself into a lone pine tree. The moral of this story is if you hesitate too long, you will end up alone or with nothing.

Anger Expressions

Iimitaiskiw - Literal translation - "dog faced." This expression refers to someone who is a brat, someone who acts in a totally insensitive, unreasonable, inhuman way. This term is also used when reprimanding someone who does not listen to elders. This term is a modern expression, invented since European contact. This expression is the most insulting term used to embarrass, degrade or humiliate a person.

Ihkiaayowa'si - Literal translation - that person turned into a bear. Refers to an angry person.

These expressions are not meant to be hurtful, but sometimes they are. When expressing anger, in most Native languages there is no such thing as swearing. These expressions are among the most derogatory in the language.

In conclusion, metaphor is not just a matter of language, of mere words, it is a matter of thought processes. Blackfoot terminology shows that the language is alive, it's descriptive, it's precise, and it's humorous. The language is the essence of the people: it describes who they are, how they think, what they believe and how they act.

Unlocking My Silence

I enrolled in Dr. Richard Butt's class, Education 5210, Teacher Stories and Professional Development, at the University of Lethbridge, in the spring semester 1992. During this class, I discovered a way to look at my past through writing and see how it influenced the present, my career and my beliefs. Through this writing I found out how influential my past has been. I came to realize that my mother's side of my family has almost been historically forgotten. I began searching through books, asking questions, and collecting stories. I found a number of intriguing letters which my grandfather wrote. They contained history, traditions, values and beliefs of the Lakota Sioux. I began to reconstruct my past through the stories and came to realize how important my story was and how it helped me to come to a better understanding of who I am. My self-discovery led me to Bergamo, the annual conference for critical theorizing. I was thrilled at the thought of telling my own story!

On the plane trip down, I was shown a program. On the front page there was a picture of a Native man. It was noted that, because of the quincentennial it was thought

that it would be a fitting gesture of acknowledgement of Native Americans. "Oh, how nice," I thought. I turned the page and read the paragraph about the man on the cover. It read,

"Cover: Big Head, an Indian from an unidentified Southwestern tribe. By Edward Sheriff Curtis, 1905. Though controversy surrounds the work of Edward Sheriff Curtis in his seemingly passive recording of the Native American culture even as it was being annihilated by the hegemonic white society, it is nonetheless true that his extensive depiction of the dying race offers us what must be recognized as an insightful and, to our mind, a sympathetic view of this beautiful but doomed civilization."

I thought, "this must be a mistake." I reread it, because I couldn't believe what was before my eyes! My heart sank to the pit of my stomach as I turned the pages slowly, and looked for my name in the program.

I arrived in Bergamo with much apprehension. I felt overwhelmed! I wondered what "little me" was doing at such a conference attended by renowned pedagogues from all over the United States and Canada. Perhaps I could slip in and out without anyone noticing me, as usual.

The next day was full of excitement. People hurried about, greeting one another, some hugging and squealing with joy at seeing a former colleague or an old friend, some spoke quietly in groups while others leisurely strolled in the gardens. I was content to sit and watch the goings-on. It was early afternoon when I met a young woman who introduced herself as a Cherokee, attending Indiana State University. Her name was Fran Rains. She told me that she too was upset about the article and she had earlier written a letter to the editors asking for an explanation and an apology. She received a nice letter from the chief editor, Jo-Ann Papago, but that didn't satisfy her. She wanted an apology from the person who had written the paragraph about the cover. We discussed the addendum that was given out at registration. It did not contain an apology either. At this point, she was trying to gather some support for doing something about it.

I returned to my room to try to relax and think about what I could do. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted out of this situation. I wanted to catch the next plane home. I could not possibly face these people. What did they think of me? I felt I didn't belong here. I felt very ill. My neck hurt. The pain was so intense it turned into a terrible

headache. My emotions were racing up and down. I felt pain, anger, and fear. I couldn't seem to get control of myself. I took a couple of Tylenol, had a hot bath and did some exercises. I tried reading, and when I finally became exhausted, I fell asleep.

The following morning my plan was to speak to Dr. Butt and tell him that I would like to return to Lethbridge. We had scheduled lunch together. We met and everyone from our group discussed what story they would relate for our session. I was the last to speak. Dr. Butt knew there was something wrong. I told him that I didn't feel comfortable here and I wanted to go home. We discussed how I felt, then he asked me if it would make me feel better if I spoke to the Editor's Committee. I gave it some thought and, finally, I agreed. I was to meet with them at 4:30 P.M. I went back to my room and stayed there for the rest of the afternoon thinking about what I would say. Just before it was time to go to the meeting I went outside to pray, to ask for strength. As I stepped out into the courtyard, there in front of me was a beautiful oak tree. It represented wisdom, strength, courage, and dignity. Under its protective shade I created a prayer asking the Creator in humbleness to help me today. I asked for courage to confront these people with strange ways and ideas, many of which I did not understand. I also asked for guidance, to give me the right words so the people could understand me. I asked for help to contain my anger so I would not say the wrong words, be hurtful or disrespectful in any way. I asked for help to represent my fellow Native Americans in a way that was dignified and would give them the rightful honor that they deserved. I thanked the Creator for giving me life and all the beauty of life that surrounded me. I thanked the Creator for this day. I went indoors when I was relaxed and ready for the meeting .

I was invited into a room where fifteen to twenty people sat in a semi-circle. There was a chair vacant for me in the middle. Dr. Butt introduced me. I then said something to this effect; "I represent the University of Lethbridge. I was enrolled in a class with Dr. Richard Butt during the spring semester. The nature of the class invited us to investigate our past through writing. I discovered how my past influenced my present, my career and my philosophy of life. I am a Lakota /Dakota Sioux. I am a descendent of the Sioux who came to Canada with Sitting Bull four generations ago. I am very proud of the fact that my ancestors survived in spite of all the conditions they encountered. Because of them, I am

here today. In searching for my past, I traveled during this summer, back to Saskatchewan, to Montana, to South Dakota and North Dakota. I visited the places where Sitting Bull roamed with his people. I even visited his grave site. I put down tobacco in the Earth beside his monument as a manner of prayer and asked his spirit for guidance in my search. For one month I talked to relatives and friends. I collected stories, books and letters which I thought I would begin to write about, for many of the stories of my people haven't been told. I want to celebrate our survival. I want to dedicate these stories to my children and particularly to my late grandfather who loved Canada but felt like an orphan because he chose not to return to the United States to live amongst his own people. With this in mind, I came to Bergamo, to tell my story. After reading the paragraph written by one of you, I felt like I was being buried alive. After all the struggles my ancestors have contended with, we continue to exist. Yes, it is true that the white people have tried to annihilate the Native American; yes, we still live under the hegemonic white society; but we are not a dying race and we are definitely not a doomed civilization! We Lakota in Canada are few and almost forgotten, but our Nations in both countries are strong." Pause. A long silence. I continued, "I don't know if an apology will be helpful, but it would certainly be a start. Our people have been forced to coexist with Europeans for five hundred years. During this span of time perhaps we haven't taken the time to learn about each other's culture. This may be a new beginning to a better understanding for some of us, particularly among us in this room. We must co-exist; there is no doubt about that. I have children and one grandchild, I want a better place for them to grow up." Another long silence. A man identified himself as Allan Block spoke up. He said, "I submitted the picture and I wrote the caption. I am sorry that I offended you. Please accept my apology." I got up from where I was sitting and walked over to him and shook his hand. I said, "I accept your apology. Thank you for your time," and I left.

I feel that I have been silenced for the most part of my life. My silencing began in the one room school house on the Standing Buffalo Reserve. Something was strange about the classroom atmosphere, which I thought was natural behavior then - none of the students spoke out loud. If we talked at all, we would whisper, or just mouth the words to one another or to the teacher if she asked us questions. We behaved this way in part

because of our shyness; we had fears of speaking to a white person. Also I believed I couldn't speak English as well as the teacher. But at recess when we were away from the classroom we would talk aloud, tease, and laugh with one another as we played.

I began to investigate this issue further for it was an important part of my past. I had to really think about this and I even telephoned my older sister to help me to understand this phenomenon. We concluded we were culture-shocked; that school was an almost unbearably different and difficult experience: there were cultural differences, we were learning a different set of social rules, we hadn't mastered the language so we didn't feel comfortable speaking and we couldn't relate to the material which was so foreign and unfamiliar that we couldn't make any connection to our experiences. There were virtually no discipline problems in our school because we stayed in our seats in straight rows and we were silent. The teacher gave long lectures and gave us lots of workbook time and filling in the blanks on mimeographed worksheets.

One of the explanations for our silence is the bad experiences we all had. When we read, we took turns, i.e. grade one's first, then we'd get an assignment to work in a workbook, grade two's and then three's and so on. We all listened to each other read because we were all in the same room. I can remember the teacher getting mad at us if we made a mistake; she would repeat our mistake like a mispronounced word, an added word or an eliminated word, and everyone would look at us and snicker. We were embarrassed.

When I finished grade eight, I had to go to boarding school. It was a traumatic experience being away from my family. I had to contend with whatever situations I encountered because everyone else did. There was no other school to attend and everyone else accepted this situation. There were grades one to twelve there. Luckily I remained there for only one year.

Boarding school was even worse than day school. There were more rules. Talking was forbidden in so many places in the residence. We had bells, whistles and buzzers, to let us know when to change routine and to be silent. Beginning in the morning, we were awakened with the ringing of a bell. We had to get up silently and quickly get dressed, make our bed, wash up and brush our teeth, line up and silently march in single file down

to the basement floor where our dining room was. After meals, we had to do our chores, and I recall talking and laughing during this time but we were not loud, because if we were caught, we were punished for fooling around. We (senior girls) assembled in our recreation room around ten minutes before class began. The buzzer would go off indicating we'd have to line up once again and silently march off to class.

During classes we hardly ever spoke. The instructors did all the talking. The boys volunteered to answer most of the questions, while the girls remained silent. If we were asked questions, and singled out, we would just say, "I don't know," to withdraw attention.

We would line up and march out for recess, lunch time and after class. We'd return to the dining hall or outdoors. It was a very routine lifestyle, every minute was accounted for. We were treated like prisoners; the buzzers, bells, whistles and marching was a form of control over us. It was a very lonely, and degrading part of my life.

When I attended public school, I had a relatively hard time. I was one of three Native students there. We were the first ever to go to a public school in our area. There I spent the next three years of my life in yet another humiliating experience, of that being an invisible person. The town kids were not used to Natives. I was marginalized from the start. I attended my classes, did the work, but virtually didn't share in any of the class discussions. I only listened. I managed to get by for those three years. I graduated and left.

The silence, along with the treatment I experienced throughout my schooling, did nothing for my enhancement but, rather, made me bitter. I believe I survived because my father and mother cared what I did, and knowing that they loved me very much was encouragement enough. I endured because I wanted to please them and I wanted to show them it could be done. I also wanted an education so I could work and travel to see the world. That was my secret goal.

I believe that the silence we experienced had tremendous negative impact on most people of my generation. I can say this because I look at the community in which I grew up. I am one of the few lucky survivors! Some of my peers have died as a result of alcohol abuse, car accidents, murder or suicide. Some of them never regained their dignity;

their spirit broken. They are the alcoholics, drug addicts, the ones on skid row, or in jails. They live under the hand of suppression often oppressing the ones around them. Who has ever bothered to apologize? The Church? Indian Affairs? Society? How and when will it ever end?

I appreciate my mother and father because they taught me a lot, particularly about who I am. Although we were separated from our fellow tribes, we practiced as a tribe the values and beliefs of the Sioux. We were always proud to be Sioux. We demonstrated it by honoring our people, giving them names, putting up special feasts for one another, celebrating life. In death we practiced the rituals of painting their faces red with ocre, clothing them with the finest garments and always putting a new pair of moccasins on their feet in order that they might have a good journey traveling to the Great Sand Hills to the East to meet our Creator and join the others who have gone before to that happy place where tribal ways are whole and complete. I have always shown my pride in my race and I believe that was shown to me not only by my parents but my grandparents, aunts, uncles and all my relatives. Today we still gather as a family, community, and tribe. The unity, pride and dignity of our race shines through.

When I met Fran Rains at Bergamo, she introduced herself as a Cherokee. Most Indian people make this distinction. They identify themselves as to what tribe they represent. I believe that this is one of our ways to show our pride in who we are. Fran and I also joined in our quest to be heard. We spoke together supporting one another to speak for our people.

At Bergamo, I was very afraid. I felt intimidated by all the intellectuals, their keenness, their critical comments, their competitiveness, and their energy. I wanted out of there. I felt I didn't belong. I felt powerless in the same way I had as a young student. Once again I felt massive controlling forces which I could not escape. The building - it's very structure, smell and atmosphere - reminded me of boarding school. I once again retreated into feeling like a non-person, an invisible shadow floating around. I wanted to run away and hide; I even wished I could simply disappear. Then I made the decision to take my chance and speak. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do in my life, but that day I felt I had to say something because the whole purpose of that trip was to tell "my story"

which was not only my story, but the story of Native Americans. Once I did that, I felt that my silence was finally broken. I asserted that I am a person with a heart and feelings and that my people have not been - and will not be - destroyed. Just as importantly I had urged that we, as educators, should know what has happened in the past and should guard against allowing anyone the power of making such huge lies seem true simply by writing them. Someone at the meeting called the caption a bad teaching error. It was an error, I trust, we have all learned from.

When I look back at my experience at Bergamo, if I hadn't taken my stand there I could have lost my chance, and my silence would have continued. I grew a great deal that day; in part, because I had faith, courage, and the support of my colleagues to see me through.

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