

SCHOOLING AND RESISTANCE TO SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES:  
A CASE STUDY IN A CANADIAN AMERINDIAN RURAL RESERVE

BY

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## ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the vast majority of Canadian Amerindians have largely remained undereducated and such is the case in Betsiamites. This 2,500 people community is the largest of the nine Montagnais reserves which are located in Eastern Québec.

There has been an improvement in the overall completion rates at the elementary and secondary levels between 1970 and 1985, following the transfer of all the responsibilities for reserve schools from the federal Government to the Amerindian communities. But progress had come to a halt by the end of the 1980s and most secondary school or university Amerindian students still drop out today. By focusing on the reserve of Betsiamites, this thesis attempts to provide explanations for this situation and to suggest ways to improve the effectiveness of Amerindian education.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion. In the second chapter, the assumptions underlying this thesis, the data-gathering and analysis methods and the ethical problems linked to the situation of the current researcher as former teacher and current principal of the secondary school under investigation are discussed. In the third chapter, it is argued that the 1969-1972 political battle which allowed the Amerindians to govern their education systems has overshadowed some basic and essential issues regarding quality education and is partly responsible for the lack of improvement since the mid 1980s. In the fourth chapter, the historical process which led to the creation of the reserve of Betsiamites and to the generalized dependency on welfare is presented. The fifth chapter analyses the daily life of the local secondary school, from its management to the motivation of students. The sixth chapter discusses the links between the local political, economic and social life and local schooling and suggests ways of alleviating widespread educational underachievement in rural reserves.

This thesis argues that despite an adverse socio-economic environment, Canadian Amerindian schools could have become much more effective if it had not been for the excessive politicization of the issue of reserve schooling and for the unwillingness of Amerindian leaders and the federal Government to question the adoption, in 1972, of affirmative action as the ideological pillar of Amerindian teacher-training programmes.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
 Chapter One:	
INTRODUCTION.....	7
Notes and references.....	25
 Chapter Two:	
"INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION" REVISITED: REMOVING BARRIERS OR LOWERING STANDARDS ?.....	29
Removing barriers or lowering standards ?.....	35
Notes and references.....	62
 Chapter Three:	
METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES.....	70
Formulation of the research problem.....	70
Intellectual approach.....	73
The role of the researcher/The data collection methods/ The issue of ethics and the issue of validity and rel- iability.....	80
Notes and references.....	101
 Chapter Four:	
THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY; BETSIAMITES: FROM THE RESERVE AS A NEW PLACE TO LIVE TO THE RESERVE AS A NEW WAY OF LIFE.....	106
Prehistory of the Betsiamites Montagnais.....	108
The European contact.....	111
The impact of trapping as a new way of life.....	112
The creation of the Betsiamites reserve.....	123
The "intensive care" years (1850-1945).....	126
The integration years (1945-1969).....	137
The introduction of compulsory schooling.....	143
The local control phase (1969-...).....	148
Notes and references.....	167
 Chapter Five:	
THE DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES.....	175
Mainstream education vs band-controlled schools in Québec.....	179

Management of the school.....	185
Financing.....	189
Teacher training.....	193
Pedagogy and student culture.....	203
Aims and objectives of schooling in Betsiamites.....	214
Relations between school and parents.....	220
Curriculum.....	236
Achievement and underachievement.....	243
Assessment methods.....	247
Motivation of students.....	254
Truancy and absenteeism.....	269
Rewards and punishments.....	281
Language issues.....	289
Conclusion.....	305
Notes and references.....	308

#### Chapter Six:

<b>THE DIMENSIONS OF RESISTANCE TO SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES.....</b>	<b>320</b>
Part 1- Resistance to schooling: Definition and conflictual viewpoints.....	322
Part 2- The cumulative effect of poverty and its impact on reserve life (the dictatorship of the workless majority and time as an enemy).....	330
Poverty in Betsiamites, an enduring phenomenon.....	333
A- Political obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites.....	336
B- Economic obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites.....	347
C- Social conditions.....	367
Poverty and lifestyles in Western countries.....	368
D- The legal obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites.....	381
Part 3- The future of schooling in Betsiamites.....	383
The 1992 and 1996 Band-commissioned studies of the education system.....	386
School improvement in Betsiamites, from now onwards.....	388
Ways of improving schooling in Betsiamites.....	391
Conclusion.....	397
Notes and references.....	404

#### Chapter Seven:

<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>420</b>
Affirmative action.....	421
Local control.....	424

The welfare trap.....	429
The treasure within.....	433
Notes and references.....	437
REFERENCES.....	442
APPENDIX ONE: Terminology.....	464
APPENDIX TWO: Letter from a parent.....	465
APPENDIX THREE: Map (Subarctic Indian bands).....	466
APPENDIX FOUR: Map (Ice age routes).....	467
APPENDIX FIVE: Maps (ancient maps).....	468
APPENDIX SIX: French tourists in Wendake.....	470
APPENDIX SEVEN: Map (Québec North Shore).....	471
APPENDIX EIGHT: Tourists at Tadoussac, Qc.....	472
APPENDIX NINE: Enrolment trends.....	473
APPENDIX TEN: House building in Betsiamites.....	474
APPENDIX ELEVEN: Caricatures (A & B).....	475
APPENDIX TWELVE: Student retention in Québec.....	477
APPENDIX THIRTEEN: Organization chart.....	478
APPENDIX FOURTEEN: Teaching licence.....	479
APPENDIX FIFTEEN: Support centre for Amerindian students.....	480
APPENDIX SIXTEEN: Note written by a teacher.....	481
APPENDIX SEVENTEEN: Drawing made by teacher.....	482
APPENDIX EIGHTEEN: Questionnaire on school/parents relations.....	483
APPENDIX NINETEEN: Examination schedule (MEQ).....	488
APPENDIX TWENTY: Inventory of school motivation (ISM).....	489
APPENDIX TWENTY-ONE: Graph on absenteeism.....	495
APPENDIX TWENTY-TWO: Graph on absenteeism and tardiness.....	496
APPENDIX TWENTY-THREE: Drawing by Misirili.....	497
APPENDIX TWENTY-FOUR: Statistics on local economy.....	498
APPENDIX TWENTY-FIVE: Welfare recipients.....	499
APPENDIX TWENTY-SIX: Drawings by students (A,B,C).....	500
APPENDIX TWENTY-SEVEN: Survey on at-risk factors.....	503
APPENDIX TWENTY-EIGHT: Taxonomy of social problems.....	505
APPENDIX TWENTY-NINE: Prevention programmes (A,B,C).....	506

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to analyse, using the case-study approach, the historical and political processes which have allowed certain Canadian Amerindians to progressively gain control over the education of their children at the local level during the last thirty years, and to appraise the "Amerindianization"<sup>1</sup> as well as the school-improvement efforts which have been undertaken since then. Along with the results these efforts have yielded, the conclusion is drawn that some major mistakes, which could have been avoided, were made both by Amerindian<sup>2</sup> leaders and by the federal Government.

Traditionally, the vast majority of Canadian Amerindians have largely remained formally undereducated. In the 1960s, between 94% and 96% of all Amerindian students were leaving school without a high school diploma<sup>3</sup>, as compared with 12% in the mainstream Canadian population. In the 1980s, 80% of Amerindian students were dropping out of high school while 25% were doing the same, on average, in the rest of the country.<sup>4</sup> As for the 1990s, the exact figures of Amerindian students' overall graduation rates are unavailable, owing perhaps to the growing decentralization of the 1980s. As one author writes: "...it is surprisingly difficult to obtain accurate statistics on Aboriginal students in Canada who abandon school [in the 1990s] before obtaining

the graduation diploma"<sup>5</sup>, and the task is not made any easier by apparent contradictions about this issue between various authors. For instance, V.J. Kirkness asserts in one of her latest books that the last decade (1982-1992) has witnessed an increase in the achievement rates of Canadian Amerindian students<sup>6</sup> and J.C. MacPherson, relying on estimates made by the Assembly of First Nations, writes that "the completion rate for Indian children at all levels of their schooling, up to and including their post-secondary education, is significantly higher than it was two decades ago [1971-1991]"<sup>7</sup>. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, however, claimed recently that "the majority of Aboriginal youth do not finish high school"<sup>8</sup>.

Is it simply a conflict between two ways (optimism vs pessimism) of presenting the facts? Without the exact figures, it becomes a guessing game, nevertheless, it appears that there are significant variations in the achievement rates between communities<sup>9</sup>, and that generally, the rural communities have very low achievement (defined as non-completion of the secondary school course) rates (between 6% and 30%). Notwithstanding, an overall achievement rate for Canadian Amerindian students, even below 50%, in the 1990s, would compare a little more advantageously now with the current 70% completion rate across Canada<sup>10</sup>.

Apparently, the latest overall statistics are encouraging for the Amerindian population, but they need to be questioned. Firstly, the huge disproportions in achievement rates across the Amerindian communities are a disturbing factor, which needs to be investigated. In the Northwest Territories, for instance, 88% of Amerindian students leave high school before Grade 12<sup>11</sup>, and this situation reflects the reality of most rural



Amerindian communities. Such is the case in Betsiamites (Québec), the community at the center of this study. Secondly, mainstream Canadian colleges and universities "see high drop-out rates among their Aboriginal students" <sup>12</sup>, a fact which casts doubt on the degree of initial preparation of those students who have succeeded, especially since absenteeism and lack of motivation still characterize the average secondary school Canadian Amerindian student in the 1990s <sup>13</sup><sup>14</sup>. And thirdly, there was a steady increase in educational standards at all levels between 1970 and 1990 in the Canadian educational system, which explains the lowering of the success rate in the Canadian population <sup>15</sup> at large.

The fact that overall Amerindian success rates at the secondary level appear to have significantly increased during this particular period can therefore be interpreted in two ways. Either the quality of education provided to Amerindian students has considerably improved, or its standards have not been upgraded as in the rest of the country, or worse yet, they have been lowered.

This research seeks to demonstrate that this last explanation is the valid one <sup>16</sup>. It is indeed suggested that it is illogical to witness (at least in some regions) impressive records of success rates at the secondary level for Amerindian students (from approximately 6% in the 60s to 25%-45% in the 90s) while fundamental negative attitudes towards schooling (i.e. absenteeism and lack of motivation) have remained unchanged.

It is argued here that the explanation for the formidable (between four and six times

better), albeit artificial, increase in the completion rate of some secondary school Amerindian students across Canada can be traced back to the beginning of the 1970s, and that political factors both at the national and local (i.e. Amerindian-community) levels have more to do with such an increase than do educational factors. Moreover, the fact that during the last five years there has been a steady increase in the number of Amerindian parents in rural communities in Québec who are asking to have their children transferred to a provincial mainstream school because they are dissatisfied with the quality of local education is in direct contradiction with the two most important objectives which had been set out by the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) in 1972, i.e. to turn the reserve schools into "excellence models"<sup>17</sup> and "to provide Indian children with the education and training necessary for making a good living in modern society"<sup>18</sup>.

Actually, not one of these goals has been attained. More and more, rural reserve schools are classified as those schools that parents are ashamed to say their children attend<sup>19</sup>, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Five.

Four fundamental assumptions underlie this study. These assumptions are:

1- that generalized educational underachievement has dramatic consequences in any community;

2- that widespread poverty in rural reserves is very similar in many respects to rural poverty in general;

3- that schooling in Québec's rural reserves could have been much more efficient

than it is today;

4- and that education is a basic human right and a universal human value. As Gunnar Myrdal once said, researchers should be "as open as possible about the valuations guiding their own research. [These valuations should be] explicitly stated, specific, and sufficiently concretized from the outset of a study" <sup>20</sup>, which is exactly what is being done here. Each of these assertions is now examined in more detail.

1- Generalized educational underachievement has dramatic consequences in any community. The collectivity in rural reserves such as Betsiamites suffers enormously because of it. UNESCO recently adopted the following viewpoint regarding this phenomenon, which reflects the position adopted here:

In all cases, [educational underachievement] represents a waste, devastating in its effect on morale and in its human and social effects, and often leading to some form or other of exclusion that will mark its victims throughout their adult lives. <sup>21</sup>

2- Widespread poverty in rural Amerindian reserves is very similar in many respects to rural poverty in general (both in Canada and in the USA), and differences between the rural poor and the urban poor are very slight in Québec, at least in terms of effects on family life. Poverty has the same adverse effects on the Amerindian populations as it has on the mainstream population. In this sense, social problems in rural reserves are human problems as such, rather than purely Amerindian problems. G.J. Ebrahim has written the following, with which we agree, about the social and cultural breakdown stemming from

economic problems:

Alcoholism, family strife, vice and violence are part of the life of the urban poor. These pathologies are the by-products of the culture of poverty and are ways of adapting to poverty.<sup>22</sup>

3- Schooling in Québec's rural reserves could be much more efficient today and the parents could have much more confidence in it, if it had not been for some major mistakes made in 1972 and later in 1996 by the National Indian Brotherhood and the federal Government. Although rural reserves clearly are disadvantaged areas, research has proven<sup>23</sup> that schooling in these areas can be just as effective as in wealthier areas.

4- "Education is a basic human right and a universal human value"<sup>24</sup>, and just as effective "Black" schools in the United States are fostering "cultural expansion"<sup>25</sup> (i.e. that "Black studies", if present in the school, are an addition to the regular curriculum), schools for Canadian Amerindian students should also try to expand the latter's cultural horizons. This position on the goals of Amerindian schooling is similar to the one held by Dr Stanley Vollant, the first Amerindian surgeon in Canada, who was born and educated in Betsiamites until he was thirteen. Dr Vollant sees formal schooling as a way to learn as much as one can about oneself and about the culture of others<sup>26</sup>, and thus advocates, as this study does, the need for intercultural education.

These themes are present throughout the thesis. They constitute the intellectual "pillars" of the research, which focuses at the micro level on the outcomes of national

Amerindian educational policies adopted thirty years earlier by Amerindian leaders, and questions, in a historical perspective, their ideological choices regarding the methods they have chosen to foster "quality education" and to increase the educational achievement of Amerindian students.

The research is divided into seven chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion. They are:

- 1- Introduction
- 2- "Indian Control of Indian Education" revisited
- 3- Methodological issues
- 4- The context of the study
- 5- The dimensions of schooling in Betsiamites
- 6- The dimensions of resistance to schooling in Betsiamites
- 7- Conclusion

The second chapter ("Indian Control of Indian Education" revisited) measures the assumptions underlying contemporary Amerindian educational policies in Canada against the results these policies have produced. The title of the chapter hints at its aim, which is to reevaluate the conclusions of the 1972 National Indian Brotherhood document "Indian Control of Indian Education", in the light of how schooling in Amerindian communities has evolved since its publication. This document has had a tremendous impact on the kind of education which has been offered to Canadian Amerindians for the last thirty years. In fact, so great was its influence that the recent Royal Commission

on Aboriginal Peoples costing £25 M has simply repeated its arguments and demands as far as Amerindian education is concerned.

Given that the educational situation had not evolved in a satisfactory way for many Canadian Amerindians during the 1972-1996 period (and this include the Betsiamites Montagnais), one could have expected that the positions of "Indian Control of Indian Education" would at least have been questioned by the recent Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, since the document formed the basis of the federal Government's Amerindian' educational policy since 1972<sup>27</sup>. But such is the moral and political power of this document that no one even thought about discussing the positions and conclusions of this "landmark policy statement" <sup>28</sup>.

It is not suggested here that this document is useless, but it is certainly argued in this chapter that some of its recommendations have had long-term devastating effects on rural Amerindian communities' schools.

To challenge this document's assumptions is an important task in this research because their influence on the local educational processes is still as strong in 1997 as it was in 1972 and because it is thought that some of these assumptions were, and remain, ill-informed.

In the third chapter (Methodological issues), the assumptions underlying this research, along with the data gathering, analysis and methodology will be brought into the open, in addition to the ethical questions raised. Furthermore the issues of validity and

reliability will be discussed. One of the most important concerns regarding such data was not only quantitative but also qualitative, the purpose being to validate the findings by triangulation.

No claim of total objectivity is made since the point of view adopted here clearly is the exploration, in a deprived rural setting, of the "persistence of inequality in a society which stands firmly upon a foundation of equalitarian principle" <sup>29</sup>. Thus, the research looks beyond factual events and individual' decisions and/or impact (inside as well as outside the local schools) in order to discover, by way of a distinctive viewpoint, the mechanisms or social engineering by which generalized underachievement is "realized", a thing which certainly contributes the perpetuation of poverty and inequality.

This problem is not approached in terms of victims and oppressors, but in terms of deeply-rooted social mechanisms, collective behaviour, and cultural practices which foster or impair Betsiamites's school improvement efforts, and do or do not contribute to the betterment of the lives of the Montagnais people. In other words, it is the collectivity as a whole, and not the individuals, which is being scrutinized for the purpose of analysing the educational process. As one can see, the ontological assertion being put forward here- i.e. that a collectivity's behaviour has "an existence over and above the existence of individual actors" <sup>30</sup> can be linked to sociological realism. Clearly then, the inquiry of paradigm determines in turn the epistemological difference or singularity of the research, which is the subjectivist assumption that knowledge is value dependent, as explained by Guba and Lincoln, who made the following pronouncement about critical theory:

The investigator and the investigated object are assumed to be interactively linked, with the values of the investigator (and of situated "others") inevitably influencing the inquiry. Findings are therefore value mediated. [...] what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group.<sup>31</sup>

Other factors which allow one to "label" this case study as belonging to the critical theory "family" are the following criteria, which were identified by Bennett and LeCompte in 1990<sup>32</sup>:

- interest in locating contradictions;
- consideration of historical analysis central to understanding of social phenomena;
- sharing a common concern for injustice, oppression and inequality in society;
- sharing a strong belief in the powers of individuals to shape their own destiny (provided they have developed a critical consciousness);
- fostering positive social change rather than social reproduction;
- aspiring towards the radical transformation of social arrangements in order to increase human freedom.

However, although this research can be classified as qualitative research using the case study approach and critical theory as its inquiry paradigm, the fact remains that, as Stake wrote in 1993, that "there are worlds within worlds, unending, each with its own paradigms"<sup>33</sup>



This research, because of its very subject, can also be seen as belonging to the large family of the "school improvement movement", but that does not constitute a disadvantage in itself. As Janet Harland has put it, "all educational research is geared to some notion of improvement"<sup>34</sup>, and the current research certainly is no exception. However, it has to be kept in mind that its ultimate goal is not to X-ray a particular Canadian Amerindian rural reserve secondary school to discover what is "wrong" (or "right") with it, but rather to use it as a concrete example to demonstrate that the educational path chosen by the National Indian Brotherhood and the federal Government in 1972 has had a tremendous impact on the schooling process of rural Amerindian students in Canada and on the quality of the education that they have received.

Finally, the position of the researcher in this study is also a "detail" of paramount importance which will not be overlooked. Researching one's own school presents both advantages and disadvantages, as will be seen in the second chapter. In the present case, the ethical considerations are particularly important, since the researcher has been a staff member for ten years (teacher for four years and vice-principal for six), and has been the principal for the last two years, which implies that not only was he a participant observer, but a key decision-maker. This makes the task of maintaining an "objective", "exteriorized" posture, a "dualism"<sup>35</sup> all the more difficult, albeit not impossible of course. Thus, the issues of the current researcher's personality, philosophical orientation, bias, methods of data gathering (including style of interviewing) are fully addressed in this chapter. This will also be an occasion to reflect on other ethical aspects of educational research such as the purpose of this research, the nature of what is being researched, the way it is undertaken, the relations of the

researcher with those researched and his personal influence on the school which is the subject of this thesis.

The fourth chapter places the reserve in its historical context. The current cultural, social, economic, political and educational situation in Betsiamites today cannot be appraised without first analysing the historical developments which have affected the Montagnais since their arrival on this continent. The very fact that the Amerindians in Canada insist today more than ever on being called "First Nations" attests that history has played a major role in the (modern) definition of "Indianness".

It will be argued, in this chapter, that although the economic and political reasons which led to the creation of the reserve system in North America were very clear, the tremendous long-term impact of this system had not been foreseen. A part of this impact (e.g. cultural maintenance) was very positive, but other aspects have taken their toll on social and educational progress for decades. The problem is that a system which was intended to be temporary has accidentally become a "way of life" that has totally transformed the lives of Amerindians in Canada (and of course in the United States also). Today, in the reserves, one can routinely find traces of the vocabulary used by the first "Indian agents" a century ago (e.g. "ration" for welfare cheque), even though the nature of the relief still sent at regular intervals by the federal Government has been totally transformed. This tends to validate the assumption that "welfarism" has always been the reserves' supporting pillar. The understanding of the historical "making" of the reserve (as much as the comparison with the life of Amerindians before the implementation of the reserves) is thus a major task if we are to grasp the meaning of

the reserves' current problems and challenges.

The fifth chapter (The dimensions of schooling) focuses on "l'école secondaire Uashkaikan" in Betsiamites (a rural reserve in Québec), which was inaugurated in 1985. By looking at the whole school, from the budget to the teachers' pedagogy and the system of rewards and punishments, the study will provide an insight into its daily life and allow the reader to better understand what local schooling means in this community. And by placing these characteristics in the context of the recommendations of the document "Indian Control of Indian Education", the research will attempt to demonstrate the extent to which this educational policy has affected the development of that particular school.

One of the other important tasks in this chapter will be to present the school in the context of the Betsiamites reserve, since it is argued in this research that the social, cultural, economic and political life of the reserve greatly affects the two local schools (there is also an elementary school in Betsiamites) and is a determining factor in the formulation of their agendas as regards their current challenges and policies. It is in this chapter, and the following one, that most of the data collected during the research will be presented.

In the sixth chapter, concepts of educational resistance are examined. Resistance may not a healthy phenomenon (e.g. cultural affirmation through refusal of alien indoctrination or assimilative pressures) for the Betsiamites students, but rather a collective drama which owes much to the context of the reserve itself, but which also

contributes to its own perpetuation. The standpoint in this chapter is the one adopted by Dr Stanley Vollant, from Betsiamites, who sees formal education, despite its imperfection, as the only way to gain personal freedom and to keep one's positive Indian identity in this day and age. He considers learning about white' culture (and about any other, for that matter) to be an enrichment, and not a threat, and suffers personally at the sight of his former schoolmates who are more often than not marking time in the reserve- which he does not hesitate to describe as a "golden jail" <sup>36</sup>.

In this chapter, it will be demonstrated, by analysing the average Betsiamites student's personal route to failure, that the odds against educational success are stacked very high against the reserve student, for reasons linked, in short, to the excesses of "welfarism" carried to the point of illogicality. Nowhere else on earth has a population been so nurtured and cared for materially by the State as much as Canada has done with its Amerindian population <sup>37</sup>, and probably nowhere else does a population suffer from such a degree of collective despair. Shkilnyk, for instance, has written that she had never seen such hopelessness as she found at the Grassy Narrows reserve (Ontario), even in poor or war-devastated countries <sup>38</sup>. Thus, it will be argued that the creation of the reserves has led to the development of a system where the short-term collective interest powerfully incites long-term collective dysfunction, albeit unconsciously. Moreover, the negative impact of welfarism is still aggravated in the reserves by the current legal and political system (i.e. the "Indian Act" at the national level and the "permanent" system of elections- every two years- at the reserve level) as it also has been by such an ill-informed document as "Indian Control of Indian Education". This hampered much real educational improvement which could have been achieved taken

place during the last thirty years because of the federal Government's long-term hands-off policy, and the prevailing fiction of "self-government". It will be also suggested that time is running short in the rural reserves for educational reform, and that it has even become an "enemy".

In the concluding chapter, the current strengths as well as the weaknesses of Betsiamites' educational system will be detailed and compared with the results of a similar research undertaken in the 1980s<sup>39</sup>, in order to see if the overall situation has improved or not. Although the two local schools' records for the last decade are far from being impressive, there are some signs which tend to indicate that the situation could change. First of all, the growing discontent of parents which is being expressed more openly and frequently indicates that there is deep concern in Betsiamites as regards both the importance of formal schooling and the quality of education. This is active criticism which the schools in question can put to use to legitimate the eventual steps to be taken in increasing the achievement rates of their students. Secondly, the secondary school students themselves stay in school much longer than they did ten years ago, and those who have abandoned come back a few years later and ask to be registered as part-time or as full-time students. Thus, the problem has obviously shifted from generalized unconcern and lack of motivation to difficulties in achieving academic success, which is undoubtedly an improvement. It is the task of the school to help those students to overcome such difficulties, especially since the schools are partly responsible for this situation.

And finally, the local authorities have certainly not exhausted those strategies which

could influence local scholastic results in a positive way. It is true that the unsuccessful eight-year teaching experiment of the Montagnais language at the elementary school has taken its toll on the morale of the troops, but there are other fields, such as the innovative teaching of reading at the elementary level, and pre-school and early education which to now have been left completely untouched. Moreover recent research on learning difficulties has demonstrated clearly that the earlier good compensatory or remedial education is provided to children, the better the results <sup>40</sup>.

In other words, there is reason for both satisfaction and dissatisfaction as far as formal schooling is concerned in Betsiamites, but one thing remains certain, parents will not tolerate the status quo much longer, and steps have to be taken by the local authority to allow Betsiamites' children to have access to more effective local schools- which has not been the case before now. Nevertheless, Amerindian parents still attach high value to formal education as being the key to socioeconomic mobility <sup>41</sup> and "want schools to help [Amerindian] children, youth and adults learn the skills they need to participate fully in the economy" <sup>42</sup>.

This thesis then affirms that such a goal will not be attained if Amerindian leaders and the federal Government continue to foster Amerindian educational policies based on principles found in the 1972 document "Indian Control of Indian Education" <sup>43</sup> and in the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples <sup>44</sup>. It is indeed argued that for the last thirty years, Amerindian leaders, the Federal Government and many academics have almost exclusively focused on the shortcomings of the Amerindian adult learner and on the under-representation of Amerindians in "the ranks of college and

university graduates in Canada"<sup>45</sup>. The result has been so much energy and efforts directed away from the task of implementing effective Amerindian elementary and secondary schools in rural reserves and from the needs and problems of the infant Amerindian learner. In other words, Canadian Amerindians would be better advised in 1997 to aim at new educational targets if the dual goals of "quality education" and "full participation in the economy" are going to be attained one day in rural reserves. The conclusion, however, of the recent Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples as regards Amerindian education demonstrates that this is still far from even being considered a valid option by either Amerindian leaders or the federal Government.

By unravelling the historic, legal and political steps which have led to this seemingly irrational "national" behaviour as far as Canadian Amerindian schooling is concerned, and by demonstrating at the micro level the negative long-term impact of such educational policies, the current thesis will expose some significant contradictions between the official (i.e. printed) discourse and the daily reality in some Québec rural reserve schools<sup>46</sup>, thereby questioning, the level of representativity of the Assembly of First Nations, while also suggesting some ways in which the problem of school improvement in rural reserves could be tackled.

The next chapter focuses on the 1972 document by the National Indian Brotherhood ("Indian Control of Indian Education") which revolutionized both reserve schooling and mainstream Canadian college and university programmes and entry requirements for Amerindian students and also analyses its long-term side effects. The well-intentioned authors of this document have certainly reached one of their goals namely to increase

the *access* to higher education for Amerindian students, but as will be demonstrated, there has been a heavy price to pay as far as reserve schooling and success rates at every educational level are concerned.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1.This term refers to the creation of an "Indian" school curriculum as well as the hiring of Indian educators and administrators.
- 2.See Appendix 1 for a description of the terms used in this thesis.
- 3.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) *First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles*, Toronto; Canadian Education Association: 14; Hawthorn, H.B. (ed.) (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens Contemporains du Canada: Besoins et Mesures d'Ordre Économique, Politique et Éducatif*, Ottawa; Direction des Affaires Indiennes: 121.
- 4.Cf. Ministère des Affaires Indiennes (MAINC) *Les Indiens du Canada*, Ottawa; MAINC: 106.
- 5.Mackay, R. & Myles, L. (1995) "A major challenge for the education system: Aboriginal retention and dropout", in Battiste, M. & Barman, J. (eds) (1995) *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, Vancouver; UBC Press: 158.
- 6.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) op. cit.: 56. [The author does not give the figures, but the rates would have to be somewhere between between 25% and 40% if there was an increase, as she claims there is.]
- 7.MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *MacPherson Report on Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future*, Ottawa; DIAND: 3.[Once again, no figures are provided, which leaves us, as in the case of Kirkness, to estimate it as being between 25% and 40%.]
- 8.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People: Nation to Nation*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and Services Canada: 82. [No figures again. Any number beyond 50% is the majority. Our estimate must therefore remain somewhere between 25% and 40%.]
- 9.Cf. Mackay, R. & Myles, L. (1995) op. cit.: 161.
- 10.Cf. Moisset, J. & Toussaint, P. (1992) "Pourquoi faut-il combattre l'abandon scolaire ? Une perspective socio-économique.", in CRIRES-FEC (eds) (1992) *Pour Favoriser la Réussite Scolaire: Réflexions et Pratiques*, Montréal; Editions St-Martin: 45.
- 11.Cf. *Home and School*, February 1995: 45.
- 12.Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) op. cit.: 86.
- 13.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) op. cit.: 56.
- 14.Cf. Hawthorn, H.B. (ed.) (1967) op. cit.: 26.
- 15.Cf. *Options*, Nu. 14, Printemps 1996: 17.
- 16.The issue of low standards in Band-controlled secondary schools throughout Canada was discussed during the public hearings of the recent Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Hence, commissioner Bertha Wilson asked the following question to a participant in 1993: "I wanted to ask you about something that has come up in a number of communities in the north that we have visited. And that is the, the fact that we've been told that many native students in the secondary schools get pushed ahead through the program when they may not really have

accomplished, their accomplishment may not have justified their being moved ahead. It's been described to us as a process of what they call "number crunching". That in order to show that the school is achieving what it's set out to achieve, it tends to push students ahead before they are really ready. And then in a number of communities we've been told that the consequence of this is that the students are really not equipped to go into post-secondary education [sic], that they don't have the reading and writing skills that are necessary to handle the material that confronts students when they go up to College or University. And that there is actually a need for illiteracy courses [sic] for students who have graduated from high school and who would like to go further with their education [sic]. That has always struck me as a rather astonishing proposition and I have asked, well how could students be graduating from high school if they needed literacy courses and to learn reading and writing skills in order to be able to go onto University. And I wonder if, if you have come across this problem and are aware that, that this is problem [sic] that students are being pushed ahead through the various levels and are emerging as graduates without having some of the basic reading and writing skills. Have you run into that problem?" The participant (Flora Zaharia) answered in this way to the commissioner's question: "Very much so. I have, in working in the different area [sic], you know, in the education [sic] field, I have run across that, you know, social promotion is just too often practised, you know. [...] I would suggest that each school division or each where the aboriginal people are concerned, where they're involved, that they make an earnest effort to present, to make proposals to the schools on their concern regarding this social promotion. [...] Quite often parents don't understand why their children cannot be promoted. They feel that, like, I've heard the remark in the past from parents saying, "Oh, we had such a wonderful teacher, everybody passed in that class, in that school, in that class". And people don't understand. We need a lot of public education on education [sic] on the proper goals of education [sic]". Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1997) *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (CD-ROM), Ottawa, Ontario; Libraxus Inc.: Public hearings on education, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 93-06-03, pages 288-91. It is important to note that this discussion is not mentioned anywhere in the printed 4,000 page final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which costs \$250 CAN (approximately £125). The CD-ROM which contains these public hearings costs \$350 CAN (approximately £175).

17.Cf. Fraternité des Indiens du Canada (1972) *La Maîtrise Indienne de l'Éducation Indienne*, Ottawa; Fraternité des Indiens du Canada: 25.

18.Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.: 3.

19.Cf. National Commission on Education (1996) *Success Against the Odds: Effective Schools in Disadvantaged Areas*, London; Routledge. ["Parents are proud of their children and proud of their school. They used to be embarrassed about saying where their children went to school. Now they are proud to say "My child goes to Lochgelly North""]. p. 313.]

20.Quoted in Bok, S. (1995) "Introduction", in *Daedalus*, Vol. 124, No. 1, Winter 1995: 6.

21.Delors, J. et al. (1996) *Learning: The Treasure Within*, Paris; UNESCO: 136.

22.Ebrahim, G.J. (1984) "Health care and the urban poor", in Richards, P.J. & Thomson, A.M. (eds) (1984) *Basic Needs and the Urban Poor: The Provision of Communal Services*, London; Croom Helm: 104.

23.Cf. National Commission on Education (1996) op. cit.; Sowell, T. (1976) "Patterns of Black Excellence", in *Education: Assumptions Versus History, Collected Papers*, Stanford, Cal.; Hoover Institution Press: 6-38.

- 24.Cf. Delors, J. et al. (1996) op. cit.: 254.
- 25.Cf. Sowell, T. (1986) op. cit.: 20; 29.
- 26.Cf. Société Radio-Canada/ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/ CBC) *Chasse ou Cash ? Le Dilemme Amérindien*. A one-hour special on Betsiamites broadcast at the national level in 1994. [UASHKAIKAN Library (Betsiamites)].
- 27.Cf. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, (1985) Edmonton; Hurtig Publishers: 1214.
- 28.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) op. cit.: Foreword.
29. Cf. Lewis, M. (1978) *The Culture of Inequality*, Amherst; University of Massachusetts Press: 48. [Lewis was writing about the United States, but the same can be said about Canada.]
- 30.Cf. Jary, D. & Jary, J. (1991) *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Sociology*, N.Y.; HarperPerennial: 410.
- 31.Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) "Competing paradigms in qualitative research", in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London; Sage Publications: 110.
- 32.Cf. Bennett, K.P. & LeCompte, M.D. (1990) *The Way Schools Work: A Sociological Analysis of Education*, White Plains, N.Y.; Longman: 24-30
- 33.Quoted in Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) op. cit.: 116-7.
- 34.Harland, J. (1996) "Evaluation as realpolitik", in Scott, D. & Usher, R. (eds) (1996) *Understanding Educational Research*, London; Routledge: 104.
- 35.Quoted in Hamel, J. et al. (1993) *Case Study Methods*, London; Sage Publications: 43.
- 36.Cf. Société Radio-Canada/ Canadian Broadcasting Society (SRC/ CBC) *Chasse ou Cash ? Le Dilemme Amérindien*. (1993) A one-hour television special on Betsiamites broadcast at the national level in 1994. UASHKAIKAN Library.
- 37.An important distinction must be made. As collectivities, Amerindian communities receive substantial amounts of money both from the federal and provincial Governments; in fact much more than white communities located in the same regions, proportionally speaking (so much so that a Betsiamites Band Council's employee said during an interview in 1993 that he did not even know "why the governments were giving [them] this manna. Maybe so that we [the Amerindians] will shut up." The journalist, in order to illustrate this, gave the example of a white town near Betsiamites which has the same population and had received \$2 M CAN (£ 1 M) from the governments in 1993 and had 20 municipal employees. That same year, Betsiamites had received more than \$12 M CAN (£ 6 M)[this however, was a gross underestimation, since the total transfer payments for Betsiamites for that particular year were in fact \$21,834,736 CAN or £10.5 M. Cf. Le Groupe Mallette Maheu (unp.) (1994) *Katakuitshet Pesamit: Rapport Financier Annuel*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 15] and had one hundred municipal employees. Cf. *Chasse ou Cash ? Le Dilemme Amérindien*. (1993) Société Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/CBC) A one-hour special program on Betsiamites broadcast at the national level in 1993. UASHKAIKAN Library). But actually, the majority of the reserve's inhabitants are as poor as the inhabitants of the poorest areas in the province. It is because this money is mostly being spent in unproductive areas. More will be said about those expenses in chapter Six (The dimensions of resistance to schooling in

Betsiamites). Some authors, such as G. B. Senese, have also written about such an apparent contradiction: "This poverty [in Tlingit-Haida communities in Alaska] was in contradiction to the great natural riches their surroundings implied and also to the growing administrative, political, and educational influence of the Sealaska Native Corporation, which owed its own wealth to the greatest single exchange of land for money since the Louisiana Purchase- The Alaska Native Claims Settlement." Senese, G.B. (1991) *Self-Determination and the Social Education of Native Americans*, New York; Praeger: IX.

38.Cf. Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) *A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community*, New Haven; Yale University Press: 4.

39.Cf. Vien, C. (unp.) (1991) *L'Éducation à Betsiamites: Valeurs et Attitudes des Parents et des Enseignants*, M.A. Thesis, Sherbrooke; Université de Sherbrooke: 44-6.

40.Cf. *Psychology in the Schools, Special Issue: School Readiness*, Vol. 34, No. 2, April 1997.; *Nouvelles, Centrale de l'Enseignement du Québec*, Novembre-December 1996: 5. 'Quand la recherche retourne à l'école'.

41.Cf. Kidwell, C.S. (1994) "Higher education issues in Native American communities", in Justiz, M.J. et al. (eds) (1994) *Minorities in Higher Education*, Phoenix; Oryx Press: 244.

42.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People: Nation to Nation*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and Services.

43.National Indian Brotherhood (1972) *Indian Control of Indian Education*, Ottawa; National Indian Brotherhood.

44.Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People: Nation to Nation*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and Services.

45.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1995) "Aboriginal peoples and tertiary education in Canada: Institutional responses", in *The London Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 11, 1995: 28.

46.For instance, the Montagnais communities' sustained demands to Québec universities for the last four years to abandon "special programmes" aimed at Amerindian students is in direct contradiction with one of the most important principles put forward in "Indian Control of Indian Education" and in the recent report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Cf. Meetings of the "Comité des directeurs et directrices d'écoles montagnaises", Québec, 1994-1997.

## CHAPTER 2

### "INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION" REVISITED: REMOVING BARRIERS OR LOWERING STANDARDS ?

At the end of the 1960s, Jean Chrétien, then minister of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND), relying partly on the conclusion of the important H.B. Hawthorn study <sup>1</sup>, which had been completed two years earlier, opted in favour of a radical plan which aimed at terminating the Indian Act, seen by the federal Government as the major cause for Amerindians educational underachievement. "Integration" became the key-word for DIAND. According to this ambitious scheme, the reserve system was to be abandoned, along with all the special programs aimed at Canadian reserve Amerindians, and DIAND itself was to disappear within five years <sup>2</sup>.

These proposals were published in 1969 in what is known as DIAND's White Paper. The federal Government did not have to wait long for Amerindians reaction, which was "explosively negative" <sup>3</sup>. Not only did Amerindians not want the federal Government to abolish the Indian Act, but in fact, the publication of the White Paper resulted in Amerindian leaders throughout Canada demanding to have their special rights honoured to an even greater extent than before 1969:

The Indian response to the proposed government policy [to the White

Paper] was hostile and sustained. A comprehensive network of Indian political organizations was formed and made counterproposals of their own concerning a wide range of claims. The government, facing an awakened public conscience, retreated from its proposals and then provided funding to support Indian efforts to clarify their demands.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter Four (The context of the study) will provide some explanations which will contribute to explain why Amerindian reaction to the White Paper was so strong. The present chapter is concerned with the crucial determining effect which this reaction had on subsequent Amerindian educational policies. It is argued here that the official response of Amerindian leaders to the White Paper, "Indian Control of Indian Education", which was published in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood (today the Assembly of First Nations), contained a major misconception regarding the application of an educational principle which has had a negative influence on the Canadian reserves' schooling process. Moreover, it is suggested that if this "watershed document in the history of Indian education policy-making"<sup>5</sup> had been presented at any other time, it is very unlikely that this ideological flaw would have remained undetected. It will be seen here that the political context of 1972 explains why none of its arguments was questioned at that time, and a tradition having thus been established, why it has never been reviewed by anyone since its publication.

In short, "Indian Control of Indian Education" rests on two major educational principles: "parental responsibility and local control"<sup>6</sup>; according to the National Indian Brotherhood, Amerindian parents should be granted the same decision-making rights on schooling as

mainstream Canadian parents<sup>7</sup>, and local Amerindian communities should determine themselves the kind of education they want for their children. In concrete terms, The National Indian Brotherhood suggested the following strategies to ameliorate formal schooling on reserves:

It [the document] identified the importance of local community control to improve education, the need for more Indian teachers, the development of relevant curricula and teaching resources in Indian schools, and the importance of language instruction and native values in Indian education.<sup>8</sup>

The issues of Amerindian curriculum and Amerindian language instruction are extensively discussed in chapter Six (The dimensions of schooling in Betsiamites). In the following pages, the chief method selected by the National Indian Brotherhood to "improve [reserve] education" (i.e. the dismantling of "barriers to success" for would-be Amerindian teachers) is discussed. First of all, this chapter retraces the steps which led to the adoption of this ideological position. Secondly, the issue of access to higher education and the effects of affirmative action policies are weighed against the importance, for underprivileged children, of having excellent teachers. Thirdly, the results yielded by putting into practice three decades of educational policies espoused by the National Indian Brotherhood are analysed as is the influence, in concrete terms, these policies have had on relations between rural reserve schools and parents. Fourthly, it will be argued that the "special support" claimed by the recent Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and aimed at Amerindian students registered in mainstream Canadian universities already exist and that its value is questioned even by some of those who

should theoretically benefit from it. And finally, the latest positions taken by Amerindian leaders and the federal Government on reserve schooling are scrutinized.

As mentioned above, Canada's Amerindians were greatly angered by the publication in 1969 of the Department of Indian Affairs' White Paper, which sought to virtually abolish the Amerindians' status. This sparked unexpected (for the federal Government at least) political turmoil in Canada. At the same time, Amerindian activism was raging in the neighbouring United States in the 1960s, where the Red Power Movement had vitalized itself amidst the civil rights movement protests, the vociferous opposition to the Vietnam war, and a sudden generalized interest in ethnic minorities. Dee Brown had published in 1970 his famous book "Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee"<sup>9</sup> and this site had been occupied, with much publicity, by members of the American Indian Movement<sup>10</sup>. These activities had led, not too surprisingly, to the creation of numerous "Indian Studies" programmes in American universities, as R.D. Edmunds asserts:

...other activists in the urban Indian communities and on college campuses successfully petitioned university administrators to establish Native American Studies programs. [...] history departments across the United States rushed to add undergraduate Native American history courses to their curricula. [...] Eager for employment, many historians jumped on the buckskin bandwagon, marketed themselves as "Indian historians", and ventured forth into the classroom. Some were adequately trained; others were woefully lacking in their preparation.<sup>11</sup>



It was in such an atmosphere that Canadian Amerindian leaders prepared their official response to the White Paper. The document's principles and objectives were selected solely by representatives of the National Indian Brotherhood (whose names are not mentioned in the document) during a one-day meeting in Yellowknife<sup>12</sup>. They relied exclusively on papers previously prepared by the various provincial Amerindian associations (Québec presented none, and British Columbia presented three) which had all been hastily written in 1971 or 1972, amidst a political storm, by organizations which were then more often characterized by division rather than representativeness<sup>13</sup>. Not a single document had been presented by Amerindian parents' committees or representatives, and only eighteen other papers were used later during the composition of the final document<sup>14</sup>. This did not prevent the president of the National Indian Brotherhood from stating in the foreword of "Indian Control of Indian Education", that this document was "historic"<sup>15</sup>, barely two months before the federal Government adopted it.

In 1972, the president of the National Indian Brotherhood knew full well that the federal Government was willing to endorse as quickly as possible anything presented by Amerindian organizations in order to bring an end to the pressure which had built up since the publication of its vilified 1969 White Paper.

Thus, to paraphrase the title of a recent Canadian book about Amerindian education; "the circle unfolds"<sup>16</sup>. Eager to solve its "Amerindian problem", the federal Government failed in 1969 to administer a dose of "miraculous" medicine- medicine which the Amerindians found indigestible, to say the least. In return, the latter hastily concocted

a reply which contained, as will be seen below, a major flaw. But given the political context and Canadian politicians' propensity to "do like the Americans do" (after delay of a few years), the federal Government lost its composure and speedily gave its approval to Canadian Amerindian demands, without really analysing either their nature or their impact. Indeed, one can only be amazed at how quickly the federal Government endorsed this document often referred to in the Canadian literature as a "landmark policy statement"<sup>17</sup>. As MacPherson writes, "it was accepted less than two months later by the federal Government"<sup>18</sup>, a surprising speed of response since the Canadian federal bureaucracy is not famous for its alacrity and would normally have sought "a priori" the advice of various specialists in the field. They were certainly available, as they always are in such a case because the federal Government is renowned for providing its expert counsel with favourable work conditions. Where sound judgement and careful analysis were required, emotion and improvization prevailed in their stead..

The demands coming from a hurt people (and for good reasons for that matter) were addressed to a tired, irritated and panic-stricken State machinery, and since this new educational field was obviously going to create a lot of job opportunities in Canadian colleges and universities (as it had done in the United States and was also to do in Canada), the federal Government had further reason to accord its speedy approval. In other words, Amerindian leaders were, in 1972, in a privileged position to present their demands. They had an historic opportunity to take their educational destiny into their own hands, and within the boundaries set by their historical, social and legal position, they did what was logical but not necessarily what was the best. They have in fact imposed some of the negative aspects of their "special" status<sup>19</sup> onto the culture of

schooling, and have mixed together two ingredients which are poles apart; i.e. quality and flexibility. The impact of this ideological choice on Amerindian teacher-training programmes and on the relations between local reserve schools and Amerindian parents since 1972 will now be analysed, along with the issue of local control of education and its influence on the current issue of Canadian Amerindian "self-government".

#### REMOVING BARRIERS OR LOWERING STANDARDS ?

The issue of the setting up in the 1970s of training programmes aimed specifically at prospective Canadian Amerindian teachers was strongly influenced, as will be seen below, by political events in the neighbouring United States in the 1960s and the 1970s. Although this was totally unanticipated in 1972, the Canadian Amerindian leaders' claim for "flexible" entry requirements and programmes for Amerindian students in higher education resulted, twenty-five years later, in strained relations between the rural reserves' parents and their local schools, the former accusing the latter of offering mediocre teaching to their students. Such a debate is at the very heart of a current political storm in the United States regarding what looks very much like the end of affirmative action policies in higher education. This will be discussed below.

Indeed, flexibility and quality (in educational fields) have two logics of their own, and in some cases, these logics may well be incompatible. Discussions surrounding the conflict between widening access to higher education for disadvantaged minority students *and* maintaining high academic standards has been a very serious one during

the last decade, both in the United States<sup>20</sup> and in the United Kingdom<sup>21</sup>. While some contend that "lowering admissions standards" does not necessarily mean lowering performance standards<sup>22</sup>, others argue that the denigration of "objective knowledge" and dismissing "common academic standards and standardized tests as culturally biased and judgmental" have led, in effect, in the United States to disadvantaged minority students "[learning] less" and "[failing] to build up the intellectual capital that is the foundation of further learning"<sup>23</sup>. While these ideological positions appear quite irreconcilable, the fact remains that two decades of racial preferences in admissions standards in the United States have not prevented success rates (i.e. graduation rates and postgraduate enrolment) of the targeted minorities from remaining stagnant or even falling<sup>24</sup>. This reality seems to lend proof to the latter proposition.

Affirmative action has existed in the United States ever since F.D. Roosevelt's 1941 Executive Order 8802 (although the term "affirmative action" was first used in 1961 by J.F. Kennedy<sup>25</sup>). This policy was defined in 1978 in the following way:

government-fostered and voluntary action by public and private organizations going beyond the cessation of formal discriminatory practices...organizations must act positively, affirmatively, and aggressively to remove all barriers, however informal or subtle, that prevent access by minorities and women to their rightful places in the employment and educational institutions of the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Traditionally, these programmes have always been aimed specifically at Black

Americans, and more recently at Hispanic Americans, in the United States.

In Canada, such a public policy is usually referred to as "positive discrimination", but the logic underlying it is the same, namely the deterministic point of view that it is more difficult and unfair for members of certain minorities because they "are victims of an oppressive and racist society that beats them down" <sup>27</sup>. In other words, the public policy's assumption underlying affirmative action is that (some) minorities' economic and educational failure "is caused by racial discrimination alone" <sup>28</sup>. The National Indian Brotherhood obviously strongly agreed with such a notion when in 1972, the authors of "Indian Control of Indian Education" explained in their document that they were asking for flexible entry requirements and programmes in Canadian colleges and universities because Amerindians had been traditionally put at a disadvantage in the educational field <sup>29</sup>.

However, the quality of teaching usually is extremely important for parents and Canadian Amerindian parents are no exception. The issue of a wider access to higher education for prospective teachers is problematically linked to a deep concern about the quality of their teaching skills. In the United States, for instance, following widespread accusations of mediocrity aimed at higher education institutions at the beginning of the 1980s, "a heavy emphasis", Justiz and Kameen write, "[was placed] on standardized tests to assure the public that prospective teachers possess[ed] adequate professional knowledge and skills to teach.[...] In fact, the number of states that require teachers to pass tests rose by more than 400 percent from 1980 to 1990." <sup>30</sup>

The latter authors deplore this situation and contend that it "has exacerbated the shortage of minorities in teaching"<sup>31</sup>. Thus, they suggest that institutions of higher education "should redesign their assessment efforts to eliminate the negative and unwanted side effects of assessment" but of course without lowering standards<sup>32</sup>. The main strategies they propose consist of implementing "comprehensive learning assistance programs" in educational institutions<sup>33</sup> and collecting information on (minority) students such as their "abilities, family and educational background, motivation and goals, learning style, financial needs, and other factors that impact learning"<sup>34</sup>.

While dismissing standardized tests and meritocracy as another form of institutionalized racism had become common practice during the last decade for advocates of racial equality in the United States<sup>35</sup>, it was becoming correspondingly evident that easier access to higher education institutions for black students- on the basis of affirmative action policies- had not resulted in closing the gap vis-à-vis Asian and white students in educational attainment since most black students were dropping out from these institutions<sup>36</sup>.

Actually, not only has research shown in the United States that the ubiquitous Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was "slightly biased- in favor of blacks"<sup>37</sup>, but it is perhaps appropriate, as some authors have put it, "to stop blaming tests for what they accurately measure- not differences in I.Q. or innate intelligence, but differences in academic preparation and skills"<sup>38</sup>. As Thernstrom and Thernstrom have written, getting rid of standardized tests will not result in making the racial gap in academic performance

disappear<sup>39</sup>.

Even though some authors pretend that "lowering admissions standards to accommodate more unprepared students [does not] lead inevitably to changed performance standards, simply because performance standards can be maintained independently of admissions standards"<sup>40</sup>, not everyone is convinced. For instance, much like the older British universities who have always been extremely concerned about "threatening standards" regarding wider access for "non-traditional students"<sup>41</sup>, affirmative action policies are currently under serious attack in the United States<sup>42</sup>, with many welcoming the "sharp decline in the number of blacks and Hispanics into next year's classes" (due to the "crumbling" of affirmative action policies in the United States) termed as "the unmasking of an artificially engineered system of preferences that has been propping up diversity"<sup>43</sup>.

The adversaries of affirmative action have suggested that what disadvantaged minorities most need is first-rate elementary and secondary schooling<sup>44</sup>, or, put another way, "some tough love [and having] them channeled into being able to compete"<sup>45</sup>. The outcome of decades of affirmative action policies in the United States seems to prove the latter right. Not only are the targeted minorities still "lagging behind"<sup>46</sup>, but even the advocates of the lowering of admissions standards admit candidly that disadvantaged minorities often perform poorly on standardized tests because of "inadequate prior educational experiences"<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, the number of Amerindian students enrolled in mainstream universities in the United States and the number of doctorates awarded to Amerindian students declined in the 1980s, despite the existence of "studies programs

and support services" specifically aimed at them and implemented as early as 1977<sup>48</sup>. This demonstrates that there are limits in correcting those educational deficiencies which can be linked to shortcomings in elementary or secondary schooling. In other words, lowering the admissions standards in higher education is a little like attacking the disease once the symptoms have become irreversible.

Nevertheless, Canadian Amerindian leaders, influenced by what was going on in the United States and angered by the 1969 federal Government White Paper, chose an educational strategy resting on affirmative-action principles for prospective Amerindian teachers in 1972 and presented this demand to the federal Government. As has been mentioned, the federal Government reacted quickly, as seen, to this demand, indeed, it was only too pleased to demonstrate to Amerindian leaders its brand new "collaborative" spirit in order to put an end to the turmoil it had sparked with its White Paper.

In 1972, Canadian Amerindian leaders firmly believed that lowering admissions standards for prospective Amerindian teachers would result in turning the reserve schools into "excellence models" recognized and even imitated by the Canadian provinces<sup>49</sup>. This belief was grounded in the conviction, borrowed from the United States, that "flexibility" in admissions standards and programmes was synonymous with "quality of education", and it explains why one finds these two conflicting concepts side by side more than once in the document "Indian Control of Indian Education":

-[We want] to improve the quality of education. (page 8) -[We need]



flexible secondary school programmes. (page 9) -The rigid admission policies of [Canadian] universities and colleges should be adapted. (page 11) -[The federal Government should] make educational standards more flexible [for the Amerindians in colleges and universities]. (page 13) -[We need] to improve the quality of education for Amerindian children. (page 16) -[The federal Government must offer to would-be Amerindian teachers] flexible entry requirements [and] special teacher-training programmes. (page 16) -[Amerindian schools should] hire the best [teacher] candidates. (page 27) [Author's translation.]<sup>50</sup>

These excerpts are not taken out of context. They mean exactly what they say; i.e. the National Indian Brotherhood' aim was to improve the education of Amerindian children by lowering the admissions standards to higher education and to claim special programmes for would-be Amerindian teachers and/or administrators, all while simultaneously insisting on the importance for reserve schools of hiring the best candidates.

As a direct result of the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education", Canadian colleges and universities rushed (like their U.S. counterpart) to establish Amerindian teacher-training programmes:

Several programs to increase the number of native teachers have been established [after 1972] in universities in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick. In an effort

to improve teaching material for and about native people, DIAND and the Museum of Man have co-operated in the preparation of dictionaries, grammars and reading texts.<sup>51</sup>

It is legitimate to suspect that amongst all these new programmes, some were satisfactory while others were substandard, given the speed at which they were implemented (more is said about this key issue in Chapter Six). Why should Amerindian education in Canada have escaped from the same problem which had arisen in the history departments of American universities in the 1970s (as mentioned above by R.D. Edmunds)? And besides, how could anyone explain that in some cases, if not in most cases, non-Amerindian teachers were prevented from registering to these programmes, which yielded teaching licences valid exclusively in the reserve system ?

There is one great danger in asking for "flexible" programmes. It may lead to the devaluation of one's degree. Thomas Sowell has very well described this phenomenon in the United States in regards to Black university students:

Faculty members are by no means exempt from the paternalism found in recruiting and admissions policies [for Black students]. Some professors grade black students more leniently than they would grade other students, and many hesitate to flunk them, either out of humanitarianism or a desire to avoid "trouble". One cynic said of his black students, "I give 'em all A's and B's; to hell with them". At least he understood the consequences of what he was doing. The double standard of grades and

degrees is an open secret on many campuses, and it is only a matter of time before it is an open secret among employers as well. The market can be ruthless in devaluing degrees that do not mean what they say. It should also be apparent to anyone not blinded by his own mobility that it also devaluates the student in his own eyes.<sup>52</sup>

A college teacher in Baie-Comeau (Québec) admitted in 1994 that he was reacting in the very same manner with his Amerindian students. And he also mentioned that his colleagues were doing the same. He said that although there were no written policies, they had realized that to grade their Amerindian students leniently would save them trouble and complications<sup>5354</sup>.

One could ask why it was "essential" (according to the National Indian Brotherhood and various academics) to provide would-be Amerindian teachers with a teacher-training programme based on "flexibility" and on various forms of "support" ? Indeed, such an approach to school improvement, which focuses on the problems of the Amerindian adult learner, rather than on those of the Amerindian child- and thus favours the short-term solution instead of the long-term one- is in direct contradiction with research findings. If research on school improvement has demonstrated one thing during the last fifteen years, it is that good elementary and secondary schools first and foremost rely on one very important "ingredient"; i.e. good teachers, and this is especially true when dealing with at-risk students. Focusing on the issue of underprivileged at-risk students, the "Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation" (Québec) wrote in 1982 that the province's school boards should adopt policies which would allow the best teachers to teach to

those students:

To this end [to raise the at-risk students' educational achievement], any programme which seeks to provide the underprivileged students with the most skilful, experienced and devoted teachers must be encouraged. If school boards make sure that the best teachers are assigned to the underprivileged, their efforts will be rewarded. <sup>55</sup> [Author's translation.]

More recently, UNESCO has also emphasised the importance of the quality of teachers for at-risk students:

The importance of the quality of teaching, and therefore of teachers, cannot be overemphasized. It is at an early stage of basic education that the principal attitudes toward learning as well as the self-image of the learner are formed. The role of the teacher at this stage is crucial. The greater the handicaps the children coming to school have to overcome—in terms of poverty, difficult social environment or physical impairments—the greater the demands on the teacher. (...) When a child's or adult's first teacher is poorly trained and poorly motivated, the very foundations on which all subsequent learning will be built will be unsound. (...) The measures needed to recruit future teachers from among the most motivated students, improve their training and encourage the best among them to take on the most difficult posts need to be determined in relation to the specific circumstances of each country; but such measures must

be taken, since, without them, it is unlikely that there will be significant improvements in quality where they are most needed.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, in 1965, the "Royal Commission on Schooling in Québec" had concluded that the elementary level was the most important one, since it represented the foundation on which the child was to build all of his/her subsequent knowledge:

one must not forget that it is the quality of elementary schooling which conditions the standards of subsequent learning. [...] Nothing is strong that is built upon shaky foundations. The development of the child is hampered for life if the elementary school cannot provide him or her with high quality schooling.<sup>57</sup> [Author's translation.]

The lack of noticeable improvement regarding the achievement of Amerindian students registered in mainstream college and university programmes, even after thirty years of efforts by these institutions, stands as proof that the National Indian Brotherhood's 1972 short-term strategy of focusing on the Amerindian adult learner has failed.

As a "legacy"<sup>58</sup> (once again to paraphrase a Canadian book about Amerindian education), of this initial choice, the recent Commission on Aboriginal Peoples analysed (once again) thirty years after the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education" the same educational problems and, sadly, came up with the same solution:

Mainstream colleges and universities see high drop-out rates among their

Aboriginal students. To improve retention, barriers to success must be dismantled. Students may require assistance to qualify for entry to colleges and universities, and they may require special supports to stay the course. [...] The Commission proposes that Aboriginal nations investigate and establish targets for human resources development in key fields and that Canadian governments enter into partnerships with them to offer flexible training opportunities.<sup>59</sup>

The most serious damage, however, can be seen at the community level. By opting for a shortcut, the National Indian Brotherhood (and the federal Government by endorsing it) may have postponed the real improvements which local control could have yielded. Worse still, by promoting the concept of "quality education" while at the same time playing with the universal rules on which quality education is based, they have raised doubts, on the part of many Amerindian parents, about the seriousness of local Amerindian education. As Richard King writes (about a local control experiment which turned sour in a Canadian Amerindian rural community):

Although the well-intended and hard-working group who planned and implemented that first year [of local control] were convinced that "at least we can do no worse" [than the federal Government], the resulting school and community schisms might well be considered "worse" to the extent that they provided generally negative attitudes and expectations for future operations.<sup>60</sup>

Negative reactions towards local schooling on the part of the Amerindian parents in rural reserves has become a frequent phenomenon in the last few years. The following opinions about the quality of local education in the Montagnais reserves are extracted from "Montagnaises de Parole: Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat" <sup>61</sup>. The authors surveyed 350 Montagnais women from the nine Montagnais communities in 1991 and discussed various aspects (including schooling) of modern-day life on the reserves:

-Some situations are worrying. The student who registers at a school outside the reserve is told that he cannot be enrolled in the grade he should be enrolled in, because he is one year behind the white students in all subjects. -The teachers should be extremely well-trained in order to teach our children. -I think that the Native teachers do not have enough authority. -The Native teachers should have good training. -I don't trust local schooling. -I think that local control was too hastily implemented. It is more about money than about the teaching of our children. - Personally, I trust the white teachers more. -We have tried to have our children admitted elsewhere, but we were refused because they were seen to be backward. <sup>62</sup> [Author's translation.]

As one can see, not every Montagnais mother on the reserves is currently satisfied with the education her child receives. "Flexible" Amerindian teacher-training programmes are mainly to be blamed for this, because they have cast doubt on the initial preparation of every Amerindian teacher (and by extension, on Amerindian schools), good or bad. And Amerindian rural reserve parents are worried because they are well aware that only one

teacher of poor quality in a single rural school can have, as D.T. Reeves wrote in 1987, "catastrophic"<sup>63</sup> effects on the community, given the small size of the local reserve schools (between 100 and 375 students). Furthermore the Montagnais mothers are no exception. Exactly the same situation can be found in other rural non-Montagnais reserves, so much so that an Algonquin (Québec) school official felt the urge in 1996 to publicly beg the parents to stop criticizing their local school in an article published in 1996 in "The Journal of the First Nations Education Council":

So parents, your support is crucial. [...] Talk negatively about the school your child attends and the teachers in it, and the difficulties that the child faces may become insurmountable.<sup>64</sup>

These negative trends have resulted in a growing number of parents in the various Québec rural reserves asking their respective Band Council to have their child removed from the local school and transferred to a provincial one, writing in their letters to the Band Council that the "local school is not a status-enhancing educational institution", "there is no student follow-up on the part of the teachers", "the students make little or no progress", and that "the courses are not validated by the Québec Ministry of Education". In sum, they say, and even write, that they are deeply dissatisfied with the quality of the local education. Such a letter can be seen in Appendix 2. They have become only too common in the past few years.

Surely, this is not at all the turn of events that the authors of "Indian Control of Indian Education" had envisioned, but rather its very opposite. Indian control was seen by the



National Indian Brotherhood in 1972 as the only way to raise the educational achievement of Amerindian students throughout the country and thus put an end to widespread welfare dependency and poverty. But in the mid 1980s, it became apparent that contrary to what had been expected, little or no improvements were being observed<sup>65</sup> in the Band-controlled reserve schools, even where local control had been granted for an extended period of time (i.e. more than ten years).

Explanations were provided then in order to explain this situation. There had not been sufficient funding; the local control was merely limited to the local management of federal policies<sup>66</sup>, or the reserve schools had remained under some form of jurisdiction of federal or provincial agencies<sup>67</sup>. By 1987, some authors had come to the rather depressing conclusion that at least, the Amerindians had acquired the right to make their own mistakes in the educational field, a right which they had been denied until then<sup>68</sup>.

More than ten years have passed since these initial criticisms, and the recent Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has just reported the very same educational problems observed by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972: namely that the majority of Amerindian students do not finish high school<sup>69</sup>, and that most of those who enter college or university drop out<sup>70</sup>.

Using the example of Betsiamites, this research will argue in chapter six (The dimensions of schooling in Betsiamites) that under-funding and partial control can be dismissed as valid explanations for the persistence of this phenomenon in this particular case. Betsiamites, like most- if not all- other rural reserves in Québec, has been provided both



with room to manoeuvre at the administrative level and the necessary resources for the efficient operation of its schools. Which leaves us with "the right to make their own mistakes". Clearly, this last position can be considered at best, as a social or political cul-de-sac or an admission of public (i.e. State) helplessness. A government which advocates a *laissez-faire* policy in such a situation may justifiably be considered immoral.

In fact, as suggested here, these three explanations miss the point. The federal Government and the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972 made two fundamental errors. Firstly, they both underestimated the strength of an enemy which knows no race or culture, i.e. poverty. Deeply-rooted poverty is the common denominator of all rural Amerindian reserves and it is responsible for their most common and enduring social problems such as family dislocation, physical violence, sexual abuse, suicide and alcohol and drug abuse<sup>71</sup>. In this sense, these problems are not Amerindian problems, but rather human problems. And as far as educating the poor is concerned, evidence from Statistics Canada has demonstrated that the poorest Canadian children are "more than three times as likely as their richest peers to be enrolled in remedial classes, half as likely to be placed in gifted programs, and twice as likely as all children to repeat a grade" <sup>72</sup>.

Secondly, the federal Government and the National Indian Brotherhood have allowed the whole process of the transfer of powers, which include the elaboration of Amerindian educational policies, the creation of teacher-training programmes and the (non-)establishment of follow-up procedures to be pervaded by a spirit of welfarism and (exactly like Black Americans in the United States) by "playing to white guilt over past [Amerindian] victimization"<sup>73</sup>. In substance, the whole Canadian Amerindian educational

process has been developed since 1972 in the fundamental ideological belief on both sides that the Amerindian adult learner was a victim entitled to redress, which should take the shape of flexible entry requirements to college and universities, and various forms of support throughout his/her academic programme. At the educational level, affirmative action has failed for Black Americans in the United States <sup>7475</sup>, and positive discrimination has also failed in Canada for Amerindians <sup>76</sup>.

And yet, the federal Government and the Assembly of First Nations (formerly National Indian Brotherhood) are still so obsessed with this idea that, analysing in 1996 the very same educational situation their predecessors had analysed in 1972, they could only come up with the very same solution (i.e affirmative action), even though it had already proved fruitless:

Thomas Sowell suggests the following as an explanation for behaviours in cross-cultural settings which are obviously both irrational and unproductive:

Race taps the depths of man's irrationality as few things can. In this area, intelligent and knowledgeable men say and do things whose illogic and self-defeating consequences would be apparent to them in any other aspect of life. There are no experts in this field, and those who imagine that they have found The Truth are the most untrustworthy guides of all.<sup>77</sup>

American affirmative action and Canadian positive discrimination programmes have the

same logic, and pushed to their limits, this logic not only prevails in the field of flexible entry requirements and college and university programmes, but also extends to the workplace, as can be seen in the two following examples:

hiring African-American or Hispanic instructors [in American universities] who have not quite finished their dissertations- if they are provided appropriate support- gives them a foot in the door.<sup>78</sup>

[The federal Government should] protect the experienced but unqualified workers [in the Canadian Amerindian schools].<sup>79</sup>

Academics actively involved in the field of Canadian Amerindian education are also not immune to such misconceptions. For instance, Vera J. Kirkness- who participated to the writing of "Indian Control of Indian Education"- is still today demanding more research into Amerindian learning style (even though that area too has proved unproductive<sup>80</sup>), the production of more adapted school materials and, of course, more teacher-training (and administrators) programmes<sup>81</sup>. This does not prevent Ms Kirkness from devoting nearly fifty pages- in the same book- to the "developments" (e.g. teacher-training programmes, curriculum, materials) in Amerindian education which have transpired in the various Canadian provinces since 1972<sup>82</sup>.

Besides, "flexible training opportunities" (in colleges attended by Amerindian students) already exist, and they have also raised some concern in Québec's rural reserves. Indeed, in two reports on meetings held at one of those university-based support centres

for Amerindian university students, the "special support" that Amerindian students require to "stay the course" is mentioned twice in the discussions. In one of the meetings, one of the university professors explained to the other participants (most of whom were representatives from reserves) that this support was especially aimed at "making the B.A. and the M.A. Amerindian students feel secure"<sup>83</sup>. In the other report, one participant at the meeting (an Amerindian representative of a Montagnais reserve on the Lower North Shore) said that she had the feeling that many Amerindian students "had taken advantage of this system, without real necessity, [and that] if they worked harder and attended their courses, they would not need it in the first place". The Centre's director answered that "we have to show some understanding, because many of those students have been accepted at the university level without meeting entry requirements in the first place". An Attikamekw representative retorted that in his opinion, "the students who need this additional help should pay for it themselves, since they should have been aware that registering in any given course entailed some responsibilities"<sup>84</sup>.

In 1995, another "special support centre" (in a junior college this time) was delighted to announce in its bulletin that the academic achievement of the college's Amerindian students had tremendously improved during the previous two years. The "support centre" attributed this success to the fact that the college had denied entry to Amerindian students who did not meet its requirements and that the remaining students had attended their courses<sup>85</sup>. Reading this, one may be inclined to think that if these support centres were run by Amerindians, the paternalism they have traditionally displayed (e.g. support centre staff often fill out themselves some of the Amerindian

students' courses selection sheets at the beginning of the year, gross errors being not uncommon) would probably cease, and that maybe their very existence would be put at risk.

The long-term negative effect of such educational principles and policies has been fourfold in Québec's rural Amerindian reserves. Firstly, as seen above, Amerindian parents have grown very suspicious of Amerindian teacher-training programmes and of Amerindian schools in general. Secondly, recently graduated Amerindian students from Québec's rural reserves who were enrolled in teacher-training programmes have generally carefully avoided the colleges and universities' "support centres" that were specifically intended for them and express pride that they had registered in "mainstream courses" and were never given any form of compensatory support from these centres. (This issue demonstrates that the official Canadian and Amerindian discourse on post-secondary education is lagging behind the daily reality of Québec's rural reserves, wherein "flexibility" in colleges and universities is a principle which is almost unequivocally and very strongly condemned). The third result is concerned with the future itself of the issue of "local control of education". Rural reserve parents had been promised in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood that "local control" would mean "quality education". As this promise has not yet been fulfilled, and as parents are becoming impatient, the Assembly of First Nations (formerly the National Indian Brotherhood) is today asking for "self-government", even though comparative research has clearly demonstrated that this goal is utopian:

Independent of the issue of ownership of natural resources, aboriginal

governments do not seem to be able to set up viable economic systems. In this regard, their situation is similar to that of any micro-state. In all the cases we have observed, without exception, the aboriginal peoples remain dependent on government grants, and therefore, their autonomy can only be partial.<sup>86</sup>

The fourth long-term result as regards the adoption of "flexible" educational and administrative policies in Canadian rural reserves and mainstream universities and colleges in the 1970s has been the appointment of numerous Amerindian administrators to positions for which they lacked credentials. In some cases, individual qualities made up for the lack of qualifications and/or experience, but in other cases, these appointments led to disastrous results. Once again, the long-term consequences for the rural community are far from negligible; a growing distrust by the local population of the very process of local control (of education, health, social services), coupled with painful stress (due to widespread criticism, frequent "evaluations" from the Band Council, an individual sidetracked or even dismissed) experienced by the persons trapped in such positions, all of which is divisive as far as small rural communities are concerned.

When the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples published its 4,000- page report in November 1996 (almost thirty years after the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education"), self-government, this time, was pinpointed by the Amerindian leaders as the only way to fight "generalized poverty, school failure, and health and housing problems"<sup>87</sup>. But a new ingredient had been added to this social remedy, which complicated matters; threats of massive outbreak of violence throughout the country

if the demands were not met<sup>88</sup>.

Actually, one of the books published by the Royal Commission even began with this threat:

Aboriginal people have made it clear, in words and deeds, that they will no longer sit quietly by, waiting for their grievances to be heard and their rights restored. Despite their long history of peacefulness, some leaders fear that violence is in the wind.<sup>89</sup>

When such threats are made, it is because logical arguments have been exhausted and policies have failed. Why then cling to the same ideological principles? With regard to Amerindian education, positive discrimination has failed miserably in post-secondary education. The present chapter argues that deeply-rooted poverty in Amerindian rural reserves can be partly blamed for this. Nevertheless numerous efforts which have been directed for the last thirty years to correct the shortcomings of the Amerindian adult learner should have been directed to implementing efficient elementary and secondary schooling in the rural reserves. It may very well be that positive discrimination aimed at Amerindian students during this period has not tried to "cultivate the most fertile land, but to make the desert bloom"<sup>90</sup>. Shelby Steele, one of the most articulate adversaries of affirmative action in the United States (who is Black himself), points out that clinging to such public programmes fosters confusion and distracts attention from the real needs of Black Americans:



give disadvantaged [Black] children a better shot at development- better elementary schools [...] no effort is made to prepare Blacks for higher education and then when they are admitted- on the basis of preferences- they can't keep up. Seventy-two percent of the Black students who go to college drop out. What purposes do preferences serve if this is the result ?<sup>91</sup>

The real challenges as far as Amerindian education was concerned in 1972 were the problems of the infant learner, not those of the adult learner. By applying all the energy at the wrong place for ideological reasons, the National Indian Brotherhood and the federal Government have postponed the real improvements which local control could have yielded. And still trapped in this ill-informed ideology thirty years later, the two sides, analysing the same problems, come up with the same solution yet again. Surely, the disastrous effects of fostering "flexible" entry requirements and programmes for Amerindian students are obvious. One Amerindian teacher in a Centre for Amerindian adult education complained a few years ago that the college's Amerindian students thought he was incompetent:

One thing I've noticed since I've been working with adults is that, because the students are also exposed to Non-Native instructors, is that sometimes just because I'm Indian they think I'm not competent as an instructor... I guess they're so conditioned to thinking that white instructors know the curriculum.<sup>92</sup>

This particular teacher ascribed this situation to internalized "cultural self-hatred". We believe that it is rather, to a great extent, the sad legacy of positive discrimination programmes.

At least during those thirty-five years (1972-1997) all has not been lost. While the Assembly of First Nations and the federal Government are still focusing on the various aspects of flexibility, many Québec rural reserves, in an effort to respond to impatient Amerindian parents' questions, are taking the matters into their own hands and are now slowly dismantling the colleges and universities' special programmes attended by French-speaking (as second or first language) rural reserve Amerindians. This questions the level of representativity of the document "Indian Control of Indian Education" and that of the recent report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

It appears that Canadian Amerindian leaders and the federal Government are at present in a cul-de-sac when it comes to the issue of Amerindians' educational achievement. It is problematic for both parties because the success rates of the reserve Amerindian students and of those enrolled in higher education have not improved as they were expected to after the transfer of responsibilities from the federal Government to the Amerindian Bands. In 1972, the American affirmative action movement had strongly influenced Canadian Amerindian leaders as far as admissions standards to higher education for disadvantaged minority students were concerned. However, time has proven the advocates of affirmative action wrong in the United States, and the same has happened in Canada with regard to Amerindians. While the Americans are currently acknowledging that they may have been wrong in the 1960s and 70s and have acted

acted accordingly, Canadian Amerindian leaders and the federal Government both refuse to consider that maybe they were mistaken when they swiftly implemented "special" university programmes for Amerindian students in the 1970s. The "solution" to the problems of Canadian Amerindian education in 1972 was "local control" and "flexible entry requirements" to higher education; the solution in 1996 remains (i.e. in the recent Report from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples) "local control" and "flexible entry requirements", *plus* "self-government".

However, at the rural reserve level, the process of schooling has been adversely affected with regard to the relations between the local school and parents by "special programmes" and "flexible entry requirements" for prospective Amerindian teachers because the student success rates have simply not improved. As for "self-government", no one in the rural reserves seriously believes that this is conceivable in the near future, given the reserves' welfare dependency rates- as a former Betsiamites Chief said to Radio-Canada during an interview in 1994<sup>93</sup>. The current assessment of the educational situation on the reserves by Montagnais parents in Québec has been quite harsh (as seen above). Furthermore 1997 is quite different from 1972; while the rural reserves' Amerindian parents remained rather passive after the 1972 publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education", this time they have demonstrated a general aversion to diluted academic standards and their discontent is expressed so clearly and loudly these days that their local leaders have not hesitated to promote educational policies which do not reflect the official Amerindian educational ideology of the Assembly of First Nations and its federal Government allies and have even succeeded in changing university programmes and entry requirements. In this sense, it can be said that the

Montagnais parents are beginning to take real control, at last, of the education of their children, *despite* their national leaders, both white and Amerindian.

The philosophical foundation upon which educational policies aimed at Canadian Amerindian students at every educational level have rested for the last thirty years has allowed these students to have *access* to higher education, but has done very little indeed to increase their success rates once they get there and has in no way helped to alleviate widespread poverty and welfare dependence within the reserves. The fact that the mass of Amerindian students attending elementary and secondary reserve schools today are still not being offered the kind of preparation which they need in order to have the chance to graduate one day from a post-secondary educational institution can be at least partly traced back to the political decision taken by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972 to aggressively promote affirmative action policies.

This decision was understandable, given the political context of the 1970s, but what is more difficult now is to understand why the current national Amerindian leaders and the federal Government are still advocating these policies in 1997, despite their obvious failure. The other chapters will help clarify (and thus, one hopes, provide some answers to this question) the complex social, economic and political situation which has been created over the years by the Welfare state and the Indian Act within the Canadian Amerindian reserves and which had- and still has- a tremendous impact on their schooling process.

In this sense, the reserve of Betsiamites, which has gone through every "classic" stage

of evolution experienced by Canadian reserves over the last century (e.g. the settling process, the "Indian agents", the church-controlled schools, "local control" of education, the teaching of the mother-tongue at school, an endemic and very high unemployment rate, the aggravation of "social problems" and the setting up of "self-government") will help to illustrate the effects at the micro-level of economic and educational policies adopted at the national level by Amerindian leaders and the federal Government. The provinces, let us note, have virtually nothing to say about Indian affairs in Canada.

Such an illustration will be a vital way of gaining a real understanding of the current difficult educational situation in rural reserves since there remains an important discrepancy between the presupposed virtues of proclaimed national policies and their long-term effects on reserve life (including schools). However before focusing on this one community, it is essential to first describe the way in which the field of study was approached, the perspectives from which the current researcher operated and his methods of investigation as a participant observer. This will be revealed in the next chapter.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Hawthorn, H.B. (ed.) (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens Contemporains du Canada: Besoins et Mesures d'Ordre Économique, Politique et Éducatif*, Ottawa; Direction des Affaires Indiennes. The Commission suggested that it would be preferable to integrate Amerindian children in provincial schools, because most reserve schools were failing their students (recommendation No. 30: page 10). The Department of Indian Affairs extended this proposal to the very concept of the reserve system and to the Indian Act.
2. Cf. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. II (1985) Edmonton; Hurtig Publishers: 1215.
3. Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.: 2.
4. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. II (1985) op. cit.: 1215.
5. Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.: 3.
6. Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) *First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles*, Toronto; Canadian Education Association: 15.
7. Usually, Canadian parents enjoy rights such as the right to refuse to have their child repeat a year or registered in special education, the right to choose the school they wish their child to attend and the right to determine themselves the school policy of their local school. However, it must be understood that the exercise of these rights may often be limited by factors such as distance or availability of human or material resources. Nevertheless, it appears that in the province of Québec for instance, parents will exercise greater forms of direct control over their schools in the future, as the provincial government has significantly reduced since 1995, the number of school principals (while there was one for each school in the past, it is common to have a principal being responsible for three different elementary schools now). As for what the National Indian Brotherhood really meant by demanding the same rights as other Canadian parents, it was never made clear in the document "Indian Control of Indian Education" or in any subsequent official document produced by the organization.
8. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (1985) op. cit.: 1214.
9. Brown, D. (1991) (first published in 1970) *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, London; Vintage.
10. Cf. Edmunds, R.D. (1995) "Native Americans, New voices: American Indian History", 1895-1995", in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3, June 1995: 723-4. [Edmunds estimates that the book "Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee" was not "very good history", but explains its tremendous success by the "responsive chord" that it struck with the public "during these years" (page 724).]
11. Ibid.: 724.
12. Cf. *Fraternité des Indiens du Canada* (1972) *La Maîtrise Indienne de l'Éducation Indienne*, Ottawa; Fraternité des Indiens du Canada: page III.
13. For instance, the provincial Québec Amerindian Association collapsed a few years after its foundation at the beginning of the 1970s, due mostly to the Crees' decision to negotiate a separate agreement (the James Bay Agreement) with the provincial government.

14. Three of these documents had been prepared by the Department of Indian Affairs (two of them being short speeches by Jean Chrétien in June and August 1972), one was a document released by the National Indian Brotherhood in preparation of a meeting, and seven had been prepared by representatives of provincial Amerindian associations (three by Alberta, three by Saskatchewan, one by Manitoba, and none by New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, or Québec) (Cf. "La Maîtrise Indienne de l'Éducation Indienne": pages 37-8). The rest was extracted from the body of literature on Amerindian education in Canada and in the United States (Cf. Ibid.: 38-9) The author of one of the latter documents (a Phd thesis about Amerindian students' field dependence) was, according to the president of the National Indian Brotherhood himself, extremely active (Cf. Ibid.: page VI) during the whole process which led to the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education".

15. Cf. *Fraternité des Indiens du Canada* (1972) op. cit.: page VI.

16. Cf. Battiste, M. & Barman, J. (eds) (1995) *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, Vancouver; UBC Press.

17. Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) op. cit.: foreword.

18. Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.: 3.

19. Canadian Amerindians have a special legal status, by virtue of the "Indian Act", which was defined in the following way by a Western Canada Amerindian organization: "[The Amerindians] enjoy all the usual rights of citizenship and additional native rights. [This concept] has been described as 'Citizenship Plus'". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, (1985) op. cit.: 1219.

20. Cf. Astin, A.W. (1994) "Educational equity and the problem of assessment", in Justiz, M. et al. (1994) *Minorities in Higher Education*, Phoenix; Oryx Press: 51.

21. Cf. Major, L.E. (1997) "A foot in the door: While access to university is widening, some groups are still under-represented", in *The Guardian Higher Education*, June 10, 1997: I.

22. Cf. Astin, A.W. (1994) op. cit.: 51.

23. Cf. Thernstrom, A. & Thernstrom, S. (1997) "Caught in the skills gap?: Why has the progress of young black Americans gone into reverse?", in *The Times Literary Supplement*, No 4914, June 6, 1997: 16.

24. Cf. Hodges, L. (1995) "Minorities in US still lag behind", in *The Times Higher Education*, June 2, 1995: 8.; Steele, S. (1990) "Booker T. Washington was right", in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No 4, Fall 1990: 25.; D'Souza, D. (1995) "The failure of 'cruel compassion'", in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 15, 1995: B3.; Thernstrom, A. & Thernstrom, S. (1997) "Caught in the skills gap: Why has the progress of young black Americans gone into reverse?", in *The Times Literary Supplement*, No. 4914, June 6, 1997: 15-6.

25. Cf. Washington, V. & Harvey, W. (1989) *Affirmative Rhetoric, Negative Action*, Washington, D.C.; The George Washington University: 9.

26. Ibid.: 8.

27. Cf. Steele, S. (1990) "Booker T. Washington was right", in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Fall 1990: 23.

28. Cf. D'Souza, D. (1995) "The failure of 'cruel compassion'", in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 15, 1995: B3

29.Cf. Fraternité des Indiens du Canada (1972) op. cit.: 11. ["Compte tenu de tous les désavantages subis par les Indiens dans le domaine de l'éducation..."] (page 11).

30.Justiz, M. & Kameen, M. (1994) "Assessment in higher education and the preparation of minority teachers", in Justiz, M. et al. (1994) *Minorities in Higher Education*, Phoenix; Oryx Press: 287.

31.Cf. Ibid.: 289.

32.Cf. Ibid.: 287.

33.Cf. Ibid.: 291.

34.Cf. Ibid.: 292.

35.Cf. D'Souza, D. (1995) "The failure of 'cruel compassion'" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 15, 1995: B3.; Thernstrom, A. & Thernstrom, S. (1997) "Caught in the skills gap: Why has the progress of young black Americans gone into reverse ?", in *The Times Literary Supplement*, June 6, 1997, No 4914: 16.

36.Cf. D'Souza, D. (1995) "The failure of cruel compassion", op. cit.: B3.

37.Cf. Ibid. D'Souza write that the SAT tends to "overpredict the performance of African Americans in college".

38.Cf. Ibid.

39.Cf. Thernstrom, A. & Thernstrom, S. (1997) "Caught in the skills gap: Why has the progress of young black Americans gone into reverse ?", op. cit.: 16.

40.Cf. Astin, A.W. (1994) "Educational equity and the problem of assessment", in Justiz, M. et al. (1994) op. cit.: 51.

41.Cf. Major, L.E. (1997) "A foot in the door", in *The Guardian Higher Education*, June 10, 1997: I.

42.Cf. Adler, M.N. (1995) "Affirmative action under attack", in *Academe*, Vol. 81, March-April 1995: 107.; Jaschik, S. (1995) "Affirmative action under fire", in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 41, March 10, 1995: A22-23.; Tramier, S. (1995) "Haro sur la discrimination positive", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal) 30 Mai 1995: A1.

43.Cf. Glassman, J.K. (1997) "Toward a color-blind America", in *International Herald Tribune*, June 4, 1997: 8.

44.Cf. Steele, S. (1990) "Booker T. Washington was right", in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Fall 1990: 25.; Thernstrom, A. & Thernstrom, S. (1997) "Caught in the skills gap.", op. cit.: 16.; D'Souza, D. (1995) "The failure of cruel compassion.", op. cit: B3.

45.Cf. Glassman, J.K. (1997) "Toward a color-blind America", op. cit.: 8.

46.Cf. Hodges, L. (1995) "Minorities in US still lag behind", in *The Times Higher Education*, June 2, 1995: 8.

47.Cf. Justiz, M. & Kameen, M. (1994) op. cit.: 290.



48.Cf. Kidwell, C.S. (1994) "Higher education issues in Native American communities", in Justiz, M. et al. (1994) op. cit.: 251.

49.Cf. Fraternité des Indiens du Canada (1972) *La Maîtrise Indienne de l'Éducation Indienne*, Ottawa; Fraternité des Indiens du Canada: 21.

50.Fraternité des Indiens du Canada (1972) *La Maîtrise Indienne de l'Éducation Indienne*, Ottawa; Fraternité des Indiens du Canada. ([Nous voulons] améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement. (page 8); [Nous avons besoin] de programmes d'études secondaires souples. (page 9); Les conditions rigides actuelles d'admission aux universités et aux collèges devraient être adaptées. (page 11); [Le gouvernement fédéral devrait] assouplir les exigences pédagogiques [pour les Amérindiens dans les collèges et universités] (page 13); [Nous avons besoin] d'améliorer l'enseignement donné aux enfants indiens. (page 16); [Le gouvernement fédéral doit offrir aux éventuels enseignants amérindiens] une organisation souple [et] des programmes spéciaux de formation. (page 16); [Les écoles amérindiennes devraient] embaucher les candidats les mieux qualifiés. (page 27).)

51.*The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. II (1985) op. cit.: 1214.

52.Sowell, T. (1986) *Education: Assumptions Versus History*, Stanford, Cal.; Hoover Institution Press: 125.

53.Interview conducted on 3rd May 1994, in Baie-Comeau, Québec.

54.It is because of such situations that affirmative action programmes are currently being dismantled in the United States. Because there was a widespread perception in the American population that many minority students who were not meeting the standards were being admitted to universities and because more and more white students who had been denied entry to universities were suing these institutions, the Government has been submitted during the last few years to growing pressure to "stop the use of racial preferences on campuses". Cf. Sanchez, R. & Pressley, S.A. (1997) "Bans on racial preferences cut minority admissions", in *International Herald Tribune*, 20 May 1997: 1; 6.; But more fundamentally yet, democratic societies find it hard to accept that individuals or groups are being treated preferentially. Discrimination, either positive or negative, remains discrimination. Cf. Graubard, S.R. (1995) "Preface", in *Daedalus*, Winter 1995: XVIII". Other authors argue that affirmative action leads to discrimination, and thus has to be abandoned, "since a multiracial society can survive only if fair rules are applied neutrally to all citizens". Cf. D'Souza, D. (1995) "The failure of 'cruel compassion'", in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 15, 1995: B3.

55.Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation (1982) *L'Activité Pédagogique: Pratiques Actuelles et Avenues de Renouveau, Rapport 1981-1982, Tome 2*, Québec; Éditeur officiel: ("À cette fin, tout programme visant à attirer, auprès des groupes d'élèves les plus démunis, les professeurs les plus habiles, les plus expérimentés et les plus dévoués doit être favorisé. Si les commissions scolaires veillent à affecter les meilleurs enseignants aux plus démunis, leurs efforts produiront les effets escomptés". Page 17)

56.Delors, J. et al. (1996) *Learning: The Treasure Within*, Paris; UNESCO: 146-7.

57.Rapport de la Commission Royale d'Enquête de l'Enseignement dans la Province de Québec: Tome II (1965), Québec; Gouvernement du Québec: 87. ("il importe surtout de ne pas perdre de vue que c'est la qualité de l'enseignement élémentaire qui conditionne les rendements des enseignements subséquents. [...] Il n'y a rien de solide à construire sur des bases fragiles. Le développement de l'écolier est entravé pour la vie si l'école élémentaire ne sait donner une formation de bonne qualité.")

58.Cf. Barman, J. et al. (eds) (1986) *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 1: The Legacy*, Vancouver; UBC Press.

59.Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People, Nation to Nation: Highlights from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and Services: 86-7.

60.King, R. (1987) "Role shock in local community control of Indian education", in Barman, J. et al. (eds) (1986) op. cit.: 59.

61.Conseil des Attikamekw et des Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole: Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM.

62.Ibid.: 84-5. (-Il y a des situations qui sont inquiétantes. L'élève qui s'inscrit dans une école en dehors de la réserve, on lui répond qu'il ne peut pas être inscrit au même niveau académique, parce qu'il accuse un an de retard.; -Il faudrait que les professeurs soient vraiment très instruits pour pouvoir enseigner à nos enfants.; -Je trouve que les professeurs autochtones n'ont pas d'autorité; Que les profs autochtones aient une bonne formation en enseignement.; -Je crois que la prise en charge s'est faite trop hâtivement. C'est plus une question d'argent qui prime que l'éducation des enfants.; -Pour ma part, je fais plus confiance aux enseignants de race blanche.; -Nous avons essayé de faire admettre nos enfants à l'extérieur, ils ont été refusés parce qu'ils accusaient un retard trop grand dans le programme.)

63.Cf. Reeves, D.T. (unp.) (1987) *Policymaking for Primary and Secondary Schooling in Rural Areas of Australia and England: A Comparative Study of Resistance to Change*, Phd Thesis, London; University of London Institute of Education: 33-8.

64.McBride, K. (1996) "Kiwetin education and parental support", in *The Journal of the First Nations Education Council*, September 1996: 5.

65.Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *MacPherson Report on Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future*, Ottawa; Department of Indian Affairs. [The federal Government funded a major study of Indian education throughout Canada and conducted by the Amerindians themselves in the mid-1980s. "The National Review", MacPherson writes, "found a widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of Indian education. [...] Only 20% of the first Nations students complete grade twelve as opposed to a national average of 70%". Page 4.]

66.MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.: 3-4.

67.Cf. Barman, J. et al. (eds) (1987) *Indian Education in Canada, Volume 2: The Challenge*, Vancouver; UBC Press: 17.

68.King, R. (1987) "Role shock in local community control", in Barman, J. et al. (eds) (1987) op. cit.: 62.

69.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) op. cit.: 82.

70.Cf. Ibid.: 86.

71.Cf. Petawabano, B.H. et al. (1994) *Mental Health and Aboriginal People of Québec*, Montreal; Gaëtan Morin Éditeur: 30-63.; French sociologists and teachers' unions in the most deprived urban areas of Paris ascribe the generalised educational underachievement and the growing violence in those neighbourhoods to their socioeconomic condition. One teacher even said that the "lycées" in those areas had literally become urban "reserves" (thus referring, ironically, to Amerindians). Cf. "Les violences se multiplient dans les écoles des quartiers

défavorisés", in *Le Monde*, 24 Mai 1997: 14.; Three days earlier, representatives of some of the most deprived areas of South Africa were explaining to the journalists that the severe violence often observed in those areas was linked to poverty. Cf. *Le Monde*, 21 Mai 1997.

72.Cf. Philp, M. (1997) "Poor already behind by time they reach school", in *The Globe and Mail*, April 29, 1997: A7.

73.Steele, S. (1990) op.cit.: 24.

74.Cf. Sanchez, R. & Pressley, S.A. (1997) op. cit.: 1; 6.; Two British authors have also written, regarding racial inequality in Great Britain, that the use of law could do little to eradicate discrimination in the workplace: "This is not to deny the need for legislation, which remains essential as a pressure upon those activated by racial animus, or who will not act without compulsion to remove unnecessary barriers to the fair evaluation of the competence of black workers.[...] But it cannot by itself bring about any significant reduction of racial inequality." Lustgarten, L. & Edwards, J. (1992) "Racial inequality and the limits of law", in Braham, P. et al. (1992) *Racism and Antiracism: Inequalities, Opportunities and Policies*, London; Sage: 278.

75.Success rates for Black and Hispanic students in the United States were "stagnant or falling" in 1995, even after three decades of aggressive affirmative action programmes. Cf. Hodges, L. (1995) "Minorities in US still lag behind", in *The Times Higher Education*, No. 1178, June 2, 1995: 8. One author even suggests that the focus on cultural factors regarding educational underachievement during the last three decades may have done nothing to provide equal chances for educational achievement by the working classes (or the poor in general): "May it not be the case that sexual, racial, and ethnic differences have become all the more powerful as divisive factors because the acceptance of the culturalist interpretation as valid has helped to direct energies and action away from what are inherently social inequalities and hence shared social causes as well?" (Hutmacher, W. (1987) "Cultural issues in educational policies: A retrospect", in Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) (1987) *Multicultural Education*, Paris; OECD: 348.). In any case, Blacks in the United States, in other words those who were specifically targeted by the affirmative action policies, "continue to be severely disadvantaged relative to white students in terms of persistence rates, academic achievement levels, enrolment in advanced degree programs and overall psychosocial adjustments" (Cf. Allen, W.R. & Haniff, N.Z. (1989) "Determining Black student academic performance in U.S. higher education", in Yogev, A. & Tomlinson, S. (eds.) (1989) *International Perspectives on Education and Society: Affirmative Action and Positive Policies in the Education of Ethnic Minorities*, London; Jai Press: 115-6.) This has done nothing to silence the critics of affirmative action in higher education in the United States, some of whom are Black themselves, such as Laurence Thomas. And they often raise fundamental philosophical issues regarding the ideology underlying affirmative action: "I do not advocate the representation of given viewpoints or the position that the ethnic and gender composition of faculty members should be proportional to their numbers in society. The former is absurd because it is a mistake to insist that points of view are either gender- or color- coded. The latter is absurd because it would actually entail getting rid of some faculty, since the percentage of Jews in the academy far exceeds their percentage in the population. If one day this should come to be true of Blacks or Hispanics, they in turn would be fair game". Thomas, L. (1993) "What good am I", in Cahn, S.M. (ed.) (1993) *Affirmative Action and the University: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Philadelphia; Temple University Press: 130. Critics of preferential treatment have also expressed other concerns, namely that this policy has led in American higher education circles to "diversity of appearances", while "diversity of thought" was openly discouraged (Hartle, A., Ibid.: 133), that the selection of the groups for preferential treatment was arbitrary (Simon, R.L., Ibid.: 66-7; Kekes, J., Ibid.: 151) and should therefore have also included other minorities who are or have been previously the object of discrimination, such as the Irish, the Jews, the

urban and rural poor, etc., and that it led people to believe that some appointments- often those of women- was tainted by unjustified favouritism (Steele, S., in Francis, L.P., *Ibid.*: 33-4.), thus entrenching other unjust stereotypes. In short, as was stated earlier, it is clear today that these programmes are under very serious attack in the United States and that they are being dismantled during the second term of a "liberal" American President. Indeed, although President Clinton "passionately defend[s] affirmative action as a way to overcome America's racial and ethnic divisions", the *New York Times* wrote, even American civil rights leaders seem to believe that the President's support for affirmative action will amount to little in this "era that has seen a strong backlash against racial preference programs". (Cf. Mitchell, A. (1997) "Defending affirmative action, Clinton urges debate on race", in *The New York Times*, June 15, 1997: 1; 22.). Besides, the fact that the educational systems in Western countries are moving towards increasing output and productivity and raising the general standard of education because of globalization (in other words as they are moving towards greater utilitarianism) further weakens moral arguments such as "the need for diversity" or the "rooting out of discrimination" on which affirmative action policies in higher education were built.

76. Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *op. cit.*: 82; 86.; And the situation is also the same in the United States: "One study showed that 72.7 percent of Native American students in 79 colleges and universities left school before graduating, most after their first year. [Such statistics] dim the hope that most Native American students will be successful in higher education." Kidwell, C.S. (1994) "Higher education issues in Native American communities", in Justiz, M.J. et al. (eds) (1994) *Minorities in Higher Education*, Phoenix; Oryx Press: 239.

77. Sowell, T. (1986) *op. cit.*: 123.

78. Washington, V. & Harvey, W. (1989) *op. cit.*: 80.

79. *Fraternité des Indiens du Canada* (1972) *op. cit.*: 22. ("[Le gouvernement fédéral devrait] protéger les personnes d'expérience qui n'ont peut-être pas les qualifications académiques requises.")

80. "Despite more than 20 years' discussion of the importance of adapting instruction to Native students' visual learning style, research has not succeeded in demonstrating educational benefits. Certainly future research may do so, but the lack of progress in the broader area of aptitude-treatment interactions gives us little basis for optimism." Kleinfeld, J. & Nelson, P. (1991) "Adapting instruction to Native Americans' learning styles: An iconoclastic view", in *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 22, No. 2, June 1991: 280-1.

81. Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) *op. cit.*: 20.

82. Cf. *Ibid.*: 57-102.

83. *Compte Rendu de la Dixième Réunion du Conseil de Gestion du Centre d'Études Amérindiennes Tenue à l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi le 21 Novembre 1996* (unp.) (1996) Chicoutimi; UQAC: 6.

84. *Compte Rendu de la Sixième Réunion du Conseil Pédagogique du Centre d'Études Amérindiennes de l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi le 7 Octobre 1993* (unp.) (1993) Chicoutimi; UQAC: 5-6. [During this meeting, the participants discussed the case of an Amerindian student who had been given considerable "special support" during the previous academic year but had failed nevertheless when he had preferred to go to a hockey tournament rather than to sit his most important exam of the year.]

85.Cf. *L'Étape: Bulletin de Liaison du Cegep de Sept-Iles*, Décembre 1995, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1995) Sept-Îles (Québec); Cegep de Sept-Îles: 1.

86.Tremblay, J.F. & Forest, P.G. (1993) *Aboriginal Peoples and Self-Determination: A Few Aspects of Government Policy in Four Selected Countries*, Québec; Studies and Research Collection/ Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones: 59.; Guy B. Senese, for his part, writes that Amerindian sovereignty is an ambiguous notion since "[it] is strengthened only in the degree to which federal funds work to support tribal development efforts and social infrastructure". Cf. Senese, G.B. (1991) *Self-Determination and the Social Education of Native Americans*, New York; Praeger: 193.; J.J. Simard, in an extensive statistical study of Cree and Inuit in the province of Québec, has estimated that between 80% and 90% of the total income of the Inuit population in Nunavik consisted in provincial and federal transfer payments, and that the subsidised and heavily used Cree hunters' support programme was no more than an indirect social assistance programme, mostly for school drop-outs. Cf. Simard, J.J. et al. (1996) *Tendances Nordiques: Les Changements Sociaux 1970-1990 chez les Cris et les Inuit du Québec*, Québec; GETIC/Université Laval: 26; 33.; Léonard Paul, a former Betsiamites Chief, said during an interview in 1993 that given their generalized dependence on welfare, Amerindians were "by no means ready for self-determination". Cf. *Chasse ou Cash ? Le Dilemme Amérindien*, (1994) Société Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/CBC), a one-hour special program broadcast at the national level in 1994. UASHKAIKAN Library.

87.Cf. Cornellier, M. (1996) "Un ordre de gouvernement pour les Autochtones", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 22 Novembre 1996: 1.

88.Cf. Dion, J. (1996) "'Ceci est votre dernière chance', dit Mercredi" [Mr. Mercredi was then Chief of the First Nations Assembly], in *Le Devoir*, 22 Novembre 1996: 3; A two-page article, published by *The Gazette* (Montréal) on September 1995, and entitled "Indian Summer", had already discussed at length the issue of young Amerindians throughout the country who are increasingly turning to violence as a means of solving the problems they experience the reserves, thus inspired by the Oka (Québec) crisis in 1990, during which a provincial policeman was killed by Mohawk Warriors (by A. Derfel: B1-2).

89.Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) op. cit.: 3.

90.Cf. Sowell, T. (1986) op. cit.: 124.

91.Steele, S. (1990) op. cit.: 25.

92.Haig-Brown, C. (1995) "Taking control: Contradiction and First Nations adult education", in Battiste, M. & Barman, J. (eds) (1995) *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, Vancouver; UBC Press: 280.

93.Cf. Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/CBC) *Chasse ou Cash? Le Dilemme Amérindien*, 1994. UASHKAIKAN library. [A one-hour special on Betsiamites broadcast at the national level in 1994.]

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The aim of this chapter is to discuss openly and analyse "the rules of the game" <sup>1</sup> (as Blalock, who was then writing about educational research, has put it) in an effort to ensure maximum objectivity. As in most social studies, the goal is to describe a situation which corresponds to truth as much as possible, but as everyone knows, this "reality" can only represent- because complete objectivity is an illusion- an approximation; i.e. the relativist ontology admirably described by Guba and Lincoln:

"Truth" is defined as the best informed (amount and quality of information) and most sophisticated (power with which the information is understood and used) construction on which there is consensus.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the formulation of the research problem, the intellectual approach of this case study, the role of the researcher, the data collection methods, the issue of ethics and those of validity and reliability will be examined in the following pages in order to allow the reader to place himself or herself in relation to it.

#### FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Betsiamites is located on the St-Lawrence River's North Shore, two hundred fifty miles northeast of Québec city. It is a rural Montagnais reserve with a population of two thousand three hundred people situated between two non-native towns- Forestville with ten thousand inhabitants and Baie-Comeau with thirty thousand-, both forty miles away.

The people in Betsiamites rely heavily on government subsidies, and the unemployed, either welfare recipients or seasonal workers, constitute the majority. The community is run locally; the Band Council being responsible for the administration of health services, education, security (police), social services, welfare programmes, economic development, and housing programmes.

For a decade now, the population has been dissatisfied with the educational results of the two local schools. NUSSIM, the elementary school, has a student body of nearly four hundred, and on average, half of those who completed their sixth (and last) year of elementary schooling have to be enrolled in special education programmes when they transfer to high school. Nearly three hundred students are registered at UASHKAIKAN, the secondary school, but seldom more than a dozen students graduate from it every year on average. As a result, there are more and more parents every year who ask to have their child transferred to schools in Baie-Comeau or Québec City.

Many steps have been taken by the primary and secondary schools over the last ten years to alleviate this problem, but so far these efforts have yielded poor results, in terms of success rates. Two important Band-commissioned studies, and an ambitious

study (coupled with a six year teaching experiment) on the Montagnais language have also been conducted by experts in the field of local education during this same period, but without leading to any noticeable change.

This research intends to look at the school improvement efforts which have been undertaken by the community, but more fundamentally, it seeks a holistic understanding of the factors which *impede* the local authorities from improving its educational system, and attempts to shed some light on the basic educational problems experienced by Betsiamites and by other rural Amerindian reserves. Above all, it is hoped that it may provide some clues to the processes by which educational underachievement, poverty and inequality are reproduced in such settings.

However, no claim of total objectivity is made since the point of view adopted here clearly is the exploration of the "persistence of inequality in a society [the U.S.A. but the same applies for Canada] which stands firmly upon a foundation of equalitarian principle"<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, Zonabend aptly wrote about case studies wherein "the most rigorous objectivity is only possible through the most intrepid subjectivity"<sup>4</sup>.

As can be seen, the research looks beyond factual events and individuals' decisions and/or impacts (inside as well as outside the schools) in order to discover, through a distinctive point of view, the mechanisms or social engineering by which generalised educational underachievement in Betsiamites is "attained", as some sociologists have written, a thing which certainly contributes to perpetuate poverty and inequality.



## INTELLECTUAL APPROACH

This case study is about school improvement in a deprived rural area and focuses on a particular school, "l'école secondaire Uashkaikan", located in Betsiamites, one of the largest Amerindian reserves (and the largest of Québec's nine Montagnais reserves) in the province of Québec.

It draws upon the discipline of sociology to explore the relationships between Betsiamites's socioeconomic activities (including health and politics) and the reproduction of poverty and educational underachievement. Uashkaikan's school itself is very interesting intrinsically, but in the present case, the fundamental motivation is not to extend knowledge about this particular school, but rather to analyse the school's supportive role in advancing the understanding of the mechanisms of collective social failure perpetuated through educational underachievement. Therefore, it can be said that the present study is an instrumental case study using multiple methods of research strategies such as participant observation, interviews, surveys, literature review, document analysis, and secondary data analysis. The study definitely belongs in the field of qualitative research, which is described by Denzin and Lincoln in the following terms:

The word *qualitative* implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational

constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning.<sup>5</sup>

Since it can contribute to advancing the knowledge base of rural reserve education, the strong political implications of the present study are obvious, both at the local (Betsiamites) or at the national levels (Canada's federal Government), because, as Scott and Usher wrote:

Educational research then is always political, not least in terms of its effects. Whether deliberately (as in critical theory) or implicitly, research always has effects since it changes the amount and type of intellectual and cultural resources with which social actors operate. There is always a potential for control and regulation as well as potential for enhancing these resources and democratizing the distribution of knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

As for which changes this research could lead to (or the choice of status quo), the only group which could answer this question are the people of Betsiamites themselves. The federal Government could use some findings, but given its long-term attitude of total *laisser-faire*, it would be very surprising indeed if anything at all happened at that level.

The school under investigation represents an excellent example of a secondary school having to deal with a student body made up almost entirely of at-risk students. These students present the usual range of indices of vulnerability which is well-known: their

families live below the poverty line, they belong to a cultural and linguistic minority, there is a high rate of unmarried teen mothers, and many adults and youths alike are addicted to alcohol, drugs or to other substances.

By all standards, the school results are, year after year, catastrophic: only ten per cent of the students complete their high school education on average in the prescribed "normal" time (i.e. eleven years of schooling). The challenge of that particular school has thus been, for many years now, to improve its effectiveness, in accordance with parents' demands. One aim of this study is therefore the extension of knowledge regarding school improvement in deprived and culturally and linguistically distinct rural areas and, to a lesser degree, the search for a solution to a genuine problem; i.e. to propose ways to raise the standards of achievement in a secondary school in accordance with the programme of the local education authority (the school is entirely locally controlled by the Montagnais themselves). The principal concern of the study is to try to understand why the results have been far from satisfactory till today or, put another way, to see where and why there is resistance to schooling. It is indeed logical to assume that if the obstacles to school improvement strategies are not sufficiently assessed, most efforts will be made in vain, as seems to be the case now in Uashkaikan, and it is thought that to focus on one school is an effective way to understand, at the micro level, the processes of schooling and resistance to schooling in a deprived area.

The basic assumption which is made about this school is that there is something within its "culture" which hinders the academic achievement of its students. Research has already shown<sup>7</sup> that the recommendations of the advocates of the effective schooling

movement do not take into account the fact that schools have cultures of their own and that the possibilities of conflict between the innovators and those who resist change are multiple. The culture of the school is the set of interrelated characteristics which provides its unique "personality". This personality will be studied in many ways. First of all, its characteristics will be compared to those of schools which have been described, by American and British researchers, as "productive schools" (i.e. order and discipline, collaborative planning, clear goals and high expectations<sup>8</sup>). This assumption will be tested as the research advances and may be abandoned or changed.

Also omnipresent throughout the whole research will be the essential issue (as far as Canadian Amerindians' schooling is concerned) of local control. Indeed, Amerindians leaders all across Canada have continually stressed for the last thirty years that this was the solution to their political, social, economic as well as educational problems.

As for the historical context in Betsiamites, it will not be presented with the purpose of saying "this" or "that" was unfair or unjust. It will rather be an attempt to describe- in a disinterested manner albeit within a framework relying on a few major concepts such as acculturation, enculturation, and colonization- the historical, educational, social, religious, and economic changes which have affected the lives of the Betsiamites Amerindians since the creation of the reserve.

The aim in this particular section (chapter Four- The context of the study) will be to try to understand the nature of the historical processes which can contribute to explain today's situation, and this task is extremely important because very little can be done

when one does not succeed in finding the roots of a problem. As Jaimes pointed out:

The nature of the past interactions between Euroamericans and American Indians within what is now the U.S. [it is also certainly true for Canada] serves to define the facts of their present relationship.<sup>9</sup>

Equally important, when exploring the roots of a problem, is the careful avoidance of traps such as exaggeration, generalization, oversimplification, and romanticism, as is often the case with Amerindians, because they are both a minority and victim of much oppression.

In fact, in the past and even today, many authors have used those "traps" in order to convince their readers. For instance, exaggeration is a technique used by some authors—especially those identified as Indian "activists". Dunbar Ortiz, for example, assumes that because many Amerindians have been subjected to genocidal warfare in the past, they "still expect it in the future"<sup>10</sup>. This kind of statement is not only refuted by other authors, such as Underhill:

When one reads of thirty and forty millions spent in one year for the benefit of Indians [in 1953], the accusation of cruelty [on the part of the whites] is scarcely inappropriate. But an accusation of unwisdom ? That comes nearer the mark.<sup>11</sup>

but even by Dunbar Ortiz herself when she describes the events which took place at

Wounded Knee in 1973:

They [the descendants of Wounded Knee martyrs] were surrounded by US troops. The Indians at Wounded Knee were prepared to die and believed they would be required to do so. But unlike 1890, the whole world was watching the event on television.<sup>12</sup>

The absence of decisive military defeats is also sometimes used to emphasize the strength of contemporary Indian resistance movements, as demonstrated in the statement made by Marie Lego in 1970: "The United States has not shown me the terms of my surrender"<sup>13</sup>. This is, as White pointed out, somewhat beside the point:

If necessary, the Americans could have easily subdued these people [the Indians] during the nineteenth century, and the Indians knew it.<sup>14</sup>

And it is also pitiful to realize that Amerindians in North America are often presented in the popular culture- and even sometimes by scholars- as belonging to a monolithic bloc when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. Precontact Amerindians in North America belonged to hundreds of different tribes, of varied cultural, religious, social, and political traditions and customs-not to mention the geographical dimensions involved. Moreover, their languages were often as different from the others as German from Vietnamese. And finally, they did not all historically develop the same relationships with whites because, as Underhill writes:

...it was the area occupied by each Indian tribe which decided whether that tribe should be exterminated, used as an ally, or moved.<sup>15</sup>

It is then understandable that given these initial differences, and given the different relationships established between whites and Amerindians after the contact, the contemporary situation of Indian tribes is characterized by variety, not by uniformity, and that generalizations or oversimplification should be assessed with prudence.

Another trap into which many authors fall is romanticism and it is always pernicious. It distorts reality and invalidates any analysis. It has many roots: the guilt of the white man, the resentment of the Amerindian, the impossible dream of returning to a primitive life (both for whites and for Amerindians), an imaginary last refuge from an inhumane postindustrial civilization and a lost paradise. Romanticism can be expressed in many ways, but on the whole, it is always related to the presupposed superiority of Amerindian values and customs (e.g. equality, courage, democracy, education) over occidental values; but replacing one myth with another is not a valid starting point.

Thus the Amerindian- who has recently been canonized, within the fashionable cult of ecology, into environmental Sainthood<sup>16</sup>- will not be glorified in these pages because it is not difficult to indulge in the popular sport of indicting whites for the plight of Amerindians. This study simply represents an attempt to analyse a contemporary educational situation in a deprived rural area, and is not an apology for past or present crimes. In this sense, this research agrees with Turner's remarks that although it is very easy for whites to lament the plight of the losers while enjoying the fruits of victory, the

"self-lacerating national guilt"<sup>17</sup> cannot be used as a basis for analysis. While acknowledging the indisputable fact that many Amerindians certainly did suffer enormously because of the policies and the acts of whites, the fact is nevertheless that, as Wax pointed out, they do not hold a monopoly on persecution:

During the course of history, almost every people has been guilty of outrageous acts of cruelty and has itself been the victim of such acts. That many Indian peoples were subjected to horrifying treatment scarcely needs to be said again, although it may help if we trouble to recall how many of the European settlers were themselves refugees from harsh, brutal, even genocidal regimes. Thus, the very Scots who were to settle the Hudson's Bay territories and thereby displace the Metis and the Plains Indians were refugees from the genocidal policies of the British monarchy under James I [sic]<sup>18</sup>, and theirs is by no means an isolated case.<sup>19</sup>

And in a further effort to expose the foundations of this study, the other dimensions of its methodology are examined below.

#### THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER/ THE DATA COLLECTION METHODS/ THE ISSUE OF ETHICS AND THE ISSUE OF VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

All these issues *cannot* be discussed separately in such a case study for the following



reason: the researcher himself, as Merriam has emphasized, "is the *primary* instrument for data collection and analysis" <sup>20</sup> in the conduct of a qualitative case study. Her or his attitude, behaviour, values, experience, qualifications, worldview, and perspective will determine to a large extent the other dimensions of relevance to education.

This is particularly important for the present study. Indeed, not only is the researcher currently employed by the educational institution which is under investigation and has been since 1985, but moreover, he has held the three very different positions of teacher (from 1985 to 1989), vice principal (from 1990 to 1994) and principal (from 1995 until today). This entails serious ethical considerations as far as this study is concerned. Given the position of authority currently held in this school by the researcher, the issues of the purpose of the research, the nature of what is being researched, the way it is undertaken, along with his relations with those being researched must be made clear.

The purpose of this thesis is to look beyond the "qualities" or "inadequacies" of a specific rural reserve school (UASHKAIKAN) and try to discover the complex pattern of historical, political, and socioeconomic circumstances into which it fits, and to link it up with the national Amerindian educational policies which have been promoted both by the Assembly of First Nations and the federal Government since 1972 and which have heavily affected the type of teacher-training programmes aimed at would-be Amerindian teachers in Canadian universities. The assumption "hidden" behind this purpose is that there must be something wrong with the way formal schooling in rural reserves has been provided for the last two decades, given the poor overall results obtained by pupils so far<sup>21</sup>. The individuals are not at fault here, and do not therefore constitute the main

focus of the thesis. It is rather believed that ill-conceived national educational policies, along with poor material conditions in the rural reserves, the legal status of the Amerindians and the way Band Councils are run have all contributed to the situation described above, since the problems of contemporary rural reserve schools are quite similar and generalized throughout rural reserve Canada. Therefore, what is being scrutinized are the current long-term, social, political and educational trends and patterns which were to a great extent shaped by the Indian Act plus the above-mentioned factors and which have had a detrimental effect on educational attainment.

To document these historical and political developments and thus potentially contribute to suggesting ways of improving schooling in Canadian rural reserves, the researcher has relied on his own twelve-year experience as teacher, vice principal and principal of the same rural reserve school. He has been continuously conducting his studies since 1986<sup>22</sup> and relies on his own long-term and careful observation of the community involved and on the Canadian and international body of literature regarding issues such as school improvement, cultural and linguistic minority schooling, poverty, affirmative action, welfare policies and matters of mental and physical health.

The relations between the current researcher and those being researched, because of the nature of what is being studied and the way it is undertaken, is not patronizing nor does it pathologize students, teachers or parents. Rather, such research is seen as an additional tool to enable the researcher to fulfil his task as a school principal. This would enable the provision of local students with an education of quality and would help to

counter academic failure and thus combat generalized social exclusion.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the relations are based on mutual collaboration, not suspicion or confrontation. The fact that the researcher is not Amerindian himself does not prevent him from carrying out an ethical research- as Brar has underlined, using the example of white researchers in black communities<sup>24</sup>- as long as his partisan approach is clearly stated, which was partly done in the introduction chapter, and which is also undertaken in the current chapter. The researcher's intent is to operate, as far as possible within the ideological framework of critical theory, to give voice to the local parents and students, because such voices are often not echoed at all in the national educational policies aimed at Ameridians. Ironically, it is not always the federal Government's fault, as one would assume, but also that of the national Amerindian organization (i.e. the Assembly of First Nations) and various educators, academics or Indian activists whose goal, theoretically, is to "empower" the Amerindians<sup>25</sup>. However, it must be stated that the analyses, conclusions, suggestions or recommendations in the thesis are those of the researcher- based on his professional experience and his study of the subject-, and not those of any pressure group. Hence the researcher fully accepts responsibility for the ideas expressed herein. While it could be suggested that the role of a principal is to run his or her school in an efficient way, it could also be suggested that sometimes (especially in disadvantaged areas), determined leadership is not enough to "turn a school around"<sup>26</sup>. Such research therefore can prove useful both in extending the principal's presence beyond his school<sup>27</sup> and in setting out new educational targets and strategies, of probable use to other rural reserve schools.

But the position both as researcher and as principal of the school raises some other

concerns. While it is undisputable that there are many advantages linked to this arrangement, as will be seen below, it is also true that there are many dangers to be avoided in ensuring that the results will be valid and that the analysis will constitute a useful (as far as knowledge is concerned) insight into the educational process to which the Montagnais students are subject.

On the positive side, having spent so much time in this very school certainly helps one to fulfil one of the prerequisites of case studies; i.e. to spend a significant amount of time in the setting, at least enough to "gradually become integrated within the local population"<sup>28</sup>. About this, Merriam writes:

Most investigations that describe and interpret a social unit or process, as in case studies, necessitate becoming intimately familiar with the phenomenon being studied.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, having lived on the reserve for a year and a half (for a year with elderly people and for six months with a family of six people), having taught at the secondary school for four years, having acted as its vice principal six years, and having been its principal for the last two years has certainly allowed the researcher to become familiar with the setting, while seeking at the same time material worthy of research and formulating these questions best and most closely concerned with significant and enduring behaviours and issues as opposed to those that could be termed nondeterministic. Moreover, the different viewpoints that these various situations have permitted the researcher to function as lodger, staff member, key decision- maker also provide

distinctive perspectives which, when collated, all help in the production of a much desired *holistic* description and analysis of the phenomenon under study.

Being a key decision maker has allowed the researcher to gain insights and to have access to a variety of data which would normally have never been made available to *any* researcher. As Anderson's contributors have written, practitioners are in an excellent position to question received views regarding almost any educational situation, and especially those linked with at-risk students:

[The] practitioners, through their research, are beginning to challenge the mythologies and institutional and social arrangements that lead to school failure for a disproportionate number of poor and minority students.<sup>30</sup>

The positions held, and the extended period of time spent on the setting, have also facilitated the resolution of the most important problems of the validity and the reliability of the research. Any good research, by definition, should be valid and reliable<sup>31</sup>, otherwise there is no point in even undertaking it in the first place. Indeed, over the last twelve years in Betsiamites, many people were met, and many methods of inquiry were used, all aimed at looking for long-term converging lines of inquiry<sup>32</sup>: i.e. observations (direct and as participant), documents, interviews, artifacts (students' personal journals or writings, drawings, etc.), and surveys were used as multiple sources of evidence and collected at different points in time, which corroborated or not the working findings, hypotheses and conclusions. Although most of the data collected were qualitative, quantitative data related to our subject were also included in the research (e.g. surveys

on motivation, and on students' family and personal life, graph on students' absenteeism) the better to provide additional answers to the research questions. The analyses as well as the interpretations and emerging hypotheses to which these data were to lead were constantly cross-validated by further interviews with students, teachers, and other Montagnais school principals as the research progressed (in order, as Dreem and Brehony write, to scrutinize the "same events and issues on different sites, through the eyes of different actors..."<sup>33</sup>). Documentary evidence and any additional sources of information were actively sought after, in order to make the research both valid and reliable<sup>34</sup>. Thus, data triangulation was always a major concern for the researcher. Moreover, the very knowledge that this study (like its predecessor) is going to be read seriously in Betsiamites by other staff members, by Band Council employees, by supervisors, and by parents and students alike forces one to propose hypotheses and to present facts which are totally accurate and which cannot be easily contradicted because they rest on a sound footing.

Finally, this extended period of time has allowed the researcher to record behaviour and their patterns of regularity *as they have happened* throughout the years, and to take into consideration sensitive issues which subjects of research are understandably not inclined to disclose, such as profound disagreements, and so on. And last but not least, the delicate issue, raised by Merriam, of *leaving the field* without "offending those one has studied, leaving them feeling betrayed and used"<sup>35</sup>, something which does not constitute a problem for the present researcher who continues as head of the school.

On the negative side, *being* a staff member can have perverse effects on the research.

The pressure of work, for instance, leave very little time to collect data, because, as anyone soon learns, much time and energy is often "wasted" while conducting research just by trying to first gain access to the physical settings of the research and then to develop "contacts" and significant relationships with the people involved- willingly or unwillingly- in the research. If one does not gain the confidence of the various actors and participants, one will only collect very superficial and uninteresting data and information. This is, as Lois Weis mentions, particularly true with research settings characterized by poverty and educational underachievement<sup>36</sup>. What the researcher is indeed asking most of the time is to become part of the everyday life of the "subjects" of the research for a period of generally one year. This is really asking a lot of people who, as Weis points out, "have been abused by the press and members of the dominant class to such an extent historically that [they] are very reluctant to allow access"<sup>37</sup>. Besides, it is easily understandable that people who daily experience various material and/or moral difficulties to an extent which can be considered "above the average"<sup>38</sup> may not wish to discuss them with a person who will be gone in a few months and who can do little or nothing with the information she or he receives from the people met and interviewed. After all, they have nothing to gain from their encounter with the researcher apart from trouble particularly if others in the community get to know what was divulged.

Thus, it is arguable that much of the time spent working will be in fact time spent gathering and collecting data, (as long as one bothers to collect field notes, "take notes regularly and promptly; write everything down[...] and analyse one's notes frequently"<sup>39</sup>), that may, or may not, reveal insights and invaluable information unavailable to any

other researcher. For the present study, the privileged form of data collection (as a participant observer) has above all been the journal. Since there have never been long periods of time available to take down notes or to reflect on the situation on the spot, the journal has allowed the researcher to shed a focused light on the day's events, and to gradually create a taxonomy for the observed behaviours. Anderson has written that for a researcher-practitioner, a journal is a primary research technique<sup>40</sup>. As the current researcher has been involved in various research projects since 1986 in this school, the journals collected over the years represent an invaluable source of first-hand information.

One could also argue that the longer she or he has worked for an organization, the better she/he understands it<sup>41</sup>. It is not the first time that a researcher is employed by the very organization which is being researched. Harry F. Wolcott, for instance, conducted an ethnographic research on an Amerindian reserve in British Columbia over a one-year period while he was employed at the local school as a teacher. Wolcott's purpose was to study the relationship between the village life and the formal education of village pupils<sup>42</sup>. By his own account, this experience allowed him to gain insights which he would not have been able to obtain had he only been a researcher and led him to very original conclusions; which is what good research is all about.

Another disadvantage of being a staff member may be that one's philosophical orientation has been "contaminated" by the culture of the institution, leading her/him to become either too optimistic or too pessimistic about the institution's "problems" or "improvements", or even too sympathetic to its needs as an institution. While it is



undoubtedly true that at times, events can influence the perspective of the researcher, an *awareness* of the possible influence of these factors, and the selection of only long-term trends, patterns, or behaviours as valid data will help to avoid this pitfall.

Also, one's position as researcher or one's own personality may alter the behaviour of the other staff members or the students themselves, thus invalidating the observations. This could be true *if* the researcher were a poor communicator, or *if* those under investigation were treated as mere objects. However these two eventualities can be dismissed. If the researcher were a poor communicator, or listener, and if he handled the people in Betsiamites roughly, it would be very unlikely that he would have been *offered* two consecutive promotions by the people in Betsiamites (the researcher had never even submitted an application to become vice principal or principal). Similarly, if he had been incapable of empathy and if he had not been adaptive, flexible and unbiased (as much as one can be), it would also have been very surprising that he would have been named president of the Committee of Principals of Innu (Montagnais) Schools in September 1996. Because of the researcher's personality- and not because of any research requirement- the people in Betsiamites were always treated as *people*, and not as research objects. Fontana and Frey in the passage below have acknowledged the importance of doing no less (but it is very unlikely that one who would not be naturally inclined to demonstrate this attitude could *make* people believe that he is treating them with respect, when actually, she/he is merely *pretending*):

Yet, to learn about people we must remember to treat them as people,  
and they will uncover their lives to us. As long as many researchers

continue to treat respondents as unimportant, faceless individuals whose only contribution is to fill one more boxed response, the answers we, as researchers, will get will be commensurable with the way we ask them.<sup>43</sup>

Besides, a most serious ethical problem had already been solved years ago regarding the researcher's position in Betsiamites; i.e. having been involved in various research projects in Betsiamites since 1986, and having prepared a Master's thesis on the educational values and attitudes of parents and teachers in Betsiamites, the people have almost always known the researcher *as* a researcher who was studying the *collectivity* as a whole, and from whom they had nothing to fear in terms of disclosure of personal events or situations they would rather not have publicly exposed. Such has always been the nature of give-and-take in Betsiamites between the population and this researcher. People were always treated as people- and not as research objects-, it was the collective behaviour of the community, and not that of individuals that was under scrutiny.

This situation has also allowed the researcher to develop a very personal style of interviewing informants, be they parents, students, teachers, Band Council employees, local store owners, or councillors. It is very true that "different types of interviewing are suited to different situations".<sup>44</sup> For the present study, it would have seemed very odd, both for the researcher and the participants who both know each other too well, to conduct formal interviews. Instead, every time that the opportunity was given, unstructured interviews were conducted with the various informants, keeping in mind the questions and issues to be explored, but also with the open-mindedness which allows one to enter into fields which could not have been conceived beforehand. These

could be called "immersive" interviews, much like Malinowski undertook by immersing himself in the culture, and "being there"<sup>45</sup>. It was judged fruitless and most unproductive to bully participants into revealing important information (Segall et al. have mentioned the importance- for the validity of the study- of creating conditions where the subjects can feel relaxed<sup>46</sup>) and that since time was on the side of the researcher, he would sooner or later learn, one way or another, what was important to discover. And besides, it was also thought that it would be preferable to look at what people do, rather than to hear them talking about it. Indeed, while one can learn a lot from interviews, the position vis-à-vis interviews adopted by the researcher is the position acknowledged by McDonald and Walker in 1977:

At all levels of the system, what people [those who are studied] *think* they're doing, what they *say* they are doing, what they *appear* to others to be doing, what in fact they *are* doing, may be sources of considerable discrepancy...Any research which threatens to reveal these discrepancies threatens to create dissonance, both personal and political.<sup>47</sup>

This position is also valid for the participant observer. It takes a long time to distinguish between the factual and the trend, between the "accident" and the pattern, between the insignificant and the significant, and one is better advised to notice what people *do* in the long term, rather than to try to carefully register everything, which many try to do, but which is both utopian and ultimately impossible. In order to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant data, one needs in-depth knowledge about the subject under investigation.

As far as the dangers of *revealing* eventual discrepancies are concerned, these dangers are also avoided in the present study, since the position of the researcher about such things is already well known by those who could be affected by such a disclosure. No one in Betsiamites risks being totally surprised by what she/he will read in these pages, which does not mean, however, that any issue will be carelessly handled.

There is also the inevitable criticism, when one studies one's own school, that the data will be "contaminated" by the influence or impact one has had at work, thus rendering the results of questionable value. Far from rejecting this criticism, the researcher fully acknowledges that he certainly has *had* an impact on Uashkaikan High School, but this very impact has also allowed him to gain first-hand knowledge and a more holistic perspective concerning resistance to schooling in Betsiamites, which is precisely what this research intends to examine. As a researcher, one aims at discovering as much as possible about the phenomenon under study and thus "advance, refine or revise what is already known"<sup>48</sup> about the subject. As Anderson et al. have written, "no research is neutral"<sup>49</sup> and as for the actual changes which have transpired at Uashkaikan High School *because of* the researcher himself, one could say they were in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the population, otherwise, his appointments as vice principal and later principal would surely have sparked opposition at the local level. This, again, attests to the empathy of the researcher and should avert any possible accusation of undesirable bias on his part or any suspicion of unsubstantiated analysis.

A word about the issue of the researcher's bias. Many elements have already been mentioned, however to make matters absolutely clear, it must be said in the present

case that some Canadian, American, British, and French authors have profoundly influenced the researcher. These authors are Jean-Paul Desbiens<sup>50</sup>, Jean-Jacques Simard<sup>51</sup>, Anastasia M. Shkilnyk<sup>52</sup> (Can.), Michael Lewis<sup>53</sup> (U.S.A.), Hartley Dean<sup>54</sup>, Peter Townsend<sup>55</sup>, Denis Gleeson<sup>56</sup> (U.K.) and Albert Memmi<sup>57</sup> and Claude Julien<sup>58</sup> (France). Jean-Paul Desbiens wrote extensively about Québec's "quiet revolution" and lately produced a powerful pamphlet on Québec's Amerindians. He is known for being a totally free thinker unafraid of controversy. Jean-Jacques Simard is a Québec City university professor specialized in modern Amerindian- white relations. He is also known for his unconventional views. Anastasia M. Shkilnyk wrote- in what is the opinion of many Canadians- the most outstanding book about the reserve Amerindians' tragedy in North America, using the example of the Ontario Grassy Narrows reserve. Michael Lewis's main concern is social inequality in the United States and his 1978 book on this subject is without any doubt a masterpiece. Hartley Dean, for his part, worked on the issues of welfare and dependence in the 1990's. As for Peter Townsend, valued opinions in the U.K. regard him as a specialist on the issue of poverty. Denis Gleeson has approached the problem of truancy with much originality and creativity. And finally, Albert Memmi is a philosopher who reinvented the concepts of colonialism and the colonized, while Claude Julien is the former editor of "Le Monde Diplomatique" and has a special interest in the issue of social inequality. As one can see, the researcher's intellectual stances are the historical and social explorations of power relations and inequality in Western countries. Hence, for someone preoccupied with structural social inequities, a secondary school in an Amerindian rural reserve- and not the individuals *per se*- represents an extraordinary "laboratory" in which one can study the roots of the continual reproduction of educational failure across generations, with all the inevitable

consequences.

To achieve such a goal, one must come to rely on many sources of information. Fieldwork, clearly, is not enough if a holistic perspective is to be sought after in this work. Its data collection methods are indeed, as will be seen, characterized by their variety.

One of the important techniques used in this study will be secondary data analysis. As one does not need to reinvent the wheel where appropriate, existing data will be utilized, and this study will often rely on statistics already collected either by Canadian agencies or individual researchers. Official statistics are extremely reliable in Canada. As Dr Charlie Owen, from the London University Institute of Education, himself pointed out during a research training workshop held on May 24, 1993, the best statistics in the world are the statistics from Canada, because those who collect them are completely independent of the government. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that even the purest "numerical facts" in the world can succumb to the temptation of what Irvine, Miles and Evans have identified as "ideological contamination" <sup>59</sup>.

Furthermore apart from the fieldwork itself, this researcher has had access to an impressive amount (both in quantity and in quality) of documents of different nature for the presentation of the context, and the preparation of the last two topics (dimensions of schooling and dimensions of resistance to schooling). In fact, the only trouble in the preparation of the context chapter was selecting among the variety of documents depicting the life of Amerindians since the period of first contact. The late J.F. Kennedy

himself had already noted the importance of the body of literature about Amerindians in North America<sup>60</sup>. The Montagnais from Betsiamites are no exception. "La Société Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/CBC)" even produced a one-hour film in 1994- "Chasse ou Cash ? Le Dilemme Amérindien" [Hunting or Money ? The Amerindian Dilemma] which focused mostly on Betsiamites- and broadcasted it at the national level on a Sunday evening, Natives and non-natives alike agreed that it was the best informed and most realistic film about Québec French-(second-language)speaking Amerindians that had up till then been produced. SRC/CBC also produced and broadcast in 1996 another twenty-minute report on Betsiamites, which this time left many Betsiamites Montagnais perplexed this time, to say the least. We also find the Betsiamites Montagnais (under the name of "Bersiamites") in the famous "Relations des Jésuites"<sup>61</sup>, which represents an extraordinarily rich ethnographic work. Add to this numerous other documents (e.g. "Les Montagnais et la Réserve de Betsiamites:1850-1900"<sup>62</sup>, "The Aboriginal people in Québec"<sup>63</sup>) and other anthropological, historical or sociological papers written before or after the Second World War also depict the transition periods the Betsiamites Montagnais were obliged to go through, either during the last century or else since the end of the Second World War up to the present day. The report produced by the Minority Rights Group about Canada's Indians<sup>64</sup> in 1974 was particularly useful regarding this whole transitional period.

The situation is the same today (needless to say, many of the documents mentioned above were also useful for an analysis of the contemporary situation). The recent report from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples<sup>65</sup> which cost £25 M was scrutinized in order to gain access to an overall perspective, along with numerous works by native

or non-native authors dealing with a variety of subjects such as mental health, poverty, self-government and of course, education. As for a perspective at the micro-level, the wonderful book "Montagnaises de Parole: Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat" <sup>66</sup> represented an invaluable source of information regarding the modern reserve life of the Montagnais. Similarly, educational issues alone in Betsiamites have already been the object of study of two M.A. students (a psychology student <sup>67</sup> plus the current researcher<sup>68</sup>) and three university professors (a linguist <sup>69</sup>, a psychologist<sup>70</sup> and an educator<sup>71</sup>). These researchers have produced documents which are a mine of information. The task has been to reanalyse some of their conclusions with an eye to gaining a greater understanding of the culture of the school and finding some clues which could point to an explanation of the persistent underachievement of Betsiamites students. Apart from these works, two commissioned private firms have also produced (for Betsiamites consumption) studies concerned with two essential aspects of the life of the reserve's residents; i.e. economy<sup>72</sup> and administrative and political practices<sup>73</sup>. Of course, other documents written or held by local people on various relevant issues were also utilized (for instance the study on health and social services by Gilbert Paul and Jean-Marie Vollant in 1979<sup>74</sup> and the two reports on education written by Léonard Paul in 1984 <sup>75</sup>).

"New" data came mainly from the following sources: i) direct interactions and/or interviews with teachers, students, administrators, parents, other Montagnais school principals, university professors specialized in Indian Affairs and employees of the Québec ministry of Education or the federal ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs; ii) analysis of the school's students' personal records; iii) use of surveys on absenteeism, socioeconomic conditions, motivation, and school/parent relations; iV) school records



(the data extracted from school records were transformed into graphic form, when feasible, in order to help the reader visualize the situation, or were otherwise used as supplementary quantitative or qualitative data). Each survey's procedures and origin are described before the presentation and discussion of the results (which yield both qualitative and quantitative data). It should be possible, from the combination of all these sources, to draw a realistic portrait of the current situation in Betsiamites and of its relation to the province's educational system.

A word about the two cross-cultural surveys which will be found here: i.e. between Betsiamites parents and Bangladeshi parents in Tower Hamlets<sup>76</sup>; and between Betsiamites students, Aborigines in Australia and Navajos in the United States<sup>77</sup>. For the first, the interesting thing is a comparison between parents who share a very similar socioeconomic background. The main difference, of course, is in the fact that one group lives in a rural region in Canada, while the other lives in a large European city. But they do share some other common cultural and linguistic characteristics, which *could* make the results both relevant and interesting. As for the last questionnaire, Dr Dennis McInerney, from Western Sydney University, designed the analytical procedures, and the conclusions will be drawn in relation to his work. Although it would not be prudent at this point to predict the possibility of comparisons- for instance with some Natives from the United States or Australia, there are sometimes striking similarities between their educational and social situations which tend to indicate that these groups may share some common attitudes towards Western schooling as it operates now in their everyday lives.

As one can see, some consideration is given to the process of comparing. That is because it will illustrate cultural variations and/or similarities, also because it can contribute- along with secondary data analysis and use of a variety of informants- to cross-validate the findings, analyses, and conclusions. Comparison is indeed at the very heart of the process of triangulation, which is a way of assessing the sufficiency of the data. Thus, the primary goal for doing so lies not so much in a possible generalization, but rather in the comparative process itself as a tool of validation.

Before looking into the context of the reserve, it is essential to be precise about the methodology to be adopted in this research. The object here is to keep in mind the importance of stating clearly the intellectual approach, the ethical problems, the issues of validity and reliability, the researcher's bias and the methods for collecting and analysing data. As stated earlier, the ultimate goal of this study is to furnish a description (which corresponds to "truth" as much as possible) of a culture of schooling in a deprived and culturally distinct rural area, in order to contribute to the extension of knowledge about collective resistance to school improvement. It is hoped that this endeavour will result in a vivid portrayal of an Amerindian community which, owing in part to the relatively recent appearance of pathological social symptoms (e.g. a high suicide rate), seems to suffer, not unlike the Grassy Narrows reserve described by A.M. Shkilnyk, from a "collective trauma"; the generalized educational underachievement representing only one element of this situation.

As a conclusion, one of the main concerns of the researcher, all through the research project, has been to "focus on the substance of the findings", "to avoid being overly

preoccupied with method", and to present "solid descriptive data" to the reader; in other words, the researcher has tried to avoid the sin of "methodolatry" <sup>78</sup>.

Just as *actions* (especially long-term actions) speak louder than words for one who studies a given society (or who focuses on an individual, for that matter), the *methodology* of the research is a *tool* necessary to the creation of a *theoretical enrichment* which rigorous research lends itself *providing*, of course, that the methodology selected is appropriate both for the researcher and the setting in the first place, and that ontological and epistemological choices were congruent with the research methods used and satisfactorily addressed. Michèle Rouleau, former president of the Native Women's Association of Québec, attests to the intricacy of the life both of and on the reserve, and of the importance, for the researcher, to develop a very special approach and an in-depth knowledge of social situations pertaining to reserve life:

I sometimes have the feeling that some interveners from outside have difficulty understanding the predicaments in which aboriginals find themselves because they have no idea of the complex workings of a reserve and the influence that it can have on individuals' daily life. <sup>79</sup>

The present case study starts with the basic assumption that education is the key to the promotion of the betterment of the quality of life for everyone, not only the Montagnais. It is axiomatic that schooling *may* hold out such a promise, yet, in Betsiamites, it is a failure which literally has wrecked the lives of too many young Betsiamites Montagnais.

In order to understand how such a situation had come to be so enduring, many aspects of their lives, of the schools they attend and of the community they live in have had to be scrutinized over an extended period of time. A second assumption is that variables associated with this phenomenon cannot be separated from their context<sup>80</sup>, which explains the case study approach. And a third assumption is that in some situations, social behaviour has had an existence that extends over and above the existence of individuals, which in turn influences certain ontological and epistemological choices. Therefore, a great deal of the data extracted had to be grounded in real-life situations (notwithstanding the relevance of the existing body of literature to these subjects) and [long-term] sets of interactions, patterns and common behaviour had to be discovered through a multimethod approach which will, one hopes, provide an in-depth understanding of what constitutes a real tragedy, and not a mere "jeu d'esprit". Once again, however, it is important to emphasize that this study is not interested in the problems of the individuals, but in the formulation of an explanation for what is seen as a collective problem.

This chapter has attempted to provide answers to these fundamental questions as far as educational research is concerned. The next chapter will now focus on the historical processes which can contribute to explaining how Betsiamites has become what it is today.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1989) "What is the constructivist paradigm ?", in Anderson, D.S. & Biddle, B.J. (eds) (1991), op. cit.:159.
3. C.F. Lewis, M. (1978) *The Culture of Inequality*, Amherst; University of Massachusetts Press: 48.
4. Quoted in Hamel, J. et al. (1993) *Case study methods*, London; Sage Publications: 43.
5. Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London; Sage Publications: 4 (introduction).
6. Scott, D. & Usher, R. (eds) (1996) *Understanding educational research*, London; Routledge: 179-80 (afterword).
7. e.g. Sarason (1971) *The culture of the school and the problem of change*. (Op. unavailable. Quoted in Miller, L. & Lieberman, A. (1988) "School improvement in the United States: nuance and numbers", in *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1988, Vol 1, No. 1: 16.
8. Cf. Purkey, S.C. & Marshall, M.S. "Effective schools: A review", in Carlson, R.V. & Ducharme, E.R. (1987) *School improvement-Theory and practice: A book of readings*, Lanham, MD; University Press of America: 756-7.
9. Jaimes, M.A. (ed) (1992) *The state of Native America*, Boston; South End Press:8.
10. Dunbar Ortiz, R. (1984):134.
11. Underhill, R.M. (1971), 2nd ed.:320.
12. Dunbar Ortiz, R.M. (1984):142.
13. Quoted in Jaimes, M.A. (ed) (1992) *The state of Native America*, op. cit.:311.
14. White, R. (1983):XIV.
15. Underhill, R.M. (1973):12.
16. Cf. White, R. (1983):XIII.
17. Turner, F.W. (1973):9.
18. Actually, these events took place under George II.
19. Wax, M. (1971):XIV.
20. C.F. Merriam, S.B. (1988) *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*, San Francisco; Jossey-Bass Inc.: 19.

- 21.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People: Nation to Nation*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and Services. The problems of the Amerindian youth in 1996 are the same as those which had been pointed out in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood (today the Assembly of First Nations), namely that "their [Aboriginal teenagers] confusion and distress ave evident in high drop-out rates, teen pregnancies, substance abuse, defiance of the law and suicidal behaviour". (p. 84.)
- 22.The research undertaken that year was on the educational values and attitudes of the local parents and teachers. It was completed in 1991 (Cf. Vien, C. (unp.) (1991) *L'Éducation à Betsiamites: Valeurs et Attitudes des Parents et des Enseignants*, Sherbrooke; Université de Sherbrooke). The current research was undertaken in 1992.
23. No one today disputes the fact that academic failure generates exclusion, as UNESCO pointed out in 1996. Cf. Delors, J. et al. (1996) *Learning: The Treasure Within*, Paris, UNESCO: 58.
- 24.Cf. Brar, H.S. (1992) "Unasked questions, impossible answers, the ethical problems of researching race and education", in Leicester, M. & Taylor, M. (eds) (1992) *Ethics, Ethnicity and Education*, London; Kogan Page: 195.
25. It is one thing to pretend to empower "powerless people" and and to "represent" them, and another to respect their opinions. For instance, during one of the meetings of the "Comité des directeurs et directrices d'écoles montagnaises" in Québec City in 1997, one of the white participants was strongly opposed to the inclusion of a particular sentence in one of this committee's official papers. After arguing vehemently with the chairman for ten minutes, this person said that she "wanted to hear what the Amerindian principals had to say about it, since the schools were Amerindian schools after all". To her amazement, the Amerindians all agreed with the chairman- which did not prevent her from still refusing to have this sentence included in the final text. Cf. Réunion du Comité des directeurs et directrices d'écoles montagnaises, Québec city, 3,4,5 Fevrier 1997
- 26.Cf. National Commission on Education (1996) *Success Against the Odds: Effective Schooling in Disadvantaged Areas*, London; Routledge: 362-3.
- 27.Cf. Ibid.:338.
- 28.C.F. Hamel, J. et al. (1993) *Case study methods*, London; Sage Publications: 3.
- 29.Merriam, S.B. (1988) op. cit.: 19.
- 30.Anderson, G.L. et al. (1994) *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to qualitative practitioner research*, London; Corwin Press: 7.
- 31.Cf. Wiersma, W. (????) *Research methods in education: An introduction*, Boston; Allyn and Bacon, Inc.:2-3.
- 32.C.F. Yin has rerepresented this process graphically in Yin, R.K. (1994) *Case study research*, London; Sage Publications: 93.
- 33.Cf. Dreem, R & Brehony, K.J. (1994) "Why didn't you use a survey so you could generalize your findings?: Methodological issues in a multiple site case study of school Governing Bodies after the 1988 Education Reform Act", in Halpin, D. & Troyna, B. (eds) (1994) *Researching Education Policy: Ethical and Methodological Issues*, London; The Falmer Press: 164.

- 34.As is suggested, for instance, in the literature dealing with issues of validity and reliability in qualitative studies. Cf. *The Psychologist: Qualitative Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4, April 1997: 162.
- 35.C.F. Merriam, S.B. (1988) op. cit.: 92.
- 36.Cf. Weis, L. "Reflections on the researcher in a multicultural environment", in Grant, C.A. (ed) (1992) *Research & Multicultural Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, Washington, D.C.; The Falmer Press:48.
- 37.Ibid.
- 38.Health and social problems within the reserve system in Canada very often make for headlines in the media. For example, on January 25, 1994, "La Presse" (one of the leading newspapers in Montréal) discussed the major problem of gas, paint, chemical products, and glue sniffing in the North ("Les enfants du Grand Nord inhalent tous les produits toxiques qu'ils trouvent"), and two days later, "Radio-Canada" broadcast a major coverage (twenty minutes) on the dramatic situations of Davis Inlet and Lac Simon, an Amerindian Labrador community (Davis Inlet having a special status because of its recent creation) and a Québec reserve where social problems have sky-rocketed during the last decade.
- 39.C.F. Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (1994) "Interviewing", in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) op. cit.: 368.
- 40.C.F. Anderson, G.L. et al. (1994) *Studying Your Own School*, London; Corwin Press: 178-9.
- 41.But on the other hand, too much familiarity with the subject can be a danger if the assumptions linked with familiarity are not clearly assessed and if one does not succeed in getting beyond them.
- 42.Cf. Wolcott, H.F. "The teacher as an enemy", in Spindler, G.D. (ed) (1987) *Education and cultural process: Anthropological approaches*, Prospect Heights, Ill.; Waveland Press:137-50.
- 43.Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (1994) "Interviewing", in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., op. cit.: 374.
- 44.C.F. Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (1994), in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., op. cit.: 373.
- 45.C.F. Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (1994) "Interviewing", in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) op. cit.: 366.
- 46.Cf. Segall, M.H. et al. (1990) *Human behavior in global perspective*, op. cit.:64.
- 47.Quoted in Merriam, S.B. (1988) op. cit.: 34.
- 48.C.F. Merriam, S.B. (1988) op. cit.: 62.
- 49.C.F. Anderson, G.L. et al. (1994) op. cit.: 4.
- 50.Cf. Desbiens, J.P. (1993) *How Can One be a Native Person ?*, Québec; Gouvernement du Québec.
- 51.Cf. Simard, J.J. et al. (1996) *Tendances Nordiques: Les Changements Sociaux 1970-1990 chez les Cris et Inuit du Québec*, Québec; Université Laval/Getic.

52. Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) *A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community*, New Haven; Yale University Press.
53. Cf. Lewis, M. (1978) *The Culture of Inequality*, Amherst; University of Massachusetts.
54. Cf. Dean, H. & Taylor-Gooby, P. (1992) *Dependency Culture: The Explosion of a Myth*, London; Harvester Wheatsheaf.
55. Cf. Townsend, P. et al. (1988) *Health and Deprivation: Inequality and the North*, London; Croom Helm.
56. Cf. Carlen, P., Gleeson, D. & Wardhaugh, J. (1992) *Truancy: The Politics of Compulsory Schooling*, Buckingham; Open University Press.
57. Cf. Memmi, A. (1979) *La Dépendance*, Paris; Gallimard; Memmi, A. (1972) *Portrait du Colonisé*, Montréal; Éditions l'Étincelle.
58. Cf. Julien, C. (1996) "Les fourriers du Front National", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Mars 1996: 6-7.; Julien, C. (1995) "Un monde à vau-l'eau", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Septembre 1995: 16-7.; Julien, C. (1995) "Brève radiographie d'une fracture sociale", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Juin 1995: 16-7.; Julien, C. (1995) "Le siècle des extrêmes", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Mars 1995: 16-7.; Julien, C. (1994) "Une autre politique", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Septembre 1994: 1; 16-7.
59. Cf. Irvine, J. & al. (eds) *Demystifying social statistics*, London; Pluto Press:1.
60. Cf. introduction by J.F. Kennedy in Josephy, A.M. (ed) (1961) *The American Heritage Book of Indians*, Washington, D.C.; American Heritage Publishing Co. Inc.:7.
61. Cf. *Relations des Jésuites (1634-1672)* (contenant ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable dans les missions des pères de la Compagnie de Jésus dans la Nouvelle-France), 6 tomes, Montréal, Éditions du Jour, 1972.
62. Cf. Bédard, H. (1988) *Les Montagnais et la Réserve de Betsiamites: 1850-1900*, Montréal, IQRC.
63. Cf. Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs (1987) *The Aboriginal People in Québec: 10 Nations, 53 communities*, Québec, Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs.
64. Cf. Minority Rights Group (1974) *Canada's Indians*, London; Minority Rights Group.
65. Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People: Nation to Nation*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and services.
66. Cf. Conseil Attikamekw Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole/ Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM.
67. Cf. Chassé, É. (unp.) (1992) *Analyse de l'Efficiencé Cognitive et de l'Image de soi d'Adolescents Montagnais en regard de leur Rendement Scolaire*, M.A. Thesis, Université de Montréal.
68. Cf. Vien, C. (unp.) (1991) *L'Éducation à Betsiamites: Valeurs et Attitudes des Parents et des Enseignants*, M.A Thesis, Université de Sherbrooke.



- 69.Cf. Oudin, A.S. & Drapeau, L. (unp.) (1993) *L'État de la Langue Montagnaise à Betsiamites*, Montréal; Université du Québec à Montréal.
- 70.Cf. Larose, F. (unp.) (1992) *Rapport Final du Processus d'Évaluation des Services Éducatifs Offerts à Betsiamites: 1990-92*, Sherbrooke; Université de Sherbrooke.
- 71.Cf. Bonneau, G. (unp.) (1996) *Évaluation des Services Éducatifs de Betsiamites: Rapport Final*, 3 volumes, Chicoutimi; Institut de l'Arc.
- 72.Cf. CAMO (unp.) (1990) *Plan de Développement Économique: Communauté Montagnaise de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Développement Économique; Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (SDEB) (unp.) (1995) *Betsiamites: Plan Stratégique de Développement Économique*, Betsiamites; SDEB.
- 73.Cf. Plourde, J.D. et al. (unp.) (1996) *Rapport d'Étape: Diagnostic Structurel et Organisationnel*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites.
- 74.Cf. Paul, G. & Vollant, J.M. (unp.) (1979) *Étude et Consultation sur la Prise en Charge des Affaires Communautaires à Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites.
- 75.Cf. Paul, L. (unp.) (1984a) *Plan d'Action de l'École Secondaire de Betsiamites pour l'Année Scolaire 1984-85*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites; Paul, L. (unp.) (1984b) *Présentation Générale sur l'Enseignement à l'École Secondaire*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites.
- 76.Cf. Tomlinson, S. (1990) *Bangladeshi parents and education in Tower Hamlets*, Lancaster; Ace Publishing.
- 77.Cf. McInerney, D.M., "Dimensions of school motivation: A cross-cultural validation study", in *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Sept. 1992.
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- 79.Rouleau, M. (1994) "Evaluation", in Petawabano, B.H. et al. (1994) *Mental Health and Aboriginal People of Québec*, Gaëtan Morin, Editeur: 122.
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## CHAPTER 4

### THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

#### BETSIAMITES: FROM THE RESERVE AS A NEW PLACE TO LIVE

#### TO THE RESERVE AS A NEW WAY OF LIFE

This chapter, which is divided into eight parts, discusses the history of the Betsiamites Montagnais, from their arrival on the North American continent to the relations they later established with the Europeans and the impact of this interaction on the Montagnais culture.

The first part focuses on the original culture of the Montagnais as newcomers to the North American continent and as nomadic hunters. The second and third parts analyse the consequences of the encounter with the Europeans, which had disastrous long-term effects for the Montagnais. The next two parts retrace the steps which led to the creation of the Amerindian reserves in North America and examine the response of the Amerindians to the paternalism of the Canadian nation state. Finally, the last three parts outline the efforts of the federal Government which had become eager to foster by any means the integration of the Canadian Amerindians and also place the introduction of compulsory schooling within the reserves and the more recent issue of local control (i.e. band control) in this larger context.

The aim is to try to appraise the extent and the degrees of the various forms of acculturation to which the Betsiamites Montagnais have been submitted since the contact with the Europeans, the most significant one- all events merged together- being the creation of the reserve. The implementation and the development of formal schooling in Betsiamites cannot indeed be analysed if the historic stages which led to the settling process are not first presented. Although these stages are unimportant **per se**, what does matter is the contemporary social and educational reality experienced daily by the reserve's inhabitants as well as the end **result** of the passage of those historic stages of those historic stages.

Acculturation can be defined in many ways, but the definition proposed by Herskovits seems particularly relevant in the present case:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.<sup>1</sup>

As the two groups involved here developed unequal relations from the start- due to the technological advantage of the whites- it is important to add to this definition, as Segall has done, the precision that

acculturative pressures flow in an unbalanced way, reflecting power differences across cultures.<sup>2</sup>

Acculturation is therefore an interactive- although in this case totally unequal- process, and the historical steps which lead to these changes will now be examined, looking briefly first at the prehistory of the Montagnais- or the "roots", as was said earlier- and then moving on until the present day.

## PREHISTORY OF THE BETSIAMITES MONTAGNAIS

The Betsiamites Montagnais (the word Montagnais comes from the French "montagnard"; for their part, the Montagnais have always named themselves "Innu", which means "man") belong to the subarctic native culture, one of the six cultural families present in Canada (the others being the Arctic, Eastern Woodlands, Northwest Coast, Plains, and Plateau cultures).

The Subarctic Indian bands are widely distributed throughout Canada, as can be seen in Appendix 3. The Montagnais are part of the Algonkian language family, by far the largest indigenous language family to be found in Canada, with an approximate number of 100,000 speakers (the second largest group of the eleven other language families- the Athapaskan- has only 17,000 speakers)<sup>3</sup>. It is estimated that in toto, there are less than 200,000 Amerindians left in Canada who have retained knowledge of their mother tongue (as the issue of language is particularly important in Betsiamites, it will be discussed at the end of the chapter Six: "The dimensions of schooling").

Like all the other Amerindians of North America, the Montagnais are the descendants

of the numerous groups of Asian hunters who began traveling from Siberia (see Appendix 4)- by crossing the Bering Strait, when it was a 50-mile continental bridge between Asia and Alaska- to North America some 12,000 years ago. The last noteworthy migration was undertaken by the ancestors of the Inuit (Eskimos) 2,000 years B.C. It is thought that the prehistoric relatives of the Montagnais set foot on the American continent 10,000 years ago. These Paleo-Indians used chiseled stones to hunt the great mammals of the Pleistocene period, but around 8,000 B.C., they separated into two distinct cultures.

The Montagnais are the descendants of one of these two cultural groups, i.e. the Plano, which in turn separated into two other cultures around 6,000 years B.C. This new culture, the Shield Archaic, developed in what are today the Northwest Territories and Manitoba. As climatic and ecological changes were occurring on the continent, they moved eastward and populated the whole Canadian Shield. From 5,000 to 1,500 B.C., the migrations of the Shield Archaic Indians led to the occupation of the whole of Ontario and of three-quarters of Québec- as early as 1,800 B.C., Shield Archaic Indians fought with Paleo-Eskimos over territory control in Labrador-, and led to the birth of distinctive tribes and cultures: Cree, Ojibwa, Algonquin, Beothuk and Montagnais.

Before the contact with Europeans, the Montagnais were, with the now extinct Beothuk, the most primitive group. Unlike the other tribes, they did not make pottery, clay-pipes, or rock drawings and there was no agriculture whatsoever. They were nomadic northern hunters and fishermen separated into numerous bands which occupied a vast territory- stretching along the north shore of the St-Lawrence river from Labrador

to what is now Québec City- with a very low density. Their stone tools, from the chiselled points used by their ancestors, then consisted in fluted arrow points- the bow and the arrow appearing around 1,000 B.C.- and knives, but they had also developed various methods of hunting and fishing such as snares, deadfalls, harpoons, dip and gill nets and hook and line. Their most common prey were caribou, moose, bear, beaver, lake fish and salmon. They completed this diet by gathering wild plants during the summer and fall. As they depended on game animals available only seasonally, they needed great mobility and thus lived in very small bands (usually groups of 20 people during the winter and fall and up to 100 people during the summer). Their material possessions and housing were designed to be easy to transport. As one anthropologist has remarked; "Survival depended on being able to travel long distances" <sup>4</sup>.

The Montagnais lived in small conical skin tents, wore skin-clothes and used bark canoes (in summer) and snowshoes and toboggans (in winter) to carry their equipment. Traditional religion was based on the belief that people and nature are interdependent and animal spirits played a major role in the numerous myths and legends transmitted from one generation to the next. Every part of the caribou, moose, or bear was used out of respect for its spirit and there were prehunt and posthunt rituals involving singing, drumming and dancing. Although there was a lot of prehistoric inter-tribal trade in Canada (e.g. copper, silica, silver<sup>5</sup>), the Montagnais participated very little and it can be said that their way of life as nomadic hunters and fishermen remained quite unchanged for nearly three millenia.

Although they had developed a relatively simple technology, it was perfectly adapted

to their harsh environment and allowed them to make a living despite recurrent periods of starvation, long and cold winters and short summers during which they were plagued by billions of mosquitoes. The arrival of Europeans, however, would very soon considerably alter their lifestyle.

## THE EUROPEAN CONTACT

Notwithstanding the Norse expeditions to Newfoundland during the XIth century, the first encounters of subarctic Indians with Europeans took place at the end of the XVth century. These Europeans were Portuguese, French, Basque- and later English-fishermen who soon established sedentary summer fishing settlements (the Portuguese and the English remaining in the Newfoundland region while the French and Basque were carrying their quest deep into the St-Lawrence Gulf) and started naming the places they were visiting. Hence, these ancient names appear on the first maps of "official" explorers such as Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain, who relied heavily on the fishermen's maps to draw their own (two ancient maps can be seen at Appendix 5 A & B, Betiamites appearing on both of them). These first and nonofficial contacts (Jacques Cartier, in 1534, is supposedly the first European to visit the Gulf of St-Lawrence) marked the beginning of three centuries of interaction with Europeans which forced the Montagnais, by the mid-1800s, to depend on the whites for their physical survival.

Trading began as soon as the first Europeans arrived in North America. When Jacques

Cartier explored the Gulf of St-Lawrence in 1534 and in 1535, he traded goods with the Micmac (south shore Indians) and Montagnais (north shore Indians) Amerindians. The behaviour of these Amerindians clearly indicated that they were already used to trading with Europeans<sup>6</sup>. Bruce Trigger has shown that the Montagnais had probably previously transported European goods from the shores of the Gulf of the St-Lawrence into the interior and thinks that they were at that time involved in a quite limited but existing fur trade<sup>7</sup>. But from this time, the fur trade became very rapidly practised on a wide scale in this part of the North American continent and brought about changes for the Montagnais which will affected almost every aspect of their life.

Europeans immediately realized that the land occupied by the Montagnais (at least its northernmost part) could not be used for agricultural purposes- the French even nicknaming the North Shore region the "land God gave Cain"-, but they quickly understood that huge profits could be made by trading fur. Moreover, they needed these Amerindians to hunt furs for them. Thus, the Montagnais were not exterminated like the Newfoundland Beothuks who were guilty of inhabiting an extremely poor land, but rather developed, as Robin Ridington put it, "a trapping economy and systematic trade relations with Europeans"<sup>8</sup>. These two things will constituted the most important parts of their lifestyle for the next two centuries, as they respectively became Crown subjects first of France and then of Britain.

## THE IMPACT OF TRAPPING AS A NEW WAY OF LIFE



Transforming from hunters to trappers first meant moving from "interior" regions to regions located not far away from the trading posts, which were always on the shores of the larger rivers such as the Saguenay. This alone represented a major change, because the Montagnais had until then inhabited the forest as a whole, regardless of the traditional trading "routes". Worse still, trapping needs did not fit in at all with nomadic caribou and moose hunting. Added to the early introduction of unknown infectious diseases such as measles, flu, chicken-pox, mumps, German measles and especially smallpox, the results of this new geographic distribution were disastrous for the Montagnais.

Although historians do not agree on the numbers of Amerindians who died either from starvation or from disease during the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, it is agreed that from Latin America to New France, vast numbers of people died<sup>9</sup>. It is estimated that the Montagnais population, like many other Amerindian populations, was reduced to half its original size during this period<sup>10</sup>. The Jesuits who lived among them in 1639 wrote that the Montagnais were by then convinced that the French and especially the missionaries, "intended the destruction of the country and the death of all its inhabitants"<sup>11</sup>.

The situation was somewhat ironic since it was precisely because they were trying to improve their standard of living- by obtaining more efficient tools such as metal axes and knives, warmer clothes made of wool, and canvas to replace traditional skin-tents- that the Montagnais had agreed to take part in the fur trade in the first place. Another significant consequence of being a trapper instead of a hunter was that when the proximity of other families used to be regarded as eventual mutual assistance and

greater chance of survival, it now meant competition and reduced chance of survival, thus introducing another alien concept. As for war, it became more frequent- despite former conflicts with the Eskimos, the Micmac, and the Iroquois, the Montagnais had never been a warlike group- even though the Montagnais became the military allies of the French "in wars with the British and their Indian allies" <sup>12</sup> as they were tried to keep their monopoly on the fur trade on their part of the continent. Less dramatic albeit not unimportant were the changes that ensued with regard to religious, educational and political aspects of their lives.

Previously, the Montagnais religion had consisted in simple religious ceremonials involving distant spirits of people or animals and customs related to hunting, curing, the origin of the world, birth, and to death. The design of such religious practises was both to help the Montagnais interpret their harsh environment and to make the world a safer place in which to live.

One of the essential characteristics of the religious world of the Montagnais was that no one person was "specialized" in religious matters- there were a few shamans, who were full participant in the daily life activities, unlike the priests in Western societies, their role as shamans being very limited. Everyone was familiar with the rich mythic tradition and its religious schemes and practices and thus it was a situation close to what Pierre Bourdieu calls "l'auto-consommation religieuse" <sup>13</sup>- or self-practice.

The first change for the Montagnais was therefore that the monopoly on religious matters was acquired by the Jesuits. These latter had strong support- both moral and

material- in their endeavour. First of all, the King of France had agreed that missionaries should be part of the fur trade. The goal of French colonization was not only to make profits, but also to convert the "savages" in order to save their souls while preventing them from turning the whites who lived among them- especially prior to 1630- into "savages" themselves. An attracting phenomenon was the freedom experienced within Amerindian societies which appealed to men who came from highly hierarchical and judgemental societies.

As a result of this decision of the King of France, the Indians came to compete, during the XVIIth century, for the honour of welcoming Jesuit missionaries<sup>14</sup>; they understood the message: the presence of missionaries meant good trading relations. For their part, the Jesuits had realized that the Amerindians were impressed with European technology. Consequently, they always made sure to bring with them magnets, magnifying glasses, candles and other such things and made great use of the church's ceremonials knowing well that the Amerindians would feel awed and would be easier to convert<sup>15</sup>. The Jesuits indeed frequently pointed out that since they were specialists in earthly matters, the Amerindians should also believe them when they discussed about heavenly matters<sup>16</sup>. Paradoxically, the epidemics helped the Jesuits secure their hold on the Amerindians' souls. Since the missionaries were de facto immunized against the diseases which were killing so many of them, the Amerindians came to believe that they really had special powers.

The religious rituals which had been useful for healing purposes suddenly became totally ineffective. Of course, they also pondered the possibility that diseases were brought

to them by these very same missionaries, but such was their desire not to jeopardize the trade with Europeans that they preferred to keep the missionaries with them. The eventuality of severe military revenge if the missionaries were killed must also certainly have played a part in their decision.

As for the political consequences of the adoption of a new way of life, they were also numerous and significant. Before the contact, the political leaders of the nomadic Montagnais had always been hunt leaders who inherited those responsibilities because they were capable hunters. There were no identified chiefs and each small group relied on a hunt leader only for the duration of the communal hunting period. Kinship was a crucial element of the extremely flexible social organization of the Montagnais and, as Robin Ridington points out, consensus was always reached through dialogues involving almost everyone in the decision-making process:

Most adult men and women had a part in making decisions that affected the band. Families or individuals who did not agree with a particular decision were free to join another band, camp or act for themselves for a time.<sup>17</sup>

For the Montagnais, the imposition of totally "artificial" chiefs- the Europeans strongly insisted right from the start on the importance of dealing primarily with "trading chiefs"- represented a major change, as submission was a completely alien concept in Montagnais culture<sup>18</sup>. For the Europeans, it represented a convenient way to control the Indians with whom they were negotiating. As the earlier hunt leaders were soon

replaced with trading chiefs, these officially recognised middlemen started to benefit from their enhanced status, through increased prestige, power and also through more palpable privileges such as gifts and the best parts during feasts<sup>19</sup>. Thus, inequality, both within and among the bands- because every tribe was struggling to obtain a worthwhile role in the growing fur trade- added itself to the new concepts of competition between hunter and of religious specialization. The importance of the chiefs increased proportionally with the extent of trade and the accompanying dependence on European goods. Although they had never been prominent actors in the prehistoric intertribal trade<sup>20</sup>, the Montagnais played the first major role in the fur trade. In fact, they were, from the end of the XVth to the the beginning of the XVIIth, the sole intermediaries between Northern and Western Indian tribes and French traders, as the Iroquois at this time (who were trading mostly with the Dutch) prevented the French- who had kidnapped some of them in 1536- from going past the Saguenay river. During this period, the concern of the Montagnais chiefs was the preservation of their preponderant role in the fur trade and to achieve this goal, they engaged in numerous wars- along with their French allies- against their traditional enemies; the Iroquoian nations, and later against the traditional enemies of the French who were engaged in successive colonial wars during the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. Of course, intertribal wars had always existed, but unlike before the contact, war did not originate from conflicts over prestige, religion, or revenge, but rather over commercial matters. Moreover, these new wars were much bloodier than before<sup>21</sup>.

As a result, by 1660, the Montagnais had already been decimated by wars and epidemics<sup>22</sup>. Worse yet, while Tadoussac (210 km NE of Québec city)- the traditional

temporary "capital" of the Montagnais- had been the most important trading post in NE America during the XVIth century<sup>23</sup> (and although it remained a major fur-trading centre for the first part of the XVIIth century<sup>24</sup>), the inexorable westward shift of the fur trade from the North Shore region (Québec) to the Great Lakes region<sup>25</sup> (Ontario) and the foundations of Québec City in 1608, Trois-Rivières in 1634 and Montréal in 1642, signified the transformation of Tadoussac from a trading centre to a regional religious centre controlled by the Jesuits.

Thus, the Montagnais suddenly had become for the French merchants, by the beginning of the XVIIth century, an obstacle to the westward expansion of the fur trade<sup>26</sup>, the latter seeking new supply sources because they were actively engaged in commercial competition with the Dutch, established at Manhattan in 1614 and later with the English, established in 1670 in Hudson Bay. These new realities forced the Montagnais to prove their loyalty by participating in the colonial wars of the French and to increase their production of furs in order to be "competitive". Gradually large areas of their ancestral territories and resources were depleted by overtrapping, forcing them to look to the missions for support. Caught in a trading process where they had to constantly intensify the exploitation of their natural resources, they were left, within two and a half centuries (1600-1850) with a territory which could no longer feed them and with political structures where the decision-making process had been completely altered; from the use of generalized dialogue and non-interventionist guides at significant moments, the Montagnais had been forced to elect authoritative "chiefs" who were merely middlemen specialized in trading matters.

Lastly, education did not escape these rapid changes. To really understand the nature of traditional Montagnais education, one has to keep in mind that it was entirely geared to perpetuating the knowledge necessary to secure a living from the forest. As Verna Kirkness puts it, "the community and the natural environment were the classroom, and the land was seen as the mother of the people"<sup>27</sup>. Education in this subarctic group was by observation and practice, story-telling and by a rigid social control based on teasing, as Ridington emphasizes:

Success in hunting depended on accurate knowledge of animal behaviour. Children were taught to be self-reliant, observant and resourceful. They were expected to learn the habits of game animals and to find their way through large areas of difficult terrain. They were assisted in these skills by listening to long hours of practical narrative accounts and mythological tales and by learning special trapping and hunting songs and innumerable riddles. Those who made stupid mistakes from failure to be observant were the butt of ridicule.<sup>28</sup>

Those who established the standards of behaviour were the extremely respected elderly and as the death of a great number of them- along with young children- during the epidemics of 1634-1650 coincided with the beginning of the missionary "offensive"<sup>29</sup> in New France, it contributed to accelerating the processes of cultural, religious, political, social and educational disorganisation<sup>30</sup>. Missionaries were responsible for Amerindian education from this early period until the end of the Second World War. Their role was a central one and they made huge efforts to convert the heathen

Montagnais "savages" and turn them into good civilized Christians. From the first years of their arrival on the continent, the missionaries realized that the success of their endeavours rested on one essential condition; the Amerindians had to settle, as is shown by this passage, written in Tadoussac by a Jesuit in 1632:

The Savages of Canada do not lack intelligence but education and guidance. They are so tired of their misery and reach out for our help. It seems that the nations which are settled will be easily converted.<sup>31</sup>

[Author's translation. Please note that the original text is written in non-standard pre-Académic French.]

The Jesuits first set foot in New France in 1625, ten years after the arrival of the Récollets. The Jesuits, supported by the King of France, were extremely powerful and influential and their idea of controlling the Amerindians by forcing them to settle originated with their missions in Paraguay, where such a policy had successfully been put into practice for forty years<sup>32</sup>. It proved more difficult to replicate this model for the Montagnais in New France- as the merchants needed them to hunt for furs and because there was no immediate use for the land they were occupying-, but this solution nevertheless represented for the Montagnais, by the mid-1800s, the only alternative left to them.

In the meantime, the missionaries often accompanied the Montagnais in the forest during the winters. After the monopoly on religion, the Jesuits- and other religious



orders- acquired a monopoly on education. From a situation where every adult had been responsible for the education of every child, the Montagnais were dispossessed of yet another essential facet of their life.

The integration of the Montagnais into the developing world economy literally transformed their society. The fur trade was bound to be an unequal exchange as the actors involved in it were a stone-age Indian population whose way of life rested on the need for survival on the one hand and an emerging capitalist power dependent on technology and accumulation on the other. The acculturative pressures experienced by the Montagnais cannot be compared with those which affected the Europeans. The latter had the technological capacity of replicating themselves the items (e.g. snowshoes, toboggans, canoes) that they borrowed from the Amerindians. They not only "imported" new things, but there was also an automatic appropriation of the savoir faire which allowed for the creation of these objects.

For the Europeans, the adoption of Amerindian technology simply represented an addition to their knowledge. The same is not true for the Amerindians. They had no possibility whatsoever of replicating or producing for themselves the clothes, the wooden tools, the cooking utensils, the firearms, the canvas and even the food (e.g. flour, tea, butter) that they obtained from the Europeans. In this sense, Delâge is perfectly right when he mentions that for the Amerindians, to trade in these conditions meant becoming dependent, and that the more the trade developed, the more the Amerindians became dependent<sup>33</sup>. Thus, for the Montagnais, the adoption of European **goods** represented a loss; from an autarkical society, they became a dependent one. The

zealous missionaries even made sure that the Amerindians did not contaminate the Europeans with their egalitarian ideology, a very menacing thing indeed as the European social order was built on a highly hierarchical system of social class.

The multiplication- and the harmonious integration of many into Indian tribes- of the voyageurs (or "coureurs des bois") who journeyed in canoes during the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries tells a lot about the appeal, especially for French Canadians, of this "romantic" lifestyle (even today, French tourists are particularly attracted by **anything** identified as belonging to the Amerindian culture, and visits to reserves are a must when they travel from France to the province of Québec. See Appendix 6). Consequently, to isolate the Amerindians- once the merchants did not need them anymore- corresponded as much to a way of protecting the Amerindians against the bad influences of the whites as a way to prevent the latter from being influenced in a "radical" way, and it perfectly suited the needs of the French and later the British Nation-states.

The fierceness demonstrated by the Canadian government in the destruction of the truly original Métis culture which emerged in Western Canada at the end of the XIXth century illustrates the fact that Amerindians **could not be allowed to affect** the development of a capitalist economy. As Max Gallo rightfully remarked, writing about the "discovery" of America in 1492, it was not a tête-a-tête between two cultures, but a mere "europeanization" of the world, as it also involved- indirectly, through the slave trade- the African continent<sup>34</sup>. From this viewpoint, the reserve cannot be dissociated from the introduction of formal education in New France- as one of the most powerful instruments of control-, and that is why it is essential to relate its development in

parallel with the stages leading to the creation of the Betsiamites reserve.

## THE CREATION OF THE BETSIAMITES RESERVE

With their geographical location on the Upper North Shore (the North Shore of the Gulf of St-Lawrence is bordered to the west by Tadoussac and to the north-east by Labrador and is divided into Lower North Shore and Upper North Shore as can be seen in Appendix 7), the Betsiamites Montagnais were among the first Amerindians in North America to be affected by the presence of Europeans. On the other hand, however, they were also amongst those who were able to maintain their nomadic way of life for quite a long time because of i) the remoteness of their territory from what was to become the centre of New France, ii) the limited agricultural opportunities that their land offered and, iii) and because of the fact that until 1842, no settlers were allowed on the Upper North Shore. The Crown of France and then of England set aside this area for a privileged few who held the monopoly on the fur trade until 1842. Under the French Regime, it was a "seigneurie" surrounded by some concessions (from 1653 to 1733) and later attached to the "Domaine du Roi" until 1760. After the capitulation of Québec City in 1759, the rights on this territory were held by the Hudson's Bay Company until 1842 with exclusive fur trading rights. The end of this monopoly meant that at last settlers were welcome and many of them came, attracted by the development of mass forestry. The last half of the XIXth century in this region is seen as the "golden age" of saw-mills, but for the Montagnais, it marked the end of the road. The first half of the XXth century confirmed the rapid industrialization of the Upper North Shore, with the

development of the pulp and paper, mining and aluminium industries. The last nail in the coffin was the erection on the Manicouagan river of the largest barrel vault dam in the world at the beginning of the 1960s. As for the salmon rivers which had been left untouched by this industrial development, they were leased to private interests (mostly American) for recreational purposes. A French millionaire in 1895 even bought the Anticosti Island in the Gulf of St-Lawrence and turned it into the largest private hunting club in the world.

The history of the creation of the Betsiamites reserve thus resembles that of other Canadian and American reserves. It was founded in 1853 because of the pressures exerted on the traditional way of life of the Montagnais by the growing activity of logging companies. As many as thirteen other reserves were created during this same year on the territory of Québec; a direct consequence of an Act (14-15 Victoria, chap. 106) adopted two years earlier in London<sup>35</sup>.

This activity corresponded to a general movement as eighteen reserves were founded in California only in 1851<sup>36</sup>. This alone illustrates the fact that from the middle of the XVIth century, the destiny of the Amerindians- including the Montagnais- no longer rested in their own hands. As soon as there was some use for their land, they had to cede to the settlers everywhere in North America. Delâge brilliantly demonstrates that what was happening was inescapable; the agricultural and then industrial development of North America could simply not live together with Amerindian societies which were divided, militarily inferior and did not have a dominant/dominated relationship with the land:

Progressively, the newcomers took advantage of their military superiority and of the divisions and intertribal rivalries to occupy the land, all the land. To do so, they had either to exterminate or expropriate the first inhabitants and pack them in reserves. As soon as 1660 the two forms of the "final solution" to the Amerindian "problem" were set up: genocide and/or reserve.<sup>37</sup> [Author's translation.]

The first reserves in Canada were founded on seigneurial holdings in New France. For instance, as early as 1635, the Jesuits established a reserve in Sillery (Québec City) for some nomadic Algonkian families and tried to turn them into farmers. It was, like all other similar attempts, initiated either by the missionaries or the government and was a total failure.

As long as the land was able to support them, nomadic Amerindians refused to settle in reserves and even after they were not able to depend on hunting anymore for their livelihood, they refused to become farmers. The fruitless efforts of such an endeavour in Betsiamites which lasted from 1853 to 1880 attest that for many reasons- the nature of the soil, the climate and most of all the customs of nomadic Indians- they simply **would not** be transformed into farmers<sup>38</sup>. This contradicts the mid-1800s explicit liberal philosophy of the British colonial policy which influenced the United States, New Zealand and Australia as far as Natives were concerned and which led to the creation of the reserves in the first place; while a trend in public opinion in England was in favour of not bothering at all with the Amerindians and letting them go into decline, another was claiming that the reserve system would i) preserve the Amerindians from the evil

influences of the white man and ii) allow them to attain an adequate level of civilization, given that they would be put into a land of quarantine and submitted to the missionaries' intensive care. The latter proposal was retained by the above-mentioned countries<sup>39</sup>. Thus, more than two thousand Amerindian reserves- their average population being well below 1,000- now exist in Canada and they are inhabited by approximately half a million Amerindians. (As 65% of these reserves are located in remote or rural areas, Betsiamites represents a valid example of the contemporary situation).

Since its foundation in 1853, Betsiamites has gone through the three "classic" major stages experienced everywhere else in the reserve system in Canada: i) "intensive care"; 1850-1945 ii) "integration"; 1945-1969 and iii) the local control phase; 1969-... .

#### THE "INTENSIVE CARE" YEARS (1850-1945)

During this period, the Canadian government entrusted the Amerindians to the care of the missionaries, in accordance with the principles of the colonial laws which constituted the basis of the so-called "Indian Act" passed in 1876 and its numerous subsequent amendments all of which shared a common goal; i.e. to regulate, from cradle to grave, every aspect of the life of the Amerindians who lived on reserves. With this Act, the federal Government gave itself "broad discretionary powers" <sup>40</sup> over "Status Indians", the only ones who are entitled to reside permanently on a reserve. For example, Amerindians could not buy, sell, or lease the reserve land since it belonged

to the Crown, and bands "may not be able to sue or be sued in their own names or limit financial liability for debts to communal assets"<sup>41</sup>. Obviously, it is an understatement to say that the Amerindians were not seen as responsible human beings, as a "Minority Rights Group" investigator admirably emphasized in 1974:

The policy by which the government determined to clear the land and solve "the Indian problem" was a characteristically Victorian blend of high-minded paternalism, ruthlessness, sentimentality and self-confidence. The Indians were to be removed to small reserves where they could pose no threat to white settlement, and could themselves be shielded from unscrupulous drink-pedlars and other undesirable products of white society. Here, it was thought, under the stern and moral guidance of dedicated missionaries and government officials, the Indians could somehow be enabled to retain their childlike simplicity and innocence while at the same time being taught the merits of industry, Christianity and the other attributes of a superior civilization. No-one was quite sure how this transformation was to be achieved, but there were always philanthropists who thought they knew the answer and were willing to try, and others, with different ideas, to take their place when they failed.<sup>42</sup>

Under the supervision of a government "agent" responsible for the distribution of federal aid and with the enlightened guidance of the missionaries, the Amerindians were supposed to learn- within a few decades- to become self-supporting and to live "like the

surrounding population" <sup>43</sup>. It was thus clear, for the government at least, that this situation was to be temporary. But the Amerindians did not see it this way at all. From their viewpoint, they were entitled to receive the federal aid forever as it was simply a compensation for the loss of their land, as this Betsiamites Amerindian explained in 1883:

The Queen [of England] must provide a living for us since "they" took the rivers, the forests, etc. <sup>44</sup> [Author's translation.]

This fundamental misunderstanding was the cornerstone of the implementation programme of the reserves and gave birth to numerous disputes between agents and missionaries on the one side and the Amerindians on the other side. The federal agents, in their reports, were constantly complaining about the "laziness" of these "happy-go-lucky" Indians. In Betsiamites, in 1881, the agent described the Betsiamites Montagnais in his annual report as a "bunch of demoralized, proud, suspicious drunkards" <sup>45</sup>. As for the missionaries, they were still using, to a great extent, the same terms that their predecessors had used in the XVIth century when different Jesuits had written that the "Bersiamites" were "good and simple persons who always greeted them with much love" <sup>46</sup>, or "gentle as a lamb" <sup>47</sup>. Father Charles Arnaud, a French Oblate born in 1826 who had come to Quebec to "live and die among the Amerindians" and who lived in Betsiamites from 1853 to 1908, has long been, without any doubt, the most prominent religious figure for the Betsiamites Montagnais (for instance, everyone in Betsiamites agreed that if it had not been for Father Arnaud, the reserve allocated to them would have been much smaller). In the second half of the XIXth century, Father Arnaud often



referred to the Betsiamites Montagnais as "my dear Montagnais"<sup>48</sup> or "my children of the forest"<sup>49</sup>. It is also interesting to note that he struggled as hard as the Jesuits had done two centuries before to protect the Betsiamites from the influence of the white men- some loggers were living on the other side of the Betsiamites river at that time- and referred to the successes of the "reductions" in Paraguay to explain his optimism:

Until today, our goal has been to find a place for our savages where they would be left alone and thus safe from the whites.[...] It was to save them from disaster that we long tried to assemble them. [...] It is precisely to prevent them from becoming like [the whites] and to remove them from the environment of the whites, wherein they suffer , that they ask us not to abandon them and want us to live with them. I will also answer with the example of Paraguay and our missions to the savages of the Red River. Besides, is this not the accomplishment of the passage of our Holy Rules concerning the missions among the savages ? [Author's translation.]<sup>50</sup>

This passage epitomizes the very nature of the Amerindian reserves outstandingly well. The aims are to **protect them** (they are so childlike), to **assemble them** (to turn them from nomadic hunters to farmers) and to **prevent them from acquiring the faults of the whites** (alcoholism being the worst). And in a sense, it did work, at least partly, because the remoteness and the isolation of most reserves indeed allowed the Indians to maintain their cultural identity, some of their traditional values and contributed to their psychological and physical well-being<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand however, as Wilson

emphasises, just like the fur trade had rendered the Indians dependent on European goods, the very nature of the reserves has only contributed to accelerate, expand and institutionalize their dependence and turn it into a way of life as the reserves have always tended to be...

..small and isolated and to offer few opportunities for making a living; they have limited potential as farmland and are too small for the Indians to live by the traditional pursuits of hunting and trapping, while their remoteness and small populations make them unattractive to industry. If an Indian wants to initiate an economic enterprise of his own he is hampered by lack of capital and obstructed by the administrative restrictions which surround every area of his life. The simple fact is that successive governments have found it easier and cheaper to keep the Indians dependent on welfare than to make the enormous capital investment required to enable them to stand on their own feet.<sup>52</sup>

This "new deal" between Amerindians and the Canadian government was based, as was stated earlier, on a major misunderstanding. For the latter, federal aid was to last no longer than a few decades; for the former, it was an agreement whose terms were to be eternal. In 1883, the Department of Indian Affairs wrote that "the Indians should become self-sufficient and curb their dependence on our Department"<sup>53</sup>, whereas the Betsiamites Montagnais considered the federal aid to be precisely their most fundamental right<sup>54</sup>. The Department of Indian Affairs thus involuntarily became the official "curator" of the Montagnais while the missionaries acted as their natural

guardians.<sup>55</sup> When Father Arnaud came to realize that most of his efforts to teach the Montagnais the "merits of industry" were in vain and that there were some who were even rebelling against his authority, he wrote, indignant at such a lack of gratitude, that the Montagnais "[had] become hostile to the teachings of the missionaries" and that they "[were refusing] to contribute towards the mission"<sup>56</sup>. Nevertheless, the authority of the missionaries was quickly restored, as the Betsiamites agent urged his Department in 1881 to make everything possible in order to help the missionaries- because they were the only ones who could control this "inebriated band"- and asked that a policeman be assigned to Betsiamites<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, the 1876 Indian Act had already made it compulsory for reserve Amerindians to elect a Band Council, whose powers were insignificant compared with those exercised by the agent and the missionaries, but whose presence would destabilize a little more of the traditional political organization of the Montagnais. This helped to realize the wishes of the Betsiamites missionaries who exhorted the Montagnais in 1867 to have respect for their chief and to obey him<sup>58</sup>, an obedience totally alien to their traditional political culture but their federal and religious guardians demanded that they remain in a state of docile tutelage. Any vague revolutionary impulses on the part of the Betsiamites Montagnais were thus eliminated until 1970, and they acted- for more than a century- in accordance with the role they had been assigned; i.e. they passively "took advantage" of public aid while they were "pampered" by the missionaries, their only resistance being their refusal to be transformed into whites.

For the Canadian government, the relations developed between its Department of Indian Affairs and the Amerindians during this first phase (1850-1945) were a matter of very

little concern. The federal aid indeed represented an extremely limited financial investment , as a ministry of the federal Government acknowledged in 1964. They stated at a conference that during this period, to provide for the Indians had been easy since not many resources were required to look after them <sup>59</sup>. The most expensive measure had been the creation of approximately one hundred "residential (boarding) schools" located outside of the reserves, which had the duty to remove every trace of "Indianness" from their young Amerindian students (but the regime in these schools was seen by Amerindian parents as "harsh" and "cruel" <sup>60</sup> and never succeeded in its endeavour. This experiment was later abandoned). Most politicians had thought that having set aside reserves for Amerindians and allocating resources to alleviate their poverty was sufficient commitment. The attempt to turn them into farmers had failed and many Amerindians in rural reserves (including the Betsiamites) continued to hunt for furs well into the XXth century within their shrinking hunting territory and despite the increase of industrial activity in these areas. So it did not occur to politicians before the Second World War that because of industrialization, the Amerindians were being completely marginalized and were becoming **totally dependent** on the state. The missionaries living on reserves were seen by the federal Government as cheap labour. The former were responsible not only for the religious education of the Amerindians, but also for their formal education. Thus the Amerindians were classified by Canadians as a harmless cultural attraction who helped to foster tourism, as can be seen in Appendix 8, where a photograph shows a Montagnais woman being watched by rich tourists as she is weaving a wicker basket at La Malbaie (near Tadoussac) at the beginning of the XXth century.

The goal of education for the Amerindians during this period was to teach them to how to read, write and count and to provide them with some notions of personal hygiene. Academic knowledge was considered unimportant for Amerindians, as the reserve was their refuge against the outside world<sup>61</sup>. In Betsiamites, Father Arnaud was the first to organize formal classes around 1860, using prayer books and catechisms translated in Montagnais as teaching materials.

In 1881, a provincial school inspector visited Québec's North Shore. After his visit to Betsiamites, he wrote that thirty children were learning how to read (in French) under the guidance of an unqualified twenty year old primary school teacher. Lessons were provided in a private house as there was no school (the first school in Betsiamites was built in Betsiamites in 1924) and the salary of the teacher (\$50.00 a year or £25.00) was paid by the reserve's inhabitants. The inspector added that in front of every shack, there were alert children climbing on the shoulders of the elders who were reading books to them. The inspector marveled at this custom, noting that for the elders, to learn how to read was a sacred obligation dating back to the first Jesuit missions<sup>62</sup>.

However, this idyllic version masked the fact that the (rare) inspectors' visits were known months in advance (scenarios were thus rehearsed) and that in the second place from 1860 to 1954 in Betsiamites, the missionaries experienced serious problems (e.g. poor attendance, generalized indifference) as far as formal education was concerned. The teachers, however, succeeded in one domain; i.e. the responsibility for education slowly but surely slipped away from the parents' hands to the state's, represented in the first instance by the ecclesiastics<sup>63</sup>.

Unesco noted in its 1972 major report on education that central control of education had been a major worldwide trend since the turn of the century. As the content of education had become more and more complex and as governments had become "aware of education's ever-increasing political role" <sup>64</sup>.

The drama for the Betsiamites Montagnais is that it rendered progressively more evident their various disposessions; the most significant being without any doubt the dispossession of the men's and women's role as productive workers. In this change lie the roots of the disastrous effects of the paternalistic XIXth century Indian Act which led to the creation of the reserves. The Jesuits had already realized in 1646 that every attempt to "disorientate the barbarians" (to pack them in reserves) had not only led them to become idle but also alcoholic <sup>65</sup>. Alcohol was indeed part of the fur trade right from the start, and Amerindians saw that it fostered dreaming (dreams were an important aspect of the religious culture of the Amerindians), thus many of them became drunkards. Many anthropologists, ethnologists and historians have written extensively about the history of alcohol use by North American Indians <sup>66</sup>. While they all agree that for most Amerindians, alcohol abuse has become a major cause for concern, they do not offer the same explanations for this situation. The most commonly debated theories are related to: i) possible genetical differences between whites and Amerindians which could contribute to explain why the latter were "physiologically more susceptible to alcohol"<sup>67</sup>; ii) the use of alcohol as a means to establish communication with the spirit world; iii) alcohol abuse as a way to reduce anxieties due to strong acculturative pressures and anomie and; iv) difficulties for Amerindians to integrate alcohol harmoniously into culture because they did not work to produce their livelihood.

Researchers disagree on the respective importance of these (and many other) theories but they all agree with the facts that the Amerindians who lived on the shores of the Gulf of the St-Lawrence River at the time of the contact (like the Betsiamites Montagnais) were deeply affected by alcohol as part of the fur trade. They used alcohol **only if they were absolutely certain to become completely intoxicated** <sup>68</sup> (this drinking style horrified even the sailors, soldiers, and traders who were themselves heavy drinkers<sup>69</sup>). The extent of the drinking problem created in the long run a disastrous situation for the Amerindians, as Feest demonstrates:

...the consequences of the encounter with alcohol have been of extraordinary importance for the native populations. The damages caused by alcohol range from direct and indirect health problems to economic damages, social disintegration, and finally criminalization. There is evidence that alcohol use did exceed warfare in its contribution to native depopulation. Besides constituting a waste of social product, native American drinking and drunkenness have frequently interfered with economic productivity both in traditional and urban settings. In some societies, alcohol has served as a social solvent leading to disintegration, rather than as a social lubricant as it does in many traditional drinking societies all over the world. And today, crimes connected with the consumption of alcoholic beverages account for the vast majority of Indian arrests.<sup>70</sup>

For the Montagnais, alcohol abuse had been a problem since the first contacts, but it

became much more dramatic with the creation of the reserve. The first policeman was hired in 1883 to try to control alcohol smuggling and more than a century later, alcohol abuse in Betsiamites made the headlines of quality newspapers<sup>71</sup> and six o'clock news bulletins on television<sup>72</sup>. It is now well-known throughout the province that Betsiamites has a criminality rate twice as high as Chute-aux-Outardes, a nearby white village which has the same population and is itself "famous" for its high incidence of breaches of the law registered year after year. In 1993, nearly one thousand alcohol-related offences were committed in Betsiamites- notwithstanding those related to driving-, mostly fights, sexual abuse, and death threats (few thefts are reported in the village). Betsiamites' chief and police director both ascribe this situation to alcohol abuse and alcohol abuse alone and are attempting to take legal steps to alleviate the problem. But the reality already observed by the Jesuits during the XVIIth century in New France remains unchanged.

Owing to the extremely negative impact associated with the creation of the reserves (alcohol abuse being the most visible), it is thus the "intensive care" phase which is the most significant of all the three phases under scrutiny. Indeed, every subsequent amendment to the Indian Act will be tainted with the severe limitations of the original Indian Act, as many different authors writing on this subject have noticed. For instance, the University of British Columbia estimated in 1964 that most of the Indian Act amendments still displayed the paternalistic ideology of the XIXth century<sup>73</sup> and James Wilson wrote in 1974 that..

...the Victorian system has so profoundly moulded white and Indian



assumptions through four generations that today a really fundamental change seems literally almost inconceivable to many people of both races.<sup>74</sup>

A generation later, it appears that the social problems Wilson referred to in his report have worsened and the dialogue between whites and Amerindians has reached a cul-de-sac which, in itself, was predictable. The colonial-inspired policy of the Canadian government towards its Amerindians created during the first phase (1850-1945) an institutionalized dependence the speed of which would accelerate during the second phase. Actually, in the integration period, characterized by the phenomenal development of the welfare state, the "intensive care" would find its full meaning. While it had been qualitatively instituted during the first phase, it would now be quantitatively established, but for formal education in Betsiamites, it would not make a significant difference, as far as results were concerned.

#### THE INTEGRATION YEARS (1945-1969)

After the Second World War, the Canadian government decided to establish new relations with the Amerindians. Whereas the preceding ninety years had been marked by the paternalistic desire to protect the Amerindians from the influence of whites- with the use of the Indian Act and its amendments- and a vague hope of seeing them assimilate, the policies of the Department of Indian Affairs suddenly became much more assertive. (Previously, the Amerindians had been supposed to integrate into the wider

society, as shown in this passage of a document written for the Department of Indian Affairs in 1967 but referring to the situation in 1945):

We now wish to see the Indians completely integrate into the social and economic life of Canada and live as equals with the other citizens of this country.<sup>75</sup>[Author's translation.]

One major reason accounted for this change in attitude; the post-war economic boom had resulted in the emergence of an enthusiastic mainstream "social solidarity" trend which aimed at creating jobs for everyone and alleviating the terrible poverty which had struck many Canadians during the Depression. While indigence had been considered to be a result of some sort of vice until then, the high unemployment rates-and their consequences- experienced during the 1920s and the 30s had brought about a change of attitude within the population and its elected representatives. It had become desirable to fight poverty with public funds, either by giving money or by creating jobs. Mackenzie King launched the new social era in Canada with these words in the mid-40s:

The mandate the government has received today is a mandate to strive above all else for full employment and social security in our own country.<sup>76</sup>

Unemployment insurance, the first significant measure aimed at this goal, had been created a few years earlier, and the hiring by Mackenzie King of Leonard Marsh- the architect of many of Canada's social programmes- as his principal economic advisor

contributed actively to the setting up of institutionalized "failure cushions". Marsh, like most economists in industrialized countries, had been strongly influenced by the British response to the 1942 Beveridge Report, which set out the philosophical foundations of the modern welfare state. From this date on, each successive Prime Minister contributed to the weaving of the social security fabric; accession to unemployment insurance for **every** worker, creation of child benefits, old age security pensions (1952), social assistance (1962) and, with the illusion of eternal economic growth, the golden age during the 1970s of the Canadian welfare state with the addition of retirement and housing-savings programmes and the construction of social housing units.

Of course, it is possible to suggest, as many commentators have done quite convincingly, that the tremendous growth of welfare states (between 1960 and 1975, social expenditure as a percentage of GDP in the seven major OECD countries-including Canada- increased on average from 12.3 to 21.9 percent <sup>77</sup>) corresponded more with the interests of the middle classes than to the needs of the poor alone. For instance, Pierson brilliantly demonstrates this hypothesis.

Rarely has the post-war welfare state served simply the interests of society's poorest and most distressed. Almost everywhere, the non-poor play a crucial role of (variously) creating, expanding, sustaining, reforming and dismantling the welfare state.[...] In fact, the expansion of the welfare state in the post-war period has tended to benefit members of the middle class both (1) as **consumers**, giving rights of access to facilities in healthcare, education, housing, transport and so on which

actually benefited the middle classes...in many cases more than the poor and (2) as **providers**, increasing professional employment opportunities within the public sector. As Le Grand's work on the UK welfare state suggests, perhaps counter-intuitively, it is often middle-class elements that have been the principal beneficiaries of such redistribution as the broad welfare state allows.<sup>78</sup>

The case of the Canadian Amerindian adds weight to this opinion. From 1957-58 to 1970-71, there was a 488% increase (in constant dollars) in the budget of the Department of Indian Affairs (318% per Amerindian). Between 1970 and 1988, this same budget increased by more than 1200% (from 228 million dollars canadian to 3 billion) while there was a 600% increase in social assistance expenses during which time the Indian population grew by 40% and the cost of living by 250%. The 1988 budget has by now doubled to 5.6 billion in 1994 for approximately half a million Amerindians<sup>79</sup>. While it is undisputable that the Amerindians did benefit from this money, it is also true that it created many jobs for both the white middle and upper classes. For instance, while the employees of the Department of Indian Affairs were less than 2,500 in 1960, they totalled nearly 7,000 in 1974<sup>80</sup>, whereas the percentage of its native employees has never been very high, 26% in 1979<sup>81</sup> (falling to less than 3% at the level of the higher staff) which had fallen to 20% in 1991<sup>82</sup> (820 native employees out of 4156). Although the number of Departmental employees has decreased during the last decade (because more and more Indian bands are now controlling their local education, housing and health programmes), the white majority still benefits (as **provider**) from the large amounts of money being invested every year

in these programmes. The Department of Indian Affairs has an extremely elaborate and complicated organizational structure (e.g. lands, revenues & trusts; economic development; self-government; finance & professional services; human resources; communications; legal services; support services). These various bureaucratic sections and their subdivisions employ many "consultants" and "experts" of all kinds, but more importantly, as they are concentrated towards a single goal which is to raise the standards of living (better and bigger schools, houses and offices) in the Amerindian communities, they have created local economies of **consumers** constantly dependent on outside **providers** (for cars, materials, food, clothes, medical and technical services, court services, plane tickets, and so on). Apart from a few examples of successful economic development, the reality of the local economy of Canada's 2,300 reserves is that the people who live in these communities have always been denied even a minimal chance to participate **productively** in the global economy. Amerindians have thus traditionally been seen negatively by the white majority because of the unequal exchange which first took place during the "intensive care" phase (1850-1945) and was then consolidated and officialized during the "integration" phase (1945-1969)- i.e. through social assistance, family benefits, and other transfer payments- and which determined to a great extent both the life on the reserves and the relations of the Amerindians with the outside majority. Shkilnyk, writing about the case of a rural reserve in Ontario, demonstrates the impact of this unequal exchange on Amerindians:

As the Indians accepted the goods and services offered to them by the government, they progressively lost their claim to being an independent people.[...] The white people assert their moral superiority over the Indians in this regard, while at the same time they criticize the Indians for

failing to live up to their own cultural traditions of self-sufficiency. They believe that Indians are poor because they are shiftless, lazy, unreliable, irresponsible, profligate with money and material goods. At the same time, they insist that Indians are this way because they have given up their old customs and values and have not yet adopted the new ones prized by the dominant society. White people ignore the historical evidence that it is the very geographic, legal, and economic segregation of Indian people from the mainstream society, combined with the erosion of the traditional economic base of Indian culture, that has led to their present dependence on government bureaucracies. They also ignore the fact that the very bureaucracies working to "help the Indians" are contributing millions of dollars and a substantial number of jobs to the [regional] economy.[...] The tragedy is that the [region] is able to benefit economically from the poverty of Indian people that is ameliorated through government programs and services, but the entire social system of the town, and its social consciousness, in effect ensures that Indian people cannot escape from a life of economic deprivation on the reserves.<sup>83</sup>

The misunderstood "deal" struck between the Amerindians and the white majority (lands vs "eternal" assistance) at the time of the creation of the reserves materialized itself during the integration period. For the Amerindians, the measures associated with the development of the welfare state fitted perfectly with the various forms of public assistance they had been used to since the creation of the reserves and gradually, the

reserve became not only a new place to live in, but also a new way of life. However this institutionalized dependency was not what the government either intended or was expected- as stated earlier- after the Second World War. For the government, these measures were simply a means of encouraging the Amerindians to participate fully in the economic, cultural and social life of the country. And it is with this goal in mind that the Department of Indian Affairs focused closely on schooling as **the** solution to its problem.

#### THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

By the beginning of the 1950's, the federal government had realized that the educational standards of the reserve schools had always been extremely low <sup>84</sup> and that something significant had to be done if education was going to perform the role which was expected of it; i.e. to bring about the integration of the Amerindians. The first measure was thus to make schooling compulsory for Amerindians in 1952. From that date on, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had the duty to bring back to school any young Amerindian truant found either on the streets of the reserve or in the home of his/her parents (this "spectacular" aspect of the law has rarely been enforced in practice and absenteeism still is one of the most important problems in the reserve schools today).

The second measure was to build new elementary schools throughout Canada which could replace the first reserve schools, outdated by then, most of which had been built

between 1850 and 1925 (in Betsiamites, the first elementary school was built in 1924). However on many reserves, especially outside Québec, the ideology of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND) led to the enrolment of Amerindian children in both provincial **elementary** and **secondary** schools. Federal funds were provided to ensure that these students would be sheltered from the poor formal education offered on the reserves and from the influence of their community and home culture, in an effort to foster "integration", as McCue emphasizes;

The expectation [of DIAND] was that by removing Indian students from the poorly staffed, inadequately equipped, heavily church-oriented day schools, assimilation would be accelerated and the performance of students improved.<sup>85</sup>

As a result of this policy, Indian students enrolled more and more in provincial schools, but this procedure did not allow the Amerindian students to experience greater educational achievement than before (i.e. during the era of local ill-equipped elementary schools and "residential schools", between 1900 and 1945). This failure would later be attributed to the lack of understanding of the Amerindian culture on the part of the white teachers in the provincial schools.

As far as the case of Betsiamites is concerned, the philosophical basis of formal education was exactly the same as in the rest of Canada; Amerindian students attended regular provincial schools located outside of the reserve once their elementary schooling was complete. The few students who successfully graduated from elementary school



were sent to colleges far away from home (e.g. Sept-Îles: 260 km; Jonquière; 350 km) to continue their formal education, as historian, E. Achard, reports:

The government has made a huge effort to foster the integration of its Indians into the great Canadian fabric. Schools (even boarding schools) have been opened in Sept-Iles and in Betsiamites. The curriculum is the same as the Province's until the sixth grade [end of elementary school]. At this point, the student who has shown some ability is sent to a college at the government's expense.<sup>86</sup>[Author's translation.]

But it is important to note that there were at that time huge differences both in terms of input and output between the formal schooling system in Québec and the most advanced provinces, which were literally and technologically years ahead. Thus, the educational "backwardness" of the Betsiamites Montagnais must be placed within this broader context. Indeed, while schooling, at all levels, of most Anglo-Canadians advanced resolutely between 1900 and 1950, there was only a 1% increase (from 20 to 21%) in the number of registered French Catholic students as compared with the total number of school age children<sup>87</sup>. L.P. Audet insists on the fact that until the 1950s, very few Quebecers graduated from elementary school:

We cannot overemphasize the fact that the elementary school will remain, from the end of the XIXth to the end of the first half of the XXth century, the only one attended by the majority of the [province's] pupils. [i.e. French catholic].<sup>88</sup>[Author's translation.]

Nevertheless, it will be the "slowness" of the Canada's Amerindians to catch up at the educational level with other Canadians<sup>89</sup> (including Quebecers who made up for lost time in the 1960's, as the "Quiet Revolution"- an unprecedented radical structural change in every social area, and especially in the educational field-was launched), despite huge investments on the part of the Department of Indian Affairs. This will result in the federal government making attempts to sort out this "problem" once and for all by attempting to quickly turn Canada's Amerindians into ordinary Canadian citizens.

The solution proposed by the federal government in its June 1969 "White Paper" was quite simple; within the next five years, the Department of Indian Affairs was to be abolished and Indian status was to be eliminated. The response of the Amerindians was, as J.L. Taylor writes, "hostile and sustained"<sup>90</sup>. Actually, it was so literally explosive that it forced the government to abandon its proposals and to forget about its idea of "coercive" integration. Amerindians were indeed determined not to lose what appeared to them to be their last remaining rights and papers were soon published by native political organizations or Amerindian leaders, all of them stressing the desire of the Amerindians to gain control over the administration of their lives.

None of these papers was to be more influential than the National Indian Brotherhood's "Indian control of Indian education", released in 1972. This paper illustrated vividly that the hope of the federal government for the harmonious integration of Amerindians had never been shared by the latter, who saw in it an attempted assimilation. It also marked the beginning of a new era, i.e. the local control phase. Coming out of two distinct historical periods characterized first by the missionary care (1850-1945) and then by the

growing implication of the welfare state (1945-1969), Amerindians were now expressing the desire to be given a real chance to fully develop **themselves** and their **own resources**, as Harold Cardinal, president of the Indian Association of Alberta, wrote in 1969:

What the Indian wants is quite simple. He wants the chance to develop the resources available to him on his own homeland, the reserve. What he needs to make this possible includes financial assistance, enough money to do the job properly so that he does not fail for lack of adequate financing; training in the precise skills he will need to develop the resources, training so practical and appropriate to the task that he will not fail because he does not have the know-how to do the job and, finally, access to expert advice and counsel throughout the stages of development so that he will not fail because he was given the wrong advice or no advice at all. With the money, know-how, and expert guidance, then if the Indian fails, at least it will not be because he didn't try to succeed, and at least it will not be because he was not allowed to try. One key factor remains, Indian involvement. Our people want the right to set their own goals, determine their own priorities, create and stimulate their own opportunities and development...<sup>91</sup>

In other words, they were asking the federal government i) to stop treating them as institutionalized wards of the state incapable of governing themselves, ii) to honour its (financial) commitments (thus referring to the XIXth century "deals"; i.e. lands vs

assistance) and iii) to increase significantly the annual investment of the Department of Indian Affairs both in terms of capital as well as educational and training opportunities- local control being a sine qua non condition for the success of this undertaking.

More than two decades later, it can be said that the government did respond positively to these demands, even though some commentators still insist that the financial effort was far from adequate. The steps which led to local control of education will now be analysed through the example of Betsiamites.

#### THE LOCAL CONTROL PHASE (1969-...)

In 1973, the first secondary school was inaugurated in Betsiamites as a direct result of the protestation which followed the federal government's 1969 "White Paper". For the first time, those who graduated from elementary school did not have to leave the village in order to attend high school.

Of course, as the local control phase was just beginning, the school was not yet run by the Amerindians themselves. The federal Government was still responsible for the management of the school and its personnel and the curriculum did not yet reflect the culture of the school's student body, nevertheless, for the first time, students were not prohibited from speaking Montagnais in the classrooms at the secondary level. However this was only the first step, much more would have to be done.

During the next decade, there would be in Betsiamites- as in many other Canadian reserves-, intense rounds of negotiation rounds involving delegates from Betsiamites on the one side and delegates from the federal and provincial Governments on the other. The Montagnais demanded the full local control of primary and secondary education, the federal Government provided material assistance (e.g. money and buildings) necessary to realize this end and the provincial government (in this case Québec) involved itself in the development of an original curriculum, a training programme specifically aimed at Amerindian teachers while also making recommendations for the assessment methods and the validation of both local and public examinations. One should remember that in Canada, education belongs in the provincial sphere of administration.

There are variations in the timetable of these negotiations as far as the complete transfer of responsibilities is concerned. However on the whole, there was, on the national level, a steady increase in the number of schools transferred to Band Council jurisdiction between 1972 and 1994. For instance, while only 8 per cent of the Canadian native students attended Band schools (elementary and secondary) in 1978 <sup>92</sup>, this proportion had reached 44 per cent by 1991 (40,508 students out of 92,108 <sup>93</sup>). Enrolment trends observed between 1986 and 1991 indicate that this percentage would increase in the future (see Appendix 9). The rest of the students still attend either federal schools (8.7%) or public and separate schools (47.3%).

In Betsiamites, the transfer was completed in 1981. This concrete "Indian control of Indian education" had significant repercussions. It meant that the decisions to hire or fire principals, teachers and ancillary staff both at the elementary and secondary schools

were taken at the local level. It also meant that Betsiamites Amerindians had the authority to use either Montagnais, their mother tongue, or French, their second language, as the school language. In addition, the Band Council could even decide if it wanted, to take into account or ignore the provincial curriculum, assessment and certification standards, in addition to also having the authority to determine the school calendar. As one can see, the powers of the local authority are enormous; in fact the only sphere beyond the Band Councils' jurisdiction is the method and level of financing for local education, which is established by the federal Government.

Indian management of the schools in Betsiamites has produced results which are quite similar to those encountered elsewhere in the Canadian reserve system. As the overall aim of "Indian control of Indian education" is the dissemination, at school, of Amerindian values<sup>94</sup>, two approaches were- and still are- advocated: hiring as many Amerindian teachers as possible- a practice called "amerindianization"- and creating an Amerindian curriculum. Another possibility is the use of mother tongue as the school language, but that is far from being even worth considering in many communities. One of the most visible consequences associated with the Indian control of education is the very high staff turnover which usually comes along with it. Of course, Amerindian communities, often located in remote areas, were already used to this, but the years which followed the implementation of Indian control sometimes coincided with the complete turnover of a school's staff, a situation evidently problematic, as Richard King has aptly demonstrated<sup>95</sup>.

Apart from the communication of Amerindian values at school, "Indian control of Indian

education" also aimed at providing Amerindians with a "quality education" <sup>96</sup>. Amerindian leaders very well knew that the extremely low rates of achievement in their communities tended to lead the younger generations into life-long unemployment and they thus hoped that by changing both teachers and curriculum, the students would become more motivated, would come to school on a more regular basis and would be more successful. In this sense, the philosophical approach of the "Indian control of Indian education" is a good example of a social transmission educational theory, in this case in the form of functionalism because there is a consensus amongst most Amerindian societies (and this certainly is the case in Betsiamites) over the role of the school; i.e. the dissemination of "traditional" Amerindian values and the acquisition of modern skills and knowledge which will allow students to integrate into the labour market. The National Indian Brotherhood made this very clear in 1972 when it stated that

Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of Indian people. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability. We believe in education: ...as a preparation for total living; as a means of free choice of where to live and **work**; as a means of enabling us to **participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement.** <sup>97</sup>

Higher academic achievement was one of the major preoccupations (if not the major preoccupation) of the proponents of "Indian control of Indian education" and it is also a central theme in the current research. Has Indian control brought with it a greater academic achievement since the 1950s or the 70s ? Statistically, both officially and in

fact, it can be said that yes, the achievement rates within the reserves have improved significantly since then<sup>98</sup>. Yet the picture is much less rosy when examined at the micro level or when one bothers to try to discover why and how this statistical success was achieved. Indeed, while, for example, there had been 168 students from Betsiamites registered in grade 8 in 1969, 94 of them were still attending school five years later in grade 12 (last year of secondary school in Québec)- a 44% loss. After ten years of local control, this drop-out rate had increased to 71% (in 1991) and in 1994, it was 91%. These figures strongly contradict the official "good news", but they can be explained. Since 1973, the Québec Ministry of Education has consistently raised the educational standards at all levels. As a result, it is today more difficult for a mainstream student to obtain the DES (high school diploma) and the drop-out rate in the province of Québec had thus increased to 44% by 1993. An Indian band which controls its education may choose to adopt or ignore the provincial standards of education; for instance the mandatory public examinations at the end of the five regular years of schooling at the secondary level. Betsiamites, unlike many bands, has chosen to keep those provincial standards, because it is the best way to ensure that the diplomas issued by the local high school are as valuable as any other diploma. The bands which choose to set up their own educational standards often present an unusually high rate of success, but those students generally cannot go on to college and university because they simply do not possess the skills and knowledge required by these institutions.

There is also an explanation for the higher number of Amerindian students achieving success at college or university level. Just as the growth of public expenditure in education in the fifties and the sixties in the industrialized countries had coincided with



an invasion of social scientist researchers into education<sup>99</sup>, the delegation of educational responsibilities to the Amerindians coincided with the explosion of a variety of training and educational programmes specifically aimed at this new clientele. In other words, many colleges and universities became virtual diploma mills for their Amerindian students.

Thus, the ultimate goal (quality education) of "Indian control of Indian education" is as yet far from being attained, as the typical problems associated with Amerindian students (poor attendance, dropping out, poor motivation and attitude) during the 1950s<sup>100</sup> are today as conspicuous as they were then<sup>101</sup>.

Should one blame the Betsiamites Amerindians for having simply become the "managers" of a school which does not respect Amerindian needs and values? Certainly not. In fact, some of the most innovative educational experiments in the Canadian reserve system were conducted in Betsiamites in a relatively short period of time. Many highly capable consultants were hired in order to try to alleviate the difficulties of the students. Still, nothing seems to work and the parents have been vigorously asking for a "core curriculum" and a return to "basics". As previous research has shown<sup>102</sup>, the parents in Betsiamites are not different from most other parents in North America when it comes to the purposes of schooling, as stated by the American Secretary of Education in 1988:

American parents want their schools to do one thing above all others:  
teach their children to read, write, and speak well.<sup>103</sup>

The current political and economic situation in Canada does not allow one to be optimistic about the chances of reserves such as Betsiamites to hope for a change for the better in educational terms. The external debt of the country is now more than \$700 billion (£350 billion), and since it represents 84% of GDP, the situation is worse than Morocco and Poland or developing countries such as Ethiopia and Rwanda. In fact, the only country in the industrialized world which is worse off than Canada is Italy, with a 99,3% debt/GDP ratio, the USA coming next with 32,4%, ahead of the U.K. (29,5%) and France (25,6%)<sup>104</sup>. The unemployment rate in Canada is constantly growing; in the province of Québec, it has been demonstrated lately by many labour and religious organizations that the **real** rate was in fact 26%, and not between 10% and 13%, as is usually estimated<sup>105</sup>. These are far from good signs, as Amerindians have become highly dependent on the welfare state and its host of "special programmes" specifically aimed at them and which have cost Canadian taxpayers more than \$4 billion per year, on average, during the last four years, while the Amerindian population represents less than two per cent of the total population. To make the situation worse, polls indicate that Canadians are becoming progressively intolerant countrywide<sup>106</sup>, another cause of concern, as Amerindians are ironically associated with "foreigners".

In short, the last two decades were easier for Amerindian reserves compared with the prospects they are facing. The total failure of the "Charlottetown agreement" (a project aimed at allowing the constitutional reintegration of Québec as well as setting up a "new deal" between Canadians and Amerindians) at a national referendum in 1992 created a political cul-de-sac as far as Amerindians are concerned. This "agreement"- which would have given Amerindians extended powers at all levels over their

communities- was rejected both by Québec and the rest of Canada, but for opposite reasons. Since then, Amerindians have simply disappeared from Canada's political agenda, although their difficulties have not. Yet these difficulties are somewhat different from the ones which Amerindian leaders are used to focusing on. Once again, Betsiamites offers a valid example to illustrate the current situation.

On the positive side, as already said, life expectancy has constantly increased for all Amerindians throughout Canada since the 1960s, due mostly to a marked decrease in the number of infant deaths and reported cases of tuberculosis<sup>107</sup>. The number of Amerindian students registered in elementary and secondary schools and at universities has also increased significantly, not only because the population doubled between 1966 and 1988 (from 224,164 to 443,884), but also because the registration rate increased<sup>108</sup>. The number of new on-reserve housing units has risen considerably since 1977 (nearly doubling between 1977 and 1988), and there were in 1988 4,2 people per housing unit, as compared to 5,6 in 1977<sup>109</sup>, a genuine tour de force, considering the strong population growth. Appendix 10 illustrates the rapidity at which new housing units (approximate cost \$100,000 Canadian- around £50,000- per unit) were built in Betsiamites.

On the negative side, the unemployment rate on the reserves oscillates between 20 and 95 per cent (around 60 per cent on average) and is usually four to six times that of the general population. For instance, in Betsiamites, the unemployment rate in 1987 was estimated at 81.51 per cent amongst the 2,000 villagers (67.18% welfare recipients and 14.33% collecting unemployment insurance) according to the Department of Indian

Affairs<sup>110</sup>. One can easily imagine the social consequences of such a situation where, generation after generation, the "salary of boredom" (many Québec sociologists have named the welfare payments the Amerindians receive the "salaire de l'ennui") remains the most usual way to make a living. The almost irreparable sociological habits this has created will be discussed in chapter Six. In addition, as almost every decision affecting the population at any level remains in the hands of the Band Council (e.g. employment, education, health, housing) and as there is no opposition whatsoever, a social class made up of a privileged few has slowly emerged- along with an inordinately bulky bureaucracy. A climate of generalized suspicion on both sides (i.e. between the "haves" and the "have-nots") is now so deeply rooted that it definitely hampers the efforts of those who wish a change for the better<sup>111</sup>. Furthermore, while relations with the neighboring whites had improved during the eighties, they have deteriorated since the major "Oka crisis" in 1990, as many informal discussions attest and this is a major cause of concern for the Betsiamites Montagnais. The accidental killing of a nearby white resident by a young Amerindian on the reserve territory a few years ago did nothing to improve things.

In sum, as Segall et al. emphasized, "to understand human behavior, it **must** be viewed in the sociocultural context in which it occurs"<sup>112</sup>. The overall aim of this research is to come as close as possible to "truth" as far as schooling in an Amerindian community is concerned. The assertion is that the creation of the reserves was, and still is, the element which can best serve to explain the present situation, characterized by educational underachievement and by both active and passive resistance to schooling, amongst other things. James Wilson, from the Minority Rights Group, clearly foresaw

in 1974 that Amerindians and whites would have tremendous difficulties coming to terms with each other because of the "comfortable prejudices and fears and suspicions that have grown up in both communities" <sup>113</sup>. The way different people live- even if they are very close neighbors- influences the way they think or act and the longer these specific conditions are experienced, the deeper the resultant behaviours are rooted. Hence, when the Israeli philosopher Yechayahou Leibovitz had predicted in 1967 that the occupation of the Gaza Strip would corrupt the behaviour, the soul and the values of the Israelis. It is no surprise then to read almost thirty years later that in many schools in Israel, more than half of the Israeli students approved of the Hebron massacre <sup>114</sup>. Similarly, it is no surprise to realize that on the one side, some Amerindians today idealize the ancient nomadic way of life (even though only 0.05 per cent of the population in Betsiamites describe themselves as hunters or trappers <sup>115</sup>), wish to see the whites (described as "newcomers" by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples" <sup>116</sup>, "stupid Punchinellos" in the Amerindian literature <sup>117</sup>, paternalistic wards- see caricatures from Amerindian magazines distributed throughout Canada in Appendix 11 A- or "barbarians" in the Amerindian press <sup>118</sup>) re-embark and return to Europe <sup>119</sup>. Some even bluntly regret not having killed them all when they first arrived <sup>120</sup>. While on the other side, some of the whites today depict the Amerindians as profiteers <sup>121</sup>, "spoiled and demanding children" (as a Reform Party M.P. pointed out <sup>122</sup>) or eternal self-proposed martyrs (see the caricatures, published in a quality progressive newspaper, in Appendix 11 B), not to mention the traditional stereotypes describing the Canadian Amerindians as "fat heavy smokers and drinkers inclined to beat their wives or else committing suicide before they're twenty" <sup>123</sup>. More than half of all Quebecers believe that life is easier for the reserve Amerindians than it is for the rest of the population <sup>124</sup>. Some of

the quality press holds Amerindians partly responsible for the huge Canadian external debt<sup>125</sup>.

As one can see, the relationships between the white majority and the Amerindian minority have indeed deteriorated since the 1970s. Judge René Dussault, the co-chairman of the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples ascribes this deterioration to "relationship killers" ("tueurs de relations"), i.e. the host of special rights and privileges which are currently enjoyed by reserve Amerindians which have become extremely unpopular with "ordinary" Canadians in these difficult economic times.

These rights consist mainly of federal and provincial tax exemptions, subsidized housing units, free dental care, drugs, glasses and airplane tickets to visit "specialists" (surgeons, orthopaedists, cardiologists, etc.) in city hospitals. An example of extravagant expenses was made public during the fall of 1993. "L'Actualité" (a Québec magazine) discovered that it had cost Canadian taxpayers more than four million dollars (£2 million) in 1992 for the orthodontic treatment of 89 young Québec North Shore Montagnais (plane tickets, hotel rooms, meals, taxis and treatment. During the same year, the basic dental care treatment of nearly half a million young Quebecers aged between 10 and 13 had been charged to the parents for the first time because at \$15 million- or £7.5 M- a year, this formerly subsidized programme had been judged "too expensive" by the provincial government<sup>126</sup>).

Such are the basic special provisions created for reserve Amerindians to which the Metis and those Amerindians who do not live on a reserve are not entitled. Those who

strongly oppose having the Metis and off-reserve Amerindians being treated the same way as reserve Amerindians themselves. The reason is simple; it is obvious that since the number of those benefiting from these programmes would increase significantly, assistance would have to be proportionally reduced at the individual level, because the federal Government is imagined to be on the verge of bankruptcy.

Thus, the Amerindian identity in Canada long has been closely linked to such "advantages" which the reserve Amerindians are so jealously trying to preserve that the Metis who live on reserves are often harassed by "full-blooded" Amerindians (Mary Two-Axe Early, a famous Mohawk grandmother, pretends, for her part, that there are no full-blooded Indians anymore<sup>127</sup>) who call them (the Metis) "half-breed" or "paper Indians" and who worry that their race is being "genetically diminished". They strive then to "preserve [their] genetic quality"<sup>128</sup> with measures such as final expulsion from the community. Not allowing those who are not "full-blooded" Amerindians to enjoy any of "their" special rights has thus become one of the major concerns for reserve Amerindians. For instance, almost every Montagnais woman who was interviewed by peers in 1992 about mixed marriages expressed anger at the sight of "those whites" who were merely trying to "have access to Amerindian benefits (houses, allowances, free post-secondary education, etc.)"<sup>129</sup>.

Consequently, judge René Dussault is quite justified when he refers to "relationship killers". The same situation has arisen in Scandinavia, where white Swedes, Finns or Norwegians have, as J.P. Airut reports, become critical of the "traditional benefits" of the Sami (Lapps):

Scandinavians find it difficult to justify the Sami asking for rights on the basis of their ethnicity over and above the political, cultural and social benefits they already enjoy as citizens.<sup>130</sup>[Author's translation.]

This is especially true at a time when nation-states have been insisting for about two centuries on the equality of citizens as far as rights are concerned and have struggled to form collective identities in order to impose uniformity. The current world-wide economic crisis still reinforces this social trend by making the inhabitants of rich countries more and more insensitive to widespread human misery<sup>131</sup>. Coupled with the fact that the Canadian Amerindians are those Natives who already receive the largest amounts of money per capita in the world<sup>132</sup>, the collective and generalized crisis of confidence in Canada's political system (nine Canadians out of ten think that the provincial and federal governments are embezzling public funds<sup>133</sup>) has resulted in a cul-de-sac when the Amerindian population presents itself as a victim claiming substantial amounts of money in compensation for the loss of their lands. All this while Canadian taxpayers (whose tax "bill" has risen by 21% during the last five years even though welfare and unemployment insurance payments- to name only these two examples have been strongly limited<sup>134</sup>) are in a mood to rebel against the billions of dollars being paid every year to the Amerindian Band Councils with no way for the government to know if the money is spent as intended<sup>135</sup>.

The recent discovery that Ottawa has given away one billion dollars (£500 million) every year to Amerindian Band Councils to subsidize fictitious Amerindians did nothing to improve the relationships between Canadian taxpayers and Amerindians<sup>136</sup>. Of course,



that is not to say that the Amerindians are responsible for the huge Canadian external debt and the disastrous national economy- as the Auditor General eloquently demonstrates in his Annual Report year after year. Nevertheless within the official discourse adopted since the end of the 1960s, Amerindians were bound to become ideal scapegoats (not unlike immigrants) for the general public.

Such is the discrepancy between the situations of North American and South American Indians that it almost led to the spectacular departure of the Canadian Amerindians from the Aboriginal Conference on the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the Americas held in Guatemala in October 1991. The Canadian Amerindians were angered by discussions centered around integration and down-to-earth ways of alleviating the poverty of South American Indians instead of the spiritual and religious aspects of one's Indianness<sup>137</sup>.

Representing 0.001% of the world's 300 million aboriginal population<sup>138</sup>, the Canadian Amerindians have not experienced, at least during the last century, the same material difficulties as the vast majority of indigenous peoples. Almost everywhere, aborigines do not enjoy the same privileges as "ordinary" citizens. This is not only true for South American Indians, but also as for the ex-USSR's indigenous populations<sup>139</sup>, Asia's Kalingas, Isnegs, Tinggians, Bontoks<sup>140</sup>, or for the one million Tuaregs scattered throughout five African countries<sup>141</sup>.

In Canada- and in the USA-, Amerindians have been the object of so many governmental "preference" programmes for the last forty years that it has caused them to adopt a

general attitude based on isolationism, revenge and on aggressive demands, unlike, for instance, South America's Indians who are asking for more integration and for the adoption of socialist-oriented policies<sup>142</sup>. For instance, those who have had some experience with the Canadian Amerindians would not be surprised to hear what the Betsiamites chief had to say during the secondary school graduation party as she congratulated and encouraged the young students:

Education is important. It will allow us to take back the country which was taken away from us. Now that Canadians are not having children anymore- and that we, fortunately, keep on having many children-, we will have a chance to get all the jobs which will be available soon. But be careful! Do not let the immigrants arrive ahead of us. If the country is taken away from us once more, we will only have ourselves to blame this time.<sup>143</sup> [Author's translation.]

The dramatic "culture clash" at the conference in Guatemala in 1991 was therefore predictable. Hence, the situation of Canadian Amerindians can be compared, in a way, to the blacks' in the United States. Shelby Steele, himself an American black, argues that there is a serious leadership crisis within the black community as a result of past and present "affirmative action":

Today, black leadership is both self-serving and short-sighted. They are unwilling to see that the power they have wielded in American society for the last 25 years has been the power of victimization: We are victims and

therefore entitled to redress. These leaders are addicted to the powers and concessions they have gained by playing white guilt over past black victimization and do not see the importance of breaking the link between our power and our victimization.<sup>144</sup>

For his part, J.P. Desbiens stresses that the 1990's Canadian Amerindian elite

justif[ies] [its] privileged status on the pretext of defending the interests of [its] community: pacifist generals are few and far between.<sup>145</sup>

The Canadian Amerindians' negotiating style has also strongly influenced federal and provincial Government policy on the allocation of funds to Amerindian bands. It is indeed today well known that in Canada, politically powerful Amerindian or Inuit communities always receive more than their fair share while most of the 2,300 reserves have to live well below the poverty level. The richer community leaders are shrewd enough to use the conditions found in the poorer reserves as a way to obtain more from the government<sup>146</sup>. For instance, Hydro-Québec came to an agreement in March 1994 with both Amerindian and Inuit communities over a dam-building project in northern Québec where most of the \$555 million (£278 million) were given to the communities which were the least disturbed by the dam- but which were politically powerful-, the others, significantly affected by the dam but being harmless, shared what was left, i.e. 30% of the total amount<sup>147</sup>.

Furthermore, this inequality between reserves is reproduced within the reserves. For

instance, a white teacher who has worked and lived in Betsiamites for two years and has written a book about this experience discovered that the community- like the other Canadian reserves- is separated between the haves (around 10%) and the have-nots (around 90%). Having been told many times before his arrival in Betsiamites that sharing was the most fundamental Amerindian value, instead he was very surprised to find a situation which he compared to the one existing between rich and poor countries at the international level. He thus wrote, disillusioned, that Betsiamites is a "microcosm of the world"<sup>148</sup>.

The educational situation of Betsiamites is the result of an extremely complex mixture of social, political and economic factors. This is why it is essential to demonstrate that the three historical periods Betsiamites has lived through since its creation in 1853 have resulted, as in most Canadian reserves, not only in outstandingly strong acculturative pressures and poisoned relationships with the surrounding majority, but also, as Wilson emphasized in 1974, to chronic problems of poverty (despite incredible amounts of money being poured every year into the reserves) in addition to cultural and social alienation<sup>149</sup>- educational underachievement being a result, rather than a cause, of this condition.

The overall aim of this chapter has been the appraisal of the extent of the various forms of acculturation to which the Betsiamites Montagnais had been submitted since contact with Europeans. What is interesting about these three periods is that the first two- ranging from 1853 to 1969- were marked by external control (i.e. federal Government) while the last period was characterized by local control of employment, education,

public services and health. Most analysts- both white and Amerindian- were convinced, by the end of the 1960s, that the reason why efforts to improve the situation of the Canadian Amerindians had proven ineffective was that these efforts had been decided and implemented by non-Amerindian people. Some Amerindians in Québec have been exercising power themselves for more than twenty years now. As for Betsiamites, full control of education was obtained nearly twenty years ago, and yet, every year seems to be a mere repetition of past failures as far as school results, employment figures, or health statistics are concerned. Of course, the legacy of the policies of the Department of Indian Affairs is a burden, but these results nevertheless demonstrate that only deep structural reforms can bring about the desired changes. In the meantime, it is important to fully understand the expressions of the social behavior which appear to be counter-productive (if not self-destructive) in a rural reserve such as Betsiamites and whose effects on the educational processes will be closely examined in chapter Six (the dimensions of resistance to schooling).

What the reserve has brought about are "preference" programmes which are responsible for the development of undesirable sociological habits and which, as judge Dussault thinks, "kill" relationships with their neighbours. It is in that sense- because of "preference" programmes- that the reserve has become a new way of life, replacing the forest and the rivers. The reserve has also brought with it what Shkilnyk (writing about the Grassy Narrows reserve in Ontario) calls a "collective trauma" which is translated into "numbness in the human spirit", a characteristic of many Canadian Amerindian reserves.

Although things are better off in Betsiamites than in other reserves like Grassy Narrows, there are already many signs to indicate that such a social environment is slowly but surely settling in. The number of those who live below the poverty level is inordinately high, even for a poor rural area. The extent of problems such as venereal disease, sexual aggression, alcoholism, drug addiction, domestic violence, addiction to gambling, child neglect or suicide attempts are also disquieting indicators. Amidst all these factors, educational underachievement looks more like another symptom of social alienation rather than its cause.

Everyone knows that a quality education can work miracles for "at-risk" children, as many studies have convincingly shown. But the problem in Amerindian reserves is how to set up such a kind of education in the first place. Experience has shown that "Indian control" is not enough and that additional funding is not the answer either. The task of clearly identifying the areas where there is resistance to formal schooling in rural Amerindian reserves is an important one if the struggle towards "quality education" is to be continued. This is precisely what the next two chapters will discuss.

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- 5.Cf. *Atlas historique du Canada: Des origines à 1800* (1987), Montréal; Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal: map no. 14.
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- 8.in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985), op. cit.:1210.
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- 14.Cf. Ibid.:176.
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- 16.Ibid. 179.
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- 20.Cf. *Atlas Historique du Canada* (1987) op. cit.:map no. 14.
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- 31.Père Paul Le Jeune (1632), in *Relations des Jésuites, 1611-1636, Tome 1*, Montréal; Éditions du Jour: 6.["L'esprit ne manque pas aux Sauvages du Canada, si bien l'éducation et l'instruction. Ils sont desia las de leurs misères, et nous tendent les bras pour estre assistez. Il me semble que les nations qui ont une demeure stable se convertiront aisément."]
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- 33.Ibid.:143.
- 34.Cf. Gallo, M. "1492-1992: L'histoire par le glaive", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Avril 1992:28.
- 35.Cf. Savard, R. & Proulx, J.R. (1982) *Canada: Derrière l'Épopée, les Autochtones*, Montréal; L'Hexagone:65-70.
- 36.Cf. Rudel, C. (1985) *Les Amériques Indiennes*, Paris; Karthala:91-111.
- 37.Delâge, D. (1985) *Le pays renversé*, op. cit.:343. ["Progressivement, les nouveaux arrivants ont profité de leur supériorité militaire de même que des divisions et des rivalités guerrières pour prendre la place, toute la place. Il fallait ouur cela ou bien pratiquer le génocide ou bien exproprier les premiers habitants et les réduire à la réserve. Déjà en 1660 les deux modalités de la "solution finale" de la "question" amérindienne sont en place: génocide et/ou réserve."]
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- 40.Cf. Henderson, W.B. (1985), in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, op. cit.:868.
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- 42.Wilson, J. (1974) *Canada's Indians*, London; Minority Rights Group:5.
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44. Quoted in Bédard, H. (1988) *Les Montagnais et la Réserve de Betsiamites*, op. cit.:102. ["La Reine doit nous faire vivre puisqu'on nous prend les rivières, les forêts, etc."]
45. Cf. Bédard, H. (1988) *Les Montagnais et la Réserve de Betsiamites*, op. cit.:112.
46. Père H. Lalemant (1662), in *Relations des Jésuites*, Tome 5 (1972), op. cit.:18.
47. Cf. Père B. Vimont (1641), in *Relations des Jésuites*, Tome 2 (1972), op. cit.:57.
48. Cf. Carrière, G. (1958) *Le Roi de Betsiamites: Le Père Charles Arnaud*, Ottawa; Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa:49.
49. Ibid.:72.
50. Quoted in Carrière, G. (1958) *Le Roi de Betsiamites*, op. cit.:49. [Jusqu'à présent, on avait fait nos efforts pour attirer nos sauvages dans un lieu où ils seraient seuls, à l'abri des blancs. [...] C'était pour les sauver du naufrage que nous nous efforçons de les réunir. [...] C'est justement pour qu'ils ne leur deviennent pas semblables [aux blancs] et les retirer du milieu des blancs où ils souffrent, qu'ils demandent qu'on ne les abandonne point et qu'on aille résider au milieu d'eux. Je répondrai aussi par l'exemple du Paraguay et de nos missions sauvages de la Rivière Rouge. D'ailleurs, n'est-ce pas l'accomplissement de l'article de nos Saintes Règles concernant les missions sauvages ?]
51. Cf. McCue, H., in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985), op. cit.:872; Delâge, D. (1985) *Le pays renversé*, op. cit.:301.
52. Wilson, J. (1974) *Canada's Indians*, op. cit.:7.
53. Quoted in Bédard, H. (1988) *Les Montagnais et la Réserve de Betsiamites*, op. cit.:101.
54. Cf. Ibid.:102.
55. Cf. Ibid.:107.
56. Ibid.:114.
57. Cf. Ibid.:112.
58. Cf. Ibid.:110.
59. Cf. Ministère des Affaires Indiennes et du Nord canadien (MAINIC) (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens Contemporains du Canada: Besoins et Mesures d'Ordre Économique, Politique et Éducatif*, Ottawa; Direction des Affaires Indiennes:17.
60. Cf. *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985), op. cit.:1213.
61. Cf. Ibid.:18.
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65. Cf. Delâge, D. (1985) *Le Pays Renversé*, op. cit.:296.
66. Cf. Delâge, D. (1985) *Le Pays Renversé*, op. cit.:147-52; Feest, C.F. "Notes on native American alcohol use", in Hovens, P. (ed.) (1981) *North American Indian studies: European contributions*, Gottingen, Edition Herodot:201-222.
67. Feest, C.F. "Notes on native American alcohol use", in Hovens, P. (ed.) (1981) *North American Indian Studies*, op. cit.:206. Feest himself doubts the validity of this theory, but recent medical research has suggested that because most of them did not eat any salt, it is possible that the Amerindians' mineral deficiency could contribute to explain their "predisposition" to heavy drinking. (Cf. Delâge, D. (1985) *Le pays renversé*, op. cit.:148.)
68. Cf. Delâge, D. (1985) *Le Pays Renversé*, op. cit.:149.
69. Feest, C.F. "Notes on native American alcohol use", in Hovens, P. (ed.) (1981) *North American Indian Studies*, op. cit.:206.
70. Ibid.:202.
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76. *Dimanche Magazine*, "Création de l'aide sociale", Radio-Canada (radio), 6 Feb. 1994.
77. Cf. Pierson, C. (1991) *Beyond the welfare state ?*, Cambridge; Polity Press:126.
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79. Cf. MAINC (1980), *Les Indiens, Situation Actuelle*, Ottawa:121; MAINC (1989) *Rapport Annuel du MAINC*, Ottawa:18, 67; "Les retraités ont mal à l'inflation", *La Presse*, 11 May 1991; Chartrand, L. "Déficit: haro sur le gaspillage", in *L'Actualité*, 15 March 1994:19.
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81. Ibid.
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- 84.Cf. MAINC (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens Contemporains du Canada*, op. cit.:18.
- 85.*The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985), op. cit.:1213.
- 86.Achard, E. (1960) *Sur les Sentiers de la Côte-Nord*, Montréal, Librairie Générale Canadienne:74. ["Le gouvernement, en effet, vient de procéder à un grand effort pour faciliter l'entrée des Indiens dans la grande famille canadienne. Des écoles, voire même des pensionnats ont ouvert à Sept-Iles, aussi bien qu'à Betsiamites. Le programme est le même que celui des autres écoles de la Province jusqu'en sixième année. À ce stade, l'élève qui a montré des dispositions suffisantes est envoyé dans un collège aux frais du gouvernement."]
- 87.Cf. MEQ (1989) *Une Histoire de l'Éducation au Québec*, Québec:48.
- 88.Quoted in MEQ (1989) *Une Histoire de l'Éducation au Québec*, op. cit.:48.["On ne saurait trop insister ici, sur le fait que l'école élémentaire restera, à la fin du XIXe et durant la première moitié du XXe siècle, la seule fréquentée par la majorité des écoliers." ]
- 89."Most Indian students were not achieving success: in 1967 only 200 Indian students were enrolled in Canadian universities out of a total native student population of some 60,000." *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985), op. cit.:1214; "Figures produced at the end of the 1960s showed that 61% of Indian children dropped out before Grade Six (about first or second form standard in an English secondary school) and 97% before Grade Twelve. There were only 150 Indian students enrolled in full-time courses at university." Wilson, J. (1974) *Canada's Indians*, op. cit.:24.
- 90.Cf. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, (1985), op. cit.:1215.
- 91.Wilson, J. (1974) *Canada's Indians*, op. cit.:27.
- 92.Cf. MAINC (1980) *Les Indiens: Situation Actuelle*, op. cit.:54.
- 93.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) *First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles*, Toronto, Canadian Education Association:2.
- 94.Cf. *Rencontre*, "L'éducation en milieu montagnais", vol. 5, no. 4, June 1984:9.
- 95.Cf. King, R. "Role shock in local community control of Indian education", in Barman, J. & al. (1987) *Indian Education in Canada, vol 2: The Challenge*, Vancouver, University of B.C. Press:43-63.
- 96.Cf. *Ibid.*:2.
- 97.Quoted in Kirkness, V.J. (1992), *First Nations and Schools*, op. cit.:2. [Our emphasis.]
- 98.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) op. cit.:53-6; MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *MacPherson report on Tradition and Education*, Ottawa, DIAND:3,11.
- 99.Cf. Karabel, J. & Halsey, A.H. (1977) *Power and ideology in education*, Oxford, Oxford University Press:5.
- 100.Cf. MAINC (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens contemporains du Canada*, op. cit.:26.
- 101.Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) *First nations and schools*, op. cit.:53-6.

- 102.Cf. Vien, C. (1991) *L'Éducation à Betsiamites: Valeurs et Attitudes des Parents et des Enseignants*, op. cit.
- 103.Quoted in Bennett, K.P. & Lecompte, M.D. (1990) *The way schools work*, N.Y., Longman:7.
- 104.Cf. Institut Fraser, "Endettement: le Canada est comparé aux pays pauvres", in *Le Soleil*, Québec city, 12 May 1994:B12.
- 105.Cf. Radio-Canada, *Dimanche-Magazine*, 8 May 1994.
- 106.In Toronto, for instance, 67% of the population thinks that there are too many immigrants in Canada (it was 46% just two years ago). Cf. Dagenais, A. "La passoire canadienne", in *L'Actualité*, Montréal, 15 May 1994:21-6.
- 107.Cf. MAINC (1989) *Données ministérielles de base*, Ottawa, MAINC:20-7.
- 108.Cf. *Ibid.*:2, 32-7.
- 109.Cf. *Ibid.*:58.
- 110.Cf. CAMO (unp. commissioned report) (1990) *Plan directeur de développement économique: communauté montagnaise de Betsiamites*, Québec, Urbanex: Fig. 4.
- 111.Cf. *Ibid.*:Fig. 12 and p. 40.
- 112.Segall, M.H. & al. (1990) *Human behavior in global perspective*, op. cit.:353.
- 113.Wilson, J. (1974) *Canada's Indians*, op. cit.:30.
- 114.Cf. Kapeliouk, A. "Nos belles femmes allument les bougies", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1994:12.
- 115.Cf. CAMO (1990) op. cit.:23.
- 116.Cf. Commission Royale sur les Peuples Autochtones (1993) *Partenaires au sein de la Confédération*, Ottawa, Groupe Communication Canada:51.
- 117.Cf. Kapesch, A.A. (1979) *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*, Ottawa, Les Editions Impossibles:80-1.
- 118.Cf. "Les barbares sont à nos portes", in *La Presse*, 5 March 1994:B3.
- 119.Cf. Kapesch, A.A. (1975) *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, Ottawa, Les Editions impossibles.
- 120.This last opinion was expressed by the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations- the most important Amerindian political organisation in the country- during a conference on native rights in 1990 in Victoria. The president of this same conference, for his part, described the whites as a bunch of "homeless, stinky, and starving people" when they first came to Canada. Cf. "Les blancs auraient dû être tués à leur arrivée", in *Le Soleil*, Québec City, 22 November 1990.
- 121.Cf. Soumis, L. "Le bon sauvage...et le méchant: mythes et légendes", in *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1994:1.
- 122.Cf. Radio-Canada TV News, 10 June 1994: 10:00.

123.Cf. Baillargeon, S. "Les autochtones, des citoyens de seconde zone...en meilleure santé", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 5 Nov. 1993:A1.

124.Cf. "Un sondage gênant", in *La Presse*, 12 March 1994:B2.

125.Cf. "Et les milliards en gaspillage?", in *La Presse*, 29 January 1994:B4; "La colère des contribuables", in *Le Devoir*, 25 March 1994:B5; "Pauvre Radio-Canada", in *La Presse*, 2 March 1994:E1; "Pourquoi, malgré tout, un déficit de 40 milliards?", in *La Presse*, 26 February 1994:C3; "A propos de services aux Inuit et aux Indiens", in *Le Devoir*, 25 February 1994:A11; "Déficit: haro sur le gaspillage", in *L'Actualité* (Montréal), 15 March 1994:17-9.

126.Cf. Gendron, L. "Vos taxes au travail: des dents en or", in *L'Actualité* (Montréal), 1 March 1994:10-1.

127.Cf. Radio-Canada (Radio News), 15 March 1994: 8:00.

128.Interview with a Mohawk "full-blooded" Amerindian. Radio-Canada (radio) *Dimanche Magazine*, 20 March 1994.

129.CAM (1992) *Montagnaises de parole*, Québec, CAM:46-50.

130.Airut, J.P. "Les Lappons à l'assaut de la bonne conscience de leurs voisins.", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1994:9. ["Les Nordiques admettent difficilement que les Sâmes sollicitent des droits liés à leur particularité ethnique en plus des avantages politiques, culturels et sociaux acquis au titre de nationaux."]

131.For instance, Radio-Canada (radio news) reported on 30 May 1994 that the boat people and their children "did not impress anyone anymore in Hong Kong".

132.Cf. "Dossier spécial: Le Québec et les Autochtones", in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, Vol. XXIV, No 1-2, Spring 1994:133.

133.Cf. "La colère des contribuables", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 25 March 1994:B5. Also, the remarkable work of two Ottawa journalists-Robert Fife and John Warren (1991) *A Capital Scandal: Politics, Patronage and Payoffs- Why Parliament Must be Reformed* (Toronto; Key Porter Books Ltd) which unveils a costly and ineffective political system marked by "stringent party discipline, useless debates in which speeches are written by bureaucrats for MPs to mouth and a strangled committee system" (p. 251).

134.Cf. Radio News, Radio-Canada (Montréal), 25 July 1994: 8:00 AM and Picher, C. "Cinq années de vaches maigres", in *La Presse* (Montréal), 23 July 1994:E3.

135.Cf. Dubuisson, P. "Et les milliards en gaspillage?", in *La Presse* (Montréal), 29 January 1994:B4.

136.Cf. Berger, F. "Ottawa verse un milliard en trop pour des autochtones inexistants", in *La Presse* (Montréal), 18 June 1994:A1.

137.Cf. Lemoine, M. "Résistance indienne, noire et populaire", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1992:11. It was only due to the intervention of the Guatemalan Mayas that the Canadian Amerindians consented to stay in order not to break the unity of the North and South American Indians.

138.Cf. Rouland, N. "Le développement devrait-il tuer la culture?", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1993:16-7.

- 139.Cf. Ramonet, I. "Un espoir pour les autochtones de Sibérie", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1993:15.
- 140.Cf. Decornoy, J. "Ces Igorots qui n'ont rien à vendre...", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1989:18.
- 141.Cf. Bugnicourt, J. "Touaregs à la dérive", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1989:19.
- 142.Cf. Lemoine, M. "Résistance indienne, noire et populaire", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1992:11.
143. Short speech made in front of a 500 person public (with approximately 40 whites) on the 11th of June, 1994, at the UASHKAIKAN secondary school, in Betsiamites, Québec. It should be noted that this lady was a former teacher and school principal who had been devoted to native education for about thirty years.
- 144.Steele, S. "Booker T. Washington was right", in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Volume 7, No 4, Fall 1990:24.
- 145.Desbiens, J.P. (1993) *How can one be a native person?*, Québec, Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones:13.
- 146.Cf. Colas, E. "Les autochtones et nous", in *La Presse* (Montréal) 23 July 1994:B3.
- 147.Cf. Francoeur, L.G. "Hydro-Québec s'entend avec les Inuit", in *Le Devoir*, 18 March 1994:A10.
- 148.St-Pierre, R. (1990) *Le feu des jours*, Chicoutimi; Édition Livre de Bord:150.
- 149.Cf. Wilson, J. (1974) *Canada's Indians*, London; Minority Rights Group:5.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES

In this chapter, several elements of the local culture of schooling in Betsiamites are examined. Those various educational aspects (e.g. management, relations between school and parents, curriculum, motivation of the students, language issues, etc.) may, to a certain extent, be seen as being independent from one another. However, each of them provides a viewpoint which is both distinct and complementary since it leads to a holistic understanding (at least as much as possible) of the culture of this contemporary Amerindian rural reserve high school, which was one of the aims of the current research.

The next chapter, for its part, will be concerned with explaining why educators in this school are far from attaining the national goal which was set out during the "International Year of the World's Indigenous People" in Canada in 1993 (i.e. to "make high school a better place so that some day 10 out of 10 students will finish with a diploma in hand"<sup>1</sup>). This cannot be achieved without first looking at what schooling is about in Betsiamites. Indeed, as Hilda Hernandez has written,

Issues in the schooling of linguistic minority children are so complex that they cannot be effectively addressed unless they are viewed within the

broader societal context...<sup>2</sup>

As will be seen in the following pages, such an endeavour takes up some space, even though schooling, as Bennett and LeCompte have pointed out, is a "process which differs from education"<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, while education encompasses the span of one's entire life and is concerned with the process of learning before, during, and even (hopefully) after one's passage through the educational institutions, schooling is a term referring to the years spent in formal institutions whose specific function is the instruction of students. This last statement, however, does not imply that schooling is a simple concept. In fact, it can be approached in such a multitude of ways that some limitations have to be imposed by the researcher.

Thus, the following thirteen "variables" were selected either because statistics or relevant data already existed (and could therefore be reanalysed), because participant observation over an extended period of time allowed the researcher to appraise their respective importance at the local level or because "new" data could be produced through the use of questionnaires or interviews. They are presented below in the order in which they will appear in this chapter, in combination with the way each of them was examined:

Variables	Method of investigation
management	participant observation
financing	participant observation/ secondary data analysis of Band-commissioned report



Variables	Method of investigation
teacher training	analysis of programmes being offered to prospective Amerindian teachers/ comparison with Québec's Wide pedagogical priorities
pedagogy and culture of the classroom	participant observation/ comparison white/Amerindian pedagogy
aims and objectives of schooling	participant observation/ secondary data analysis of Band council reports
relations between school and parents	participant observation/ use of Tomlinson's survey on school-parent relations
curriculum	comparison between Québec curriculum and Betsiamites curriculum
achievement and underachievement	local statistics/ comparison with Québec and other reserves
assessment methods	comparison with Québec, other reserves and with the local elementary school
motivation of students	McInerney's questionnaire on motivational factors
truancy and absenteeism	local statistics/ diagram
rewards and punishments	participant observation
language issues	secondary data analysis of a major study realized by the director of the linguistics department of Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

As can be seen, since the purpose of this chapter is to help the reader "get a feel" of the local secondary school- in order to be able to understand what schooling means in Betsiamites-, the everyday life of this school (from the culture of the classroom to its management and the relations this school has established with the community, the Québec Ministry of Education and with the institutions responsible for the training of its

teachers) will be considered through the analysis of existing documents, answers to questionnaires, interviews and long-term (twelve years) personal observation and participation as a teacher for four years and as its vice-principal for six years and as its principal for two.

Although the discussion mostly focuses on the secondary school, the local elementary school occasionally is the object of some observations, as it has a tremendous influence on the secondary school, given the fact that it is the institution attended by the totality of the Betsiamites student population.

The result of this educational scrutiny will hopefully be a vivid portrait of a modern Canadian Amerindian secondary reserve school locally controlled (for nearly twenty years in this case). By no means can this portrait illustrate the reality of every secondary reserve school in Canada, as each reserve has developed a specific culture of schooling of its own, but it will nevertheless represent an excellent prototype of a rural reserve secondary school located in the province of Québec. Moreover, as Betsiamites is considered by the other Montagnais bands and by the Québec Ministry of Education as a leader as far as formal reserve education is concerned, this chapter can be appropriately regarded as being highly relevant in terms of knowledge about contemporary formal Canadian Amerindian band-controlled schooling in rural reserves. Such a knowledge is vital if the goal of "quality education" in rural reserves is to be maintained or achieved.

As many facets of the Betsiamites secondary school will be compared with what is

currently happening in the mainstream secondary schools of the province of Quebec, it is important to first describe in a general way these two educational systems (provincial mainstream education and band-controlled schools) before going into particulars.

## MAINSTREAM EDUCATION VS BAND-CONTROLLED SCHOOLS IN QUÉBEC

Education is a provincial responsibility in Canada. There are therefore significant differences between the different provinces' school systems. In Québec, the mainstream (public) elementary and secondary education is provided in 2,745 mixed schools by 158 school boards. Private education is available in an additional 300 schools (either elementary or secondary); the student body attending the private system has represented on average during the last ten years 8% out of a the total student population of 1,152,893 in 1992-93<sup>4</sup>. The language of instruction is French for 90,3% of students, English for 9,6% while Amerindian or Inuit languages account for 0,1%. School attendance is compulsory until the age of 16, but pre-school education is not. Elementary school begins at six and normally lasts six years, followed by five years at secondary school. The secondary school diploma (DES) is awarded to those who fulfill the standardized certification requirements of the "ministère de l'Éducation du Québec". These ministry examinations are intended to evaluate the "main subjects" (e.g. French, English, mathematics, science) and the performance of individual students compared with that of students attending all other schools. The in-school mark of a student counts for half of her/his final mark (the pass requirement being 60% for every subject),

but that school-mark proportion can be lowered if the results in a certain school indicate that students have been evaluated too generously by a teacher. Ministry exams are compulsory both in the public and private sectors, the only exceptions being the band-controlled Amerindian schools.

Underachievement at secondary level has become a major concern for the Québec Ministry of Education, especially since the academic requirements have significantly risen (as in so many other Western countries) during the last decade. Indeed, those who graduated from secondary school and therefore could go on to college and university represented 70% of the total number of students in 1991-92<sup>5</sup> (Appendix 12 illustrates the number of students likely to succeed according to the grade they are enrolled in). To raise this graduation rate to at least 80% is the main objective of both the Ministry of Education and the school boards over the next few years. For instance, one of the ways adopted by the Ministry of Education to achieve this goal was to have parents becoming more involved in school through the enactment of special legislation. When compared with that of other provinces, Québec's secondary school graduation rate usually ranks the province in eighth place (out of 10), but the excellent performance consistently obtained by the province (often first or second out of ten provinces) in international tests for 9 and 13 year-old students tends to indicate that the graduation rate in itself is not a valid indicator when trying to evaluate the Québec school system in comparison with the rest of Canada. These results would tend to indicate that provincial standards are probably higher in Québec.

In Québec, the 58,000 full-time elementary and secondary school teachers and 18,000

ancillary staff are hired by school boards, while the Ministry of Education is responsible for labour relations and financing. The teachers benefit from a level of job security that is, as mentioned by the Québec Ministry of Education, "unique in Canada, if not in all of North America"<sup>6</sup>. As for programmes of study and authorized teaching materials, they are also determined by the "ministère de l'Éducation". The result is obviously a centralized educational system.

By contrast, the Amerindian band-controlled schools are part of an extremely decentralized school system. Each Amerindian band which controls its education service is responsible for the hiring of teachers and ancillary staff, the design of programmes of study, the choice of the language of instruction and that of teaching materials, and it also determines the academic requirements for elementary and secondary graduation.

There were in 1990<sup>7</sup> approximately 9,000 Amerindian students in the Province of Québec who attended some thirty elementary and twenty-five secondary schools (excluding the Inuit). Twenty elementary and seventeen secondary schools were controlled by Amerindian bands; the others being federal schools. The language of instruction was French in 60% of these schools (the others having English as the language of instruction), and Amerindian languages were part of the curriculum in most of the band-controlled schools. The band-controlled schools are those to which particular attention is being paid in this study. There are considerable variations in the "official" success rates of these schools. While some schools boast excellent (although unofficial) success rates, others are facing a disheartening 90% dropout rate. This reality is a direct result of decentralization. As a matter of fact, the only common feature

shared by all band-controlled schools is that they are funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). Both DIAND and the provincial governments do not have authority over the way each community assumes responsibility for its education service and sets its priorities. Hence, the Mohawk band living in Kahnawake, near Montréal- and the largest Amerindian community in Québec-, has decided to adopt a resolutely traditional curriculum. The result of such a choice is a kind of schooling which is known in North America as a "survival school". This band rejects the province's curriculum, as well as its academic requirements. Others, like some Cree communities in the James Bay area, are less radical as far as the curriculum is concerned, but nevertheless refuse to have their students sit the examinations set by the Ministry. Not surprisingly, these communities, more often than not, show very high success rates; the trouble is that the outstanding majority of these "graduates" experience serious difficulties when they go on to college and university.

Betsiamites, which gained control over its educational service in 1981, is among the most moderate communities. After a few years during which various educational experiments were conducted, the band concluded an agreement in 1989 with the Québec Ministry of Education which stipulates that although the curriculum in Betsiamites is adapted to the educational needs of the community, the academic requirements for obtention the secondary school diploma (SSD) are the same as the rest of the province. This agreement was seen as necessary for the local education authority once it had become clear that when there were no standardized tests at the end of the secondary course, the "graduates" were very far from having attained the same educational level as mainstream students. For instance, out of the twenty-nine

graduates in 1987-88, twenty-two had failed to complete their college education seven years later and were living on welfare, while seven others were still trying in 1994 to obtain a college diploma. The twenty-four graduates in 1988-89 were also six years later in the same predicament; nineteen of them were living on welfare, one was working in Montréal as an unskilled laborer, three were (still) registered as college students and only one had reached university. Of course, to raise the final examination standards is no guarantee that the local standards of education will automatically be raised in lockstep, but it was nonetheless a step towards making the teachers and students aware of the level a Québec secondary school graduate was expected to reach, if she/he was to successfully complete post-secondary studies.

It has become clear in recent years to Québec's post-secondary educational institutions that the assessment of the academic achievement of its Amerindian students from secondary band-controlled schools was sometimes quite problematic to the extent that the results obtained by these students could not- when the band chose to rely on local results only- be compared with those of mainstream students. Consequently, some post-secondary colleges and universities- mainly two anglophone colleges and one university and two francophone colleges and two universities- have specialized in welcoming the graduates of these band-controlled secondary schools and have designed, over the years, special programmes aimed at making their access to college or university degrees easier.

In sum, as Kirkness clearly indicates, among the most common problems linked with the schooling of Amerindians which had been identified as early as the 1950s (e.g.

underachievement, poor attendance, poor motivation, problems with integrating school and culture, dropping out), academic achievement had been the only one to have significantly improved<sup>8</sup>. But it is difficult to imagine how such an increase could not eradicate the other problems to the same extent. Suspicions arise that these higher achievement rates were due, in many cases, to diluted academic requirements which condemned the "graduates" to "special" higher studies programmes and thus made these very studies much less attractive for Amerindian students. The perspective of struggling far away from home for ten consecutive years to try to obtain a university degree, as some Amerindian students at present do, is not a convincing incentive to stay in school, for any Amerindian secondary school student, and may rather bring her/him to question both the quality of education she/he receives from the local school and her/his future chances of success. It is revealing that the Québec Ministry of Education refused in the spring of 1994 to disclose publicly the results obtained by the Amerindian secondary schools which chose to sit the Ministry examinations because they were simply, as the Ministry put it, "so catastrophic that it would have demoralized them"<sup>9</sup>. This illustrates that the objective of a "quality education" set out by the Assembly of First Nations in 1972 has not yet been tackled, despite nearly two decades of "local control", which was, according to Amerindians, a sine qua non condition for the attainment of this goal. Maybe the Assembly of First Nations had underestimated the counterproductive powers at work in Amerindian communities, mechanisms of which are examined in the next chapter.

Now that the general educational "environment" (at the secondary level) of the province of Québec has been outlined, it is time to turn to some of the aspects (which were



mentioned above) of Uashkaikan, a band-controlled secondary school in a Montagnais reserve located on the North Shore of the province of Québec, in order to understand what schooling means in this rural area.

## MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL

Like other band-controlled schools, Uashkaikan, a 275-student secondary school whose student body is 100% Montagnais (the Montagnais are the most numerous out of the eleven aboriginal nations found in Québec) is administered locally by the "education service" ("services d'éducation"), which also runs the local elementary school. As far as education is concerned, the role of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND) is strictly limited to financing the local education service and the construction of new schools. The Betsiamites "education service" is thus totally independent, having no links whatsoever with any of the 158 provincial school boards. Instead, it deals directly with the Québec Ministry of Education regarding, when desired, agreements over curriculum or academic requirements, and with DIAND over financial matters.

The Betsiamites "education service" is a distinct branch of the Band Council. Its director is supervised by no one save the director of the Band Council itself, who is in turn answerable to the band's chief, elected by the population- along with band councillors- every two years. The "education service" director oversees every formal educational activity (from kindergarten to the allocation of funds for post-secondary students) taking place within the community. The decisions of the director, who is named by the Band

Council, cannot be challenged by anyone but the band director or the band chief.

This last statement is of the utmost importance to the understanding of the reserve's social organization. As the former chief of Betsiamites acknowledged herself in a newspaper article in 1994, the Band Council- in Betsiamites as in other reserves-is not at all like an ordinary city or village local government since it has powers, albeit on a smaller scale, similar to a real national government <sup>10</sup>. This is precisely why the Band Council is the object of so much criticism- again as in most other reserves- from sections of the general population. As it controls virtually everything as far as the public life of the community is concerned, from the construction of homes to forestry, not forgetting police, education, health, social assistance, and employment- apart from the local stores of which there are a few- almost every significant decision taken in any one of these areas has come to be a political one. This is, as a sponsored independent researcher assessed in 1990, one of the major weaknesses of the collective life of the reserve <sup>11</sup>.

Study of one of the organization charts of the Betsiamites Band Council and the Betsiamites Education Service (Appendix 13) will allow the reader to appraise both the size of the local bureaucracy and the extent of its powers (one may also notice that students and parents are absent from the educational organization chart). It is hard to conceive that such large organizations are needed to run a 2300-person reserve and its two local schools. The budget of the Band Council boggles one's imagination, as it is nearly ten times that of any other village of the province of the same size.

The decision-making process rests in the hands of very few people at the education

service. The above-mentioned authority of the director of education is such that no Canadian court could overrule his or her decisions to fire someone, even if it were totally unlawful or even discriminatory according to Canadian labour laws or the Constitution. The verdict of the Federal Court over the Eskasoni (a reserve located in Nova Scotia) School Board case in 1986 has set a precedent which has extended the powers of the reserve local education authorities to levels unparalleled anywhere in Canada, as a Labour Canada officer acknowledged on 21 February 1994<sup>12</sup>. Needless to say that under such conditions, there is no teachers' union whatsoever and that decisions are, inevitably, arbitrary or personalized, for better or worse, depending on which person in which reserve holds the job. Labour relations between school personnel and directors are therefore bound to be somewhat tense, especially since there is- again as in many reserves- no written policy concerning the goals of education or about the education service's labour relations. There is a general local labour policy, but it is mostly concerned with regulating the situation and status of office workers of the Band Council, no special provisions being made for teaching staff. There is, though, one hiring policy which is extremely clear, as was stated by the now defunct "Québec Indians Association" in 1974 namely the "amerindianization" of schools, requiring "the gradual changeover of teaching personnel from non-Amerindians to Amerindians"<sup>13</sup>.

Turning again to the organization chart of the education service (Appendix 13), the ethnic breakdown is as follows: every member of the Band Council- i.e. the "Conseil de Bande" on the chart-(approximately one hundred employees) is Amerindian (100% Montagnais), just as those employed by the education service, except for one vice-principal (elementary school) and one principal (secondary school) who are white.

Seventy percent of the teaching staff of the secondary school and 30% of the elementary school are white French-speaking Québécois.

The qualifications of the personnel of the Band Council and of the education service are problematical. Although the current local labour policy specifies that to hold a relevant diploma (usually a university degree) is compulsory for those wishing to work as director of the Band Council, or of the education or health departments, many Amerindians were hired prior to the adoption of this policy, after the publication of "Indian control of Indian Education" and have no certified qualifications.

This confusion about qualifications (or the absence thereof) has not helped in creating a healthy local labour policy. A kind of "blackmail" became apparent in the eighties. Some employees used their academic qualifications to avoid being disciplined (or even fired) by their supervisors who were less "qualified" than they. In other words, diplomas are sometimes used as weapons (offensive or defensive) with regard to local labour relations. Such a situation prevails, according to the Québec Ministry of Education, in the majority of the education services of the bands which control their own education <sup>14</sup>. Needless to say, this creates highly stressful situations. Such is also often the case at the higher levels of administration. For instance, a former Betsiamites Band Council Chief (1990-92) had quit elementary school after his second year and could hardly read or write. The fact that such a person came close to being reelected twice after his regular two-year mandate says a lot about deficiency of the local human resources.

The result of this distribution of powers and qualifications, of the asserted wishes of

hiring Amerindian instead of white employees and of the absence of educational goals or any legal protection against abuse of power is a local school system which is subject to "political maneuvering"<sup>15</sup>, as Shkilnyk emphasized. Such a reality is arguably harmful in terms of social harmony, cross-cultural relations and productivity. Moreover, this considerably limits the powers of the principals of the local schools. These people may be forced by the local authority (education service or Band Council) to hire, for instance, teachers whom they would rather not have because they may be convinced that they are far from being "excellent" teachers, or else being forced to set up various services within the schools whose usefulness is far from obvious (apart from perhaps providing a job for a "local").

The analysis of the way the budget is spent also illustrates this "personalization" of local powers.

## FINANCING

In Betsiamites, as in most reserves, the budget comes from the federal Government (and, to a lesser extent, from the province) and is spent by the Band Council, which owns everything (including the houses the people live in) except the few local private stores. Private property is therefore an almost alien concept in Betsiamites. There was at one time a local source of revenue produced by the forestry department which also belonged to the Band Council but which was closed in 1997 as from few local private retail trades, but these activities have always accounted for less than 20% of the total

annual budget of the reserve. For instance, they respectively represented only 6% and 9.9% of the \$10,172,000 (about £5,000,000) annual band revenue in 1989<sup>16</sup>. The rest of the money is provided by the federal Government through a programme entitled Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). These AFAs are a result of the explicit wish of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND) to have Amerindians "assume responsibility for programmes and services that meet their own needs"<sup>17</sup> and Québec's Amerindians now directly control more than 90% of their allocated budget. Under the terms of the Indian Act, the properties of reserve Amerindians (as well as their salaries, as long as it originates **from** the reserve) and the bands' are exempt from taxation. Betsiamites thus has to depend on the federal government in order to pay for the salaries of band employees (including teachers) and for all the other programmes it now controls (e.g. health, education, social services, police, construction, maintenance).

Officially, the annual budget of Betsiamites was, under the term of its first five-year AFA (1990-1994), around \$10 M CAN (£5 million) a year, but it has steadily and significantly increased since then. But as these amounts do not usually include other important transfer payments such as unemployment insurance, old-age pensions and family benefits (which represented nearly three million dollars in 1989<sup>18</sup>), one cannot solely rely on them to assess the reserve's financial situation. In fact, "Pulse News" (Montréal CTV network) estimated on September 9, 1990, that when compared with an average Canadian family of four, the reserve Amerindian family benefited from a \$42,000 (£21,000) annual financial advantage (tax advantages:\$25,000; home ownership:\$6,000; import bargains:\$3,000; special subsidies:\$8,000). These figures illustrate two things. First of all, it is certainly wrong to assume that not enough money

is being allocated to the reserves. Actually, a reserve like Betsiamites manages a budget (for the fiscal year of 1993-94, estimated at more than twenty five million dollars, or nearly thirteen million pounds<sup>19</sup>) which is about ten times that of neighboring white villages with a similar population size. Secondly, a strong dependence on government subsidies has been created by the extraordinary development of the welfare state since the seventies. Indeed, as in most other reserves, the government is directly responsible in Betsiamites for more than 80 percent of the total income of the reserve.

As Shkilnyk demonstrates, this long-term dependence on the two levels of government (federal and provincial) has been harmful to reserve Amerindians for three reasons: i) the government ultimately decides on the amount of money which will be made available for Amerindians and any significant withdrawal of financial support would be catastrophic; ii) welfare, training, and "make-work" programmes have eliminated incentives to actively look for employment iii) people have developed "boundless expectations" from government programmes and think that this "will continue indefinitely"<sup>20</sup>. As if all this were not enough, the result of gradually transferring to the band councils these huge amounts of money has been the development of a bulky bureaucracy which now literally "controls" the reserve and in relation to which the unemployed (approximately 80 percent of Betsiamites inhabitants<sup>21</sup>) feel both dependent and powerless. It is therefore not surprising to realize that it is very difficult to estimate exactly where the money goes, since almost every director acts as if she or he were spending her or his money and the annual budget is never made public, at least in a detailed form. Of course, salaries are determined in accordance with national norms, but important sums of money are used by those who exercise power in a very discretionary

way. This latter issue, of course, has been responsible for internal tensions between the unemployed and the employed and also for the development of a generalized suspicion towards the band council and its employees.

Education, for its part, used to take the lion's share- along with social assistance, both at around 30 percent of the total expenditures made by the Betsiamites Band Council <sup>22</sup>. This percentage is the same on average on most reserves and has not varied much since the beginning of the 1980s, when DIAND estimated that out of the total amount of money it was transferring to the reserves, 40 percent was allocated to education and 22 percent to social assistance<sup>23</sup>. However, expenses related to health and housing have begun to increase considerably during the last years, as the number of local welfare recipients has increased, and has started to affect the level of the local education budget.

For the two local schools, their annual budget can be considered, by all standards, as being extremely generous. It allows them to provide students with a first-class computer room, up-to-date materials and books, free pencils, sheets, and notebooks at the start of the year. Actually, there is so much money available that the secondary school students are even paid ten dollars each (£5) every month only to come to school. (At the provincial level, not only do students not receive any money from the school, but their parents have to pay around sixty dollars at the elementary level and more than one hundred dollars per year and per child at the secondary level for ancillary services, paper, etc.). Moreover, both the Betsiamites elementary and secondary school students receive eighty dollars each (£40) at the beginning of every school year, presumably to



buy gym clothes. It is also not rare to see every Betsiamites teacher order every year thousands of dollars worth of books while those working at the provincial level are restricted to usually three hundred dollars, not to mention the unlimited amount of photocopies Betsiamites teachers can make while their provincial counterparts are strictly limited to no more than four hundred per year. Whichever way one looks at it, it is obvious that the local schools in Betsiamites are not underfinanced. Actually, it has even become common practice for the Band Council to dip into the education budget every year in order to pay other bills: i.e. paving the street, house and building construction or to hire all post-secondary Betsiamites students for summer employment. "Dipping" used to be \$200,000 (£100,000) on average in the eighties; in 1996 and 1997 it averaged \$800,000 (£400,000) a year, which says a lot about local priorities.

#### TEACHER TRAINING

Seventy percent of the teaching staff at the elementary school in Betsiamites are Amerindian while this percentage only reaches 30 percent at the secondary level. There are two main reasons for this situation: i) since the publication of "Indian control of Indian education" in 1972, most effort- as far as teacher training is concerned- has traditionally been devoted to setting up programmes for elementary schools, and ii) there is general agreement across the reserves that it is much easier to teach children rather than adolescents and therefore, a career as an elementary school teacher is more attractive. Nevertheless, all these teachers have undergone very different kinds of

teacher training, both because of the schools (either elementary or secondary) in which they were intending to teach and because of their race.

In the wake of the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education" by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIA) in 1972, many Canadian institutions saw the immense opportunities which were offered to them by this sudden arrival of thousands of would-be Amerindian teachers. As was stated by the NIA, it was the federal Government's duty to see that these students would be given preferential treatment as far as admission standards were concerned. NIA had mentioned that good will and a desire to be a teacher should be seen as satisfying qualities for any prospective Amerindian teacher<sup>24</sup>. This declaration constitutes a landmark in the field of Amerindian education in Canada, and not only in the field of Amerindian teacher training programmes. This philosophy advocated by the NIA in 1972 was unanimously agreed upon- without discussion- by the federal Government (only too eager to calm down the anger of Amerindian leaders following publication of its "White Paper" at the end of the 1960s), the provinces (who had no choice and no voice anyhow) and educational institutions throughout the country. Amerindian students were to attend post-secondary educational institutions throughout Canada with the double purpose of obtaining the qualifications they should have had in the first place at the time of their admittance (through "remedial programmes") plus the diploma they were seeking to obtain (e.g. administration, health, law enforcement, criminology, teaching) by their attendance at these very institutions <sup>25</sup>. This principle has given rise to the lamentable reputation- in particular the frequent accusation of "discount diplomas" (or "diplômes à rabais", in French) assigned to so many of these programmes, teacher training programmes included.

Specific phenomena are at the root of such a state of affairs. First of all, the incredible mushrooming of Canadian college and university programmes specifically aimed at Aboriginal students (i.e. both Amerindian and Inuit) which were created after the publication of "Indian control of Indian Education" at the beginning of the 1970s. DIAND published in 1992 a catalogue on Indian/Inuit training opportunities available in Canada for Aboriginal students. Even though this catalogue so far incomplete, and ignores many of the existing programmes, it is nevertheless a 157 page document listing nearly one hundred post-secondary institutions which offer training in numerous domains. It is interesting to take notice of the title of some of these programmes (e.g. "Customized courses in Band Management", at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology <sup>26</sup>; "Native entrepreneurship training", at the University of Lethbridge <sup>27</sup>; "Indian teacher education programme", at the University of Saskatchewan <sup>28</sup>) and especially of many of their prerequisites. Most of the time, there are no formal requirements or they "vary according to course" <sup>29</sup>, which gives great freedom to the institution in question. When there are formal requirements, one may be assessed as a "mature student" <sup>30</sup> or "may have" to participate in a telephone interview <sup>31</sup>. Needless to say, certification also "varies" enormously. Either the student "could", or "should be awarded" a degree <sup>32</sup>, or the degree is simply named a "Post Secondary Diploma" <sup>33</sup>, or else it "varies" <sup>34</sup>, even where there is simply "no formal certification" <sup>35</sup>. In other words, it is clear that many institutions, in order to welcome and accommodate this new and abundant clientele, have not hesitated to turn themselves into diploma mills. Of course, some of the programmes offered in this DIAND catalogue are as serious as any other post-secondary institution's "ordinary" programmes, but many have been so hastily conceived and implemented that one can easily have doubts about their value. One proof of this lies

in the "teaching licence" (at the primary level) that Amerindian students used to be awarded, until very recently, once they had completed the "Université du Québec à Chicoutimi" (UQAC)'s three-year course "Baccalauréat d'éducation au préscolaire et d'enseignement au primaire". Normally, students who complete such a degree are awarded a provincial teaching licence which allows them to teach (either in French or in English) **anywhere** within the province. The same is true for other provinces. However, the teaching licence of UQAC allowed Amerindian students to teach within the reserve system only. Such a licence (one can be seen in Appendix 14) was issued by the Québec Ministry of Education. There are two possible explanations for this. Either the course was so specialized in "Indian affairs" that it could only be aimed at teaching reserve Amerindian students, or the level of what was taught did not meet the usual standards of the universities and the Ministries of education. However the facts that: i) non-Amerindian students are (still) not allowed to register in these courses; ii) that many Amerindians have openly criticized them (for example, the Betsiamites Montagnais asked UQAC in October 1994 during a meeting to have all Amerindians registered to the same courses as the white students because they were afraid the standards of their "special programmes" were too low. But despite this request, this university still offers many programmes "specifically" aimed at them<sup>36</sup>; see Appendix 15. The only change which has been made is that the licence now authorises Amerindian teachers to teach throughout Québec), and iii) that some of these graduates have obvious shortcomings in terms of writing abilities (see Appendix 16, where a note written by such a graduate demonstrates that this Amerindian teacher has not even mastered the standard of the primary level educational programme she/he is teaching- a situation common in rural parts of countries such as Brazil<sup>37</sup>) rather suggest that the second possibility (low

standards) is the right one. Parents have also often expressed dissatisfaction about some Amerindian teachers as far as their competence is concerned<sup>38</sup>. The former principal (Amerindian) and vice-principal (white) of the local primary school have already mentioned twice during formal meetings with the local education service that there were at least eight Amerindian teachers at their school (out of seventeen) who were either incompetent or unwilling to change their nonprofessional attitude<sup>39</sup>. This brings the discussion directly to the heart of the subject of resistance to schooling, even though this chapter is concerned with "dimensions of schooling". In fact, it illustrates that it is virtually impossible to talk about the local dimensions of schooling without touching this "other" dimension, which is embedded in this very process.

The second reason for the often poor quality of training offered by Canadian educational institutions to Amerindian students (teacher training included) is the implicit lowering of standards within almost **any** programme offered to such students. Although one will seldom read explicit recommendations regarding this issue in college or university literature, there is a generalized consensus in Canadian educational institutions that the Amerindian students benefit from "special" treatment. One example will suffice. One particular adult Amerindian student was registered in a regular teacher training programme at the above-mentioned UQAC in the 1980s. Having failed twice a compulsory course reputed to be the hardest in the programme, extraordinary means were adopted to make sure that this would not happen a third time. They consisted in the hiring of the director of the department concerned as special teacher for this unique student, paid for by the Band Council of his reserve (and thus by the Ministry of Indian Affairs), with the strict mandate of making sure that this student would succeed (which

he did, of course). This is an extreme example, but this teacher nevertheless has worked in a reserve school ever since. Most of the time, special treatment consists in greater flexibility as far as absences, lateness and other requirements are concerned. This may seem only trivial, but in the long run, it has allowed a number of undesirable candidates to slip through the various requirements of their programmes and be awarded degrees which they, all things considered, did not deserve. When it was first decided to lower standards in 1972, it was in answer to the formal demand of the Amerindians themselves (in "Indian Control of Indian Education"). It was then thought on both sides that this lowering of standards would be temporary, giving just enough time to the Amerindian students to make up for lost time. But at the same time these unqualified (i.e. either possessing no degree or a "discount degree") persons had access to jobs with an enormous amount of powers and responsibilities, they also had access to a job security which was typical of the golden age of the Canadian public service (i.e. before budget cuts). At the level of reserve primary and secondary schools, this job security for "unqualified" Amerindian teachers has had tremendous negative long-term effects. These teachers cannot develop the potential of the students for whom they are responsible and the latter tend, as a result, to accumulate serious educational deficiencies which ultimately hamper their progress. In-service training can sometimes compensate for such anomalies, but as most reserves are located in remote areas and as the number of teachers concerned is quite limited, such training becomes extremely expensive for band councils and cannot be offered on a regular basis. It then becomes obvious that the issue of "unqualified" Amerindian teachers is an explosive one which has become a political problem- given its implications- instead of an educational one. In Betsiamites, for instance, the former principal and vice-principal of the elementary

school had clearly identified the Amerindian teachers who could be considered as undesirable and counter-productive because of lack of competence and/or unwillingness to change. What then is to be done with these teachers ? Such a problem does not exist when a white teacher finds herself or himself in such a situation; she or he is simply fired. But these Amerindian teachers all have relatives among the reserve inhabitants, and especially among Band Council personnel. To simply admit publicly that these teachers are not as qualified as they should be would have serious and complicated consequences for the directorate of the school, which would be asked why it had waited so long to bring this essential matter forward, as well as for the Band Council who would be held responsible for having selected these candidates in the first place (the Band Council selects locally the prospective teachers and pays for their tuition). One can easily imagine the social trauma which a massive teacher dismissal would cause. The relatives of the fired teachers would protest vigorously, insisting that at least **these** people all have university degrees while some key directors of the Council- including the education service- don't. And what about the university which issued their degrees ? It would have to be accused by the Band Council of being a diploma mill. In sum, the protection of some incompetent Amerindian teachers is structurally rooted in the very teacher training programme which is supposed to prevent this in the first place. The standards of certain Canadian educational institutions were lowered- at the demand of the Indians themselves- at the beginning of the sixties to allow as many Amerindian prospective teachers as possible to register in "customized" teacher training programmes. It was then thought that these standards would gradually be brought back up until they were comparable to the provincial programmes. However once a teacher has been awarded his or her university degree, once the Québec Ministry of Education

has issued his or her teaching licence (even if it is limited to the reserve system), and especially once he or she has worked in the same school for many years, how can one come up and arbitrarily decide that this teacher is not competent ? When such teachers are a majority or even a not inconsiderable minority in a given reserve school, the local standards of education certainly are at risk since significant improvements are delayed until these teachers retire.

Actually, the issue of the unsatisfactory results emanating from the various Amerindian teacher training programmes set up since 1972 is so well known that the federal Government has openly acknowledged the situation. For instance, DIAND admitted ten years ago in a widely-distributed leaflet that the quality of education in the reserve system was most of the time poorer than in the provincial systems, especially in the areas of curriculum, facilities, and **personnel**.<sup>40</sup> Although tremendous progress has been recorded at the levels of curriculum and facilities, the situation of Amerindian teaching personnel is still often as discouraging as it was ten years ago. The difference now is that the federal Government is no longer so keen as it was on discussing this fundamental issue. When it comes to education in the reserve system, the federal Government **and** the Amerindians themselves prefer to talk about self-government, aboriginal rights, treaties, constitutional amendments and the "Canadian charter of rights and freedoms". For example, in the most important document dealing with Indian education in Canada written during the last five years, not once is there any mention of Amerindian teacher training programmes, even though the author of the document concludes this fifty-page document on the utmost importance of the principle of **comparable** (to mainstream education) **quality** of education which must be offered to



Amerindian students in the reserve system<sup>41</sup>. The author, and by extension DIAND, **assumes** that local control of education is the panacea for every conceivable shortcoming, including that of the quality of teacher training programmes aimed at Amerindian students.

ICEM ("Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais), an organization which is devoted to fostering the influence of Montagnais education and culture, has also demonstrated how this serious matter is now taboo in Québec (described by many as the most politically correct area in North America<sup>42</sup>). During a two-day colloquium for teachers of Montagnais students (where there were more than one hundred Amerindian and white teachers present) held in Sept-Iles (North Shore, Québec) on 1 and 2 October 1993, there was nary a mention of existing teacher training programmes or of the need for important changes in those programmes<sup>43</sup>. Yet, two years earlier, ICEM had stressed that one of the most essential objectives of the educational programme of the Montagnais nation was to have, by the end of 1996, a **qualified** Amerindian teaching body<sup>44</sup>. ICEM, just like DIAND, estimated that it was up to each Amerindian band to clearly define their expectations in this matter. Nothing has been done, either in Betsiamites or elsewhere. Amerindian bands still rely on the colleges and universities to adequately train their Amerindian teachers, while everyone becomes trapped in a vicious circle. Incompetent Amerindian teachers cannot be fired (because of the unwritten job security Amerindian employees enjoy in the reserve system) and local education services pretend that only band councils have the authority to make a significant move in this field. Band councillors and chiefs are seldom qualified enough to clearly weigh the consequences of the current situation and they are unwilling to take any decision which would not be unanimously accepted within the community. Finally, the educational

institutions responsible for the training of Amerindian teachers are afraid that this lucrative clientele will go elsewhere should courses suddenly become too difficult. From time to time, a few Amerindian people rebel against the low standards of some Amerindian teacher training programmes (as happened in Betsiamites in 1994), but no formal, clear and official demand is ever made. Everything remains at an informal level. J.P. Desbiens has explained why he thought so little ever changed in the reserve system. To him, it was clear that it was because many people found it advantageous:

Politicians on both sides, first of all, who are thus freed from practising their proper profession, which is to make decisions and commit themselves to the directions they have announced and supported (...) experts on all sides (...) technocrats of various levels of government (...) the Native elite, who justify their privileged status on the pretext of defending the interests of their community...<sup>45</sup>

The issue of Amerindian teacher training provides another example of generalized immobility. Perhaps recent changes in provincial teacher training programmes will oblige Amerindian leaders to look into this matter and live up to the objective of a competent Amerindian teacher body laid down by ICEM in 1991. Indeed, since the standards of education have been consistently raised during the last ten years in Québec, the provincial government has decided that teacher training should and will be extended to four years of study at the university level (up to 1994, it used to be a three-year course) and that stiffer requirements (e.g. spoken and written French) be demanded of prospective teachers. Inevitably, the programmes aimed at Amerindian students will be

affected sooner or later by these new regulations. This can only be to the good, since many researchers have demonstrated very clearly the importance, for any school, of having good teachers. As Harbison and Hanushek write,

The estimated effects of a good teacher are substantial by any measuring stick, and an overall improvement in the stock of teachers- increasing the proportion of highly skilled teachers- could bring about revolutionary changes in student performance.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, one must not simply equate "good teacher" with "good teacher training programmes", as teaching is an extremely complicated and not yet fully understood profession. Nevertheless, it is extremely important to make sure that Amerindian or white teachers working in remote areas with little possibility of in-service training (the distances involved being too great) have the opportunity to be registered in excellent and relevant teacher training programmes. For the reasons mentioned above, this is not necessarily the case now, but it is an inescapable condition if the objective of "parity in the quality of education" (i.e. with the majority), which was presented by MacPherson as the ultimate goal of Indian education <sup>47</sup>, is to be reached one day. In the meantime, new teachers (and especially white teachers), will continue to rely on the perceptions of their colleagues in order to decide upon their pedagogical choices- as will be seen in the next section of this chapter.

**PEDAGOGY AND STUDENT CULTURE:**

These two facets of the school's life will be discussed together as they constantly relate to each other. The dictionary defines pedagogy as "the art, science, or profession of teaching"<sup>48</sup>. The two words "art" and "science" will be retained here. As for student culture, a reality similar to that evoked by Dumont and Wax in their article on "Cherokee school society"<sup>49</sup> will be highlighted (i.e. the students "organizing themselves" in order to "exercise control over the teacher"<sup>50</sup>).

Without any doubt, pedagogy is the most crucial element as far as teaching and "effective schooling" are concerned. Learning simply cannot take place in a disrupted (or bored) classroom. But the position of the teacher is, as Georges Gusdorf puts it, almost unbearable<sup>51</sup>: he/she, as the guardian of "truth", must always be "right" and must educate and edify young people, and not amuse or divert them<sup>52</sup>. How any teacher can succeed in fulfilling this mission still is for a large part, just like it was in the 1960s, a mystery<sup>53</sup>. As Gusdorf writes, the most sophisticated teaching methods will not be of any help to a teacher who has not succeeded in having his authority recognized by his/her students, while the most archaic and primitive methods will work miracles for the teacher who is liked and esteemed by all<sup>54</sup>. Of course, it is partly because the latter has understood that the very nature of teaching is a dialogue between a "master" and "disciples"<sup>55</sup>. However this understanding is no guarantee that this interactive process will be conducted in a satisfactory manner for the two parties involved.

Everyone who has worked long enough in a school knows that the first encounters of a new teacher with his or her students will determine the nature of their relationship for months, if not for years. It is during these first encounters that a "contract" is

established between teacher and students. Blanche Geer has very well explained the terms of this contract:

By listening carefully to what a teacher says he wants in class and comparing among themselves what grades or comments he gives for what kinds of work, and by "trying things on" (...) in the early days of a school term, a class may reach a consensus about its teacher's standards, both academic and disciplinary. It then transforms what the teacher says and does into rules for him to follow. He must not change these rules the class makes for him, and he must apply them to all pupils. (...) Some of the rules of the bargain made with a teacher are in that gray area continually subject to negotiation- degrees of neatness or quietness, for example. Other rules are clear cut: a teacher may not give a test on things not in the text or on matters not covered in class.(...) Pupils have effective sanctions which they use to reward and punish teachers who fail to live up to the bargain, sanctions few teachers can withstand.<sup>56</sup>

This behaviour of students as an entity is precisely what student culture is. And it is remarkable to study closely the interactions of a given group with its different teachers on a given day, and observe them act either as model pupils or as unruly deviants, depending on who is in front of them. This reality is universal, only its manifestations differ from one country to another. For instance, while Dumont and Wax's Cherokee students are "resisting" through subtle glances, inflections in voice, deliberate silence, and through apparent docility<sup>57</sup>, the Montagnais students at Uashkaikan respond to

teachers whom they don't like (for various reasons) by forgetting their pencils or notebooks in their locker, by coming late or not coming at all, by criticizing openly and vehemently the pedagogy of the concerned teacher, by making crude remarks (in Montagnais so the teacher can't understand) about him or her and then mocking, by using irreverent nicknames, by greeting him or her loudly outside of the classroom, or by (perfectly) imitating his/her gestures, vocabulary, expressions, or intonation. Given these circumstances, the situation rapidly becomes intolerable for the "victim" of this behaviour, even though Uashkaikan students are by no means violent and do not lapse as a rule into vulgarity. On the other hand, in the company of a teacher whom they like, Uashkaikan students will act as docile, motivated, and extremely hard-working pupils.

But interestingly, in some cases, teachers in a particular school can also develop their own "culture"; something which definitely affects the pedagogical behaviour of these teachers. Thus, the case of "Uashkaikan", an Amerindian school located in a rural reserve, offers an example-because of the ethnic breakdown of the students (100% Montagnais) and teachers (30% Montagnais and 70% whites)- of this "teacher culture". Actually, it should be mentioned that there are in fact two "teacher cultures" inside the same school. What happens is that the majority of the white teachers travel long distances everyday (around 80 miles on average) to work and that they are literally "trapped" in the school at lunch time. Therefore, they spend long hours together every week (for instance, a teacher will have spent 1,500 hours with his or her white colleagues at lunch time after five years at Uashkaikan), unlike city teachers who mostly go home or go out alone or with their friends at lunch time. And as there is a high staff

turnover of white teachers, the socialization of new teachers generally occurs during this free time. It is a well-known fact that new teachers often learn to see their new (or sometimes their first) students through the eyes of their "experienced" colleagues. One of the duties of the administration of the school then is to hire as many "positive" teachers as possible, but such positivism can hardly be perceived through an interview or a resume. When a new teacher confronts the viewpoints of some or the majority of his/her colleagues with his/her personal experiences in the classroom and with the average Canadian's general attitude towards native peoples- which is to classify them as marginal and to "place them", as Berry et al. have shown, "at the bottom of the evaluation scale" [amongst about thirty Canadian ethnic groups] <sup>58</sup>-Uashkaikan students can be classified by newcomers as being intrinsically unwilling either to learn or to work. Also, given the fact that most Uashkaikan students come from low socio-economic status (SES) households, it is understandable that attendance and motivation are somewhat problematic.

The combination of these factors has sometimes led to caricaturing Uashkaikan students as lazy and shiftless, as one new teacher did in 1991 (see Appendix 17). This caricature was sent to his colleagues and to the director by the teacher himself after he was fired at the end of 1991. He had graduated the previous spring and had worked at Uashkaikan only four months. By then, it had become obvious that he could neither arouse the curiosity of his students nor control them. His portrayal of the average Uashkaikan student pictured while "working" ("élève moyen de Uashkaikan au travail") is interesting in many respects. The "student" can be seen slumped on his desk, tipping back on his chair, chewing bubble gum, and saying "no me" ("non moi") to the teacher.

These words refer to the language "deficit" of the Montagnais students. What the student means is "No, I don't want to do this or that...", but all he can do is mumble a grammatically incorrect two-word refusal.

Of course, such a portrait of the students by the teachers is to be avoided at all costs, and the promptness of replacing this teacher with another (right in the middle of the school year) attests that one of the major preoccupations of the director is not to tolerate negative attitudes towards students from teachers. Instead, what is much needed is an attitude on the part of the teachers (namely the white ones) which fosters the academic environment described by Dumont and Wax which they have named the "intercultural classroom" (i.e. a classroom where "persons of different cultural traditions can engage in mutually beneficial transactions without affront to either party" <sup>59</sup>). This type of classroom is precisely what a desirable "teacher culture" -where the white majority sees the students through positive eyes- should lead to. This goal is by no means easy. The white teachers at Uashkaikan come from middle-class French-speaking households. The students mostly come from low SES and all use Montagnais as their mother-tongue. The language of instruction is French, but of course, the students are never prohibited from speaking Montagnais during the courses. But the ideal of the "intercultural classroom" can nevertheless be attained if there is a great deal of cooperation between white and Amerindian teachers.

The Amerindian teachers at Uashkaikan, when compared to their white counterparts, have two important advantages. First of all, they speak and understand the language of their students. This means that they are aware at all times of what is going on in the



classroom. Secondly, coming from (and generally) still living in the reserve, they have a deeper understanding of their students' behaviour and can adapt their teaching strategies to the different atmospheres. Not surprisingly then, the latter do not quite see the students with the same eyes as white teachers. In May 1993, all the teachers at Uashkaikan were separated in small groups during a meeting. The teachers had to find reasons for underachievement at Uashkaikan. Although no one had asked the teachers concerned to group themselves on a racial basis, this is precisely what happened. The result of these discussions is as follows:

<b>Reasons linked with underachievement (UASHKAIKAN)</b>		
<b>REASONS</b>	<b>WHITE TEACHERS</b>	<b>INDIAN TEACHERS</b>
lack of sleep	X	X
frequent lateness	X	X
inattention	X	X
vulgarity	X	X
absenteeism and truancy	X	X
comes to school to meet friends and socialize	X	X
lack of motivation	X	X
careless about school and personal material	X	X
parents too protective	X	X
homework never done	X	X
extra-curricular activities (e.g. tournaments, concerts) too numerous	X	X
lack of communication between parents and teachers	X	X

<b>Reasons linked with underachievement (UASHKAIKAN)</b>		
house chores	X	X
students start working (in a shop or a restaurant) and quits school	X	X
behaviour	X	
language deficit	X	
manipulates parents	X	
student had little respect for teacher	X	
parents do not trust teacher	X	
student has not eaten		X
lack of personal initiative		X
repeated failures		X
pregnancy		X
poverty (e.g. quits school in order to collect social assistance)		X
boredom (during free time)		X

**Source: UASHKAIKAN school records.**

It is interesting to note of the reasons which have been put forward by the white and Montagnais teachers and especially of those which differed. Inevitably, many reasons usually linked with low SES (lack of sleep, being late, inattentive, vulgarity<sup>60</sup>, absenteeism, poor motivation, homework not done, house chores, comes to school to meet friends, carelessness, student quits school to work) were mentioned by the two groups of teachers. But the Montagnais teachers showed a greater understanding of the

problems of their students by mentioning some other specific results of deprivation (student has not eaten, pregnancy, poverty, boredom, repeated failures). Also, the Montagnais teachers pointed to the lack of personal initiative of their students, perhaps thus referring to the well-known Amerindian value of never trying to be better than others. On the other hand, the two groups agreed on the facts that Montagnais parents generally are too protective and that the young Montagnais have an extravagant extra-curricular life (e.g. too frequent trips to Québec city or elsewhere, participation in too many sports tournaments). However, the white teachers criticized the behaviour of their students, their overprotective, distrustful and easily manipulated parents, their lack of respect, as well as their language deficit. Finally, the two groups agreed that there should be much more communication between school and parents, thus evoking the possibility that there also might be something "wrong" with the school, and not only with the students or their parents. Still, these two diverging viewpoints on the students illustrate the existence of dual teacher cultures at school. Instead of lamenting about these irreconcilable differences, it is more productive to focus on the similarities to initiate a dialogue between the two teacher groups. Indeed, many white teachers have learned both from their students and from the Amerindian teachers and have adapted their teaching strategies in order to respond more to their students's needs.

Research findings have already demonstrated the different learning style of Native Americans (at least those who come from ancient hunting-gathering societies, like the Montagnais). These characteristics of learning are the following:

1-[These students] need to have new material presented as a whole 2-

cooperate and avoid competition 3-participate in small group work and student-initiated endeavours 4- persist in social interaction 5- are reluctant to assume a leadership role 6- are peer oriented (...) [and they] consider details to be important [and] use manipulation and experimentation.<sup>61</sup>

Amerindian teachers understand these issues "instinctively". That is why they often say that they "let the students guide them through the course" <sup>62</sup> (e.g. small group work). They also generally like to bring their students outside of the school when the weather is good. Most of all, they [usually] have a deep respect for their students. When asked if some white teachers at Uashkaikan had succeeded in adapting their pedagogy to the learning style of the Montagnais students, Amerindian teachers invariably answered "yes" and named teachers who were most of all respectful. Dumont and Wax were right in saying that respect was the most important element involved in a successful relation between the Cherokee students and their white teachers. For Dumont and Wax, a teacher **does not necessarily need** to be an Amerindian himself/herself in order to provide Amerindian students with a "satisfactory education" <sup>63</sup>. Instead, the teacher who considers his/her Amerindian students and who appreciates their "ways" will establish in his/her classroom an extremely productive climate, regardless of his or her race.

Such is the importance of this facet (respect) of the relationship between the teacher and his or her students that it surpasses by far any racial "advantage" for the teachers at Uashkaikan. Although Montagnais teachers are obviously more "naturally" prepared to work with Montagnais students, those Montagnais teachers who, for one reason or

another, are not seen by their students as being respectful, welcoming or competent will certainly experience serious trouble in their classroom. This arises from an extremely subtle balance between collective and individual respect (from the teacher) on the one hand and both the power of the teacher and that exercised by the students on the other hand. This balance ought to be attained by every teacher. Amongst the most significant criteria used by students to evaluate their teacher is the capability of the latter to effectively control the noisiest, most vulgar and excited students in the classroom. Also, the teacher must impart knowledge that is recognized by the students as being either useful or interesting (therefore worth listening to) or which allows them to be successful at their final or public exams. If students feel that their teacher cannot, as Blanche Geer wrote, "live up to [this] bargain" <sup>64</sup> (i.e. satisfying academic and disciplinary standards), they will make life impossible for him or her, regardless of the race.

In a small rural school such as Uashkaikan, the quality of the dialogue between the teacher and his/her students is of the utmost importance. Any classroom is a small world in itself. The students have known each other since childhood and they have all attended the same elementary school, as their parents and grandparents had done before them. The teacher who succeeds in establishing a satisfying interaction between him/her and himself or herself and his or her group experiences a strong professional and personal satisfaction. But for the one who fails in this respect, the daily task of teaching soon becomes hellish. From this overview then of pedagogy and student culture at Uashkaikan emerges a portrait made up of strong affective needs (on the part of students), a coherent and efficient style of collective rebellion and a desire for competent teachers and pedagogical strategies which should be adapted to the

students's needs. Also, it demonstrates that a teacher at Uashkaikan does not necessarily need to be Montagnais to be an effective teacher and that at least some good teaching strategies are cross-cultural.

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES:

Basically, there are two kinds of education which are currently being proposed by Amerindian leaders in North America to elementary and secondary students. Both have an overall goal which can be summarized as quality education<sup>65</sup>, but they are very distinct. The first is culturally reassertive and sees education as a struggle against the acculturative and assimilationist pressures of the modern world. Gilbert Whiteduck, a Québec Amerindian leader has described this kind of education- usually called "survival school"- very well at a conference on elementary and secondary education in 1987:

You [the white men] destroyed a large part of it [the Amerindian society], but you have not yet destroyed a people. We are still here as Indian people. We will continue to be here and we will continue to fight."<sup>66</sup>

This kind of schooling rejects any link with mainstream education and relies heavily on traditional languages, myths, values, and skills.

The other type of schooling, for its part, is named "cross-cultural schooling". Betsiamites adopted this type of schooling as soon as it took over its education system at the beginning of the 1980s.

The characteristics of cross-cultural schooling, as determined at the same 1987 conference by Léonard Paul, the former Montagnais principal of Uashkaikan, are the following:

-although schooling should protect the students against assimilation, it should first of all represent a link between Amerindian and non-Amerindian societies.

-schooling should foster the respect of both cultures and the integration of Amerindians into the wider society.

-while helping to preserve the "relevant" Montagnais values and traditions (e.g. language, Montagnais humanism), schooling should allow Amerindian youths to have access to mainstream "tools" and "know-how".<sup>67</sup>

As one can deduce, cross-cultural education in Betsiamites is a concept which has no links whatsoever with "struggle", unlike the "survival school" phenomenon, which is especially aimed at resisting any type of acculturative pressures. For example, a young Mohawk university professor from Montréal who attended an Amerindian survival school himself did not hesitate to tell a Québec City reporter in 1994 that every Mohawk was willing to use guns at anytime in order to protect Mohawk society. "Mohawk youths", said this professor, "are particularly aggressive [...] It's part of their nature"<sup>68</sup>. This Mohawk university professor is a product of an education system- and of course of a cultural tradition- which glorifies aggressiveness as a way of life and of dealing with vexations. In Canada, the general population is so accustomed to such an attitude on the part of the Mohawks that no one made much of this remark made by Billy Two-Rivers, a Mohawk leader, at a conference on the problem of military low-altitude flights

over Labrador in October 1994:

I'm disgusted with the government of Canada, its ministers and its cabinet. Maybe they should be put against a wall and shot. Because that's what they're doing to us."<sup>69</sup>

For the peaceful Montagnais, it is unthinkable to publicly put forward "ideas" such as this. Therefore, they too are a product of a specific cultural tradition. And as an answer to the Mohawk concept of "survival" of Amerindian values and traditions, they suggest the concept of "living values and traditions" <sup>70</sup>. The school plays a significant part in the realization of this goal.

In a document released in 1981<sup>71</sup>, the Betsiamites Band Council expressed the overall aims and objectives of Amerindian schooling in Betsiamites at the secondary level. These principles may be divided into three categories: i) Amerindian schooling as a recovery from colonialism and imperialism; ii) Amerindian schooling as a means of fostering excellence, and iii) Amerindian schooling as a "producer" of good citizens for the community.

Linked to the first category are the following principles: Schooling must allow students to develop a positive self-image which will help them overcome the legacy of social dependence as a result of years of colonialism and paternalism. Thus, the pedagogical practices of the school must be derived from philosophical theories pertaining to development and change.



As for the second category, the Betsiamites Band Council estimated that the secondary school should initiate, "right from its birth" <sup>72</sup>, a climate characterized by intellectual rigour and serious learning practices in order to produce a local elite capable of efficiently replacing the current leaders. Finally, the responsibility of the secondary school which falls into the last category is to provide students with modern knowledge, skills and "tools" which will allow them to participate fully in the development of their community.

Comparing these goals with Mark Holmes's six philosophies (progressive, technocratic, cultural, traditional, individualist, egalitarian) applicable to education systems "within contemporary western society" <sup>73</sup>, one understands that the Betsiamites philosophical approach to schooling presents certain similarities with the technocratic (good citizenship), traditional (making students familiar, as Holmes writes, with the "attributes of our culture" <sup>74</sup>), and individualist (fostering excellence and competition) philosophies. The cultural ("to cultivate the intellect" <sup>75</sup>), progressive, and egalitarian philosophies did not seem, on critical examination, to have had much influence on members of the Betsiamites Band Council in 1981. Regular discussions and meetings with parents have certainly confirmed that the approaches most popular within the population in Betsiamites are the technocratic and individualist philosophies and, to a lesser extent, traditional philosophy.

These educational goals adopted by the Betsiamites Band Council in 1981 are consistent both with the overall aims of education as articulated by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972 in "Indian control of Indian Education" <sup>76</sup> and with the findings of Mark Holmes

and the Ontario Ministry of Education at the beginning of the 1980s. As Holmes writes,

The public is much more technocratic than are leading educators. It is possible that the public may be more traditional than are leading educators in public schools. There is a strong individualist element in contemporary society.<sup>77</sup>

Although these similarities suggest that there is indeed in western countries, as Holmes thinks, an "increasing cultural homogeneity"<sup>78</sup>-coupled with an increasing material inequality and growth of individualism- it is also obvious that Amerindian schooling in Betsiamites is distinct and unique since it has attempted to integrate philosophical notions concerned with a desired "recovery" from past colonial and paternalistic oppression. However, what is understood by "theories about development and change" is not stated in the above-mentioned document or anywhere else. This becomes problematic, because there can then be as many interpretations as there are individuals when a school "constitution" or a whole-school policy is nonexistent. Moreover, current and future students and teachers at Uashkaikan may also not have the slightest idea that the school favors a cross-cultural educational approach since it is not mentioned in any booklet or handbook, or displayed on a wall. Informality certainly leaves room for rapid adjustments, changes and adaptations, but it is also a fertile ground for misinterpretation, misunderstanding and sheer ignorance.

Thus, some leaders viewpoints about educational goals in Betsiamites clash from time to time. For instance, when a local reporter interviewed the reserve's chief and the

elementary school principal in August 1994 about the future of formal education in the reserve, both of them answered that the Montagnais youths were studying in order to be able one day "to work and to own a car, a house or a summer cottage" <sup>79</sup>, adding, however, that salary was an unimportant thing, and that Amerindian values and traditions were very different from whites'. There never was any mention, in this interview, about the ideas evoked in the document released by the Betsiamites Band Council in 1981 or about cross-cultural education, even though the former secondary school principal considers this last aspect to be of the utmost importance as far as formal reserve education is concerned. These contradictions (in the two leaders' discourse as well as **between** such discourses and the one put forward by the secondary school principal) demonstrate the gulf that exists between the opinions of local political and educational decision-makers.

Nevertheless these apparent contradictions and the absence of clear documents, leaflets or handbooks explaining the goals of education in Betsiamites cannot be presented as proof that there is absolutely no consensus about local schooling in the community (and even if this were so, it would still not be dramatic because, as Holmes writes, "the problem is less that we disagree about education, than that we have come to believe we ought to agree"<sup>80</sup>). On the contrary, the discrepancy between the discourses of the 1980s and those of the 1990s testifies to changing educational priorities; what everyone surely agrees on today in Betsiamites as far as educational goals are concerned is; that the overall aim of formal education is "quality education". Parents and educational leaders in Betsiamites are equally concerned about the inordinately high dropout rates at Uashkaikan (when figures are compared with the province's). This fact

is demonstrated clearly through local newspapers articles <sup>81</sup>, the priorities put forward by organizations dedicated to Amerindian education such as the "Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais"(ICEM)<sup>82</sup> and through meetings with Betsiamites parents.

Hence, the aims of formal education in a rural Amerindian reserve such as Betsiamites are not, in large part, being determined at the local level, but at the international level. As Walo Hutmacher explains, there has recently been a tremendously strong shift, in Western countries, in the education systems' priorities. This "cultural reorientation" is due to the "growing importance of the scientific and technical referent" as a "guarantee of future economic competitiveness"<sup>83</sup>. These considerations are as valid today in Betsiamites as they are in Montréal, New York, or in Mississauga (Ontario), as the discourses of Betsiamites leaders and their insistence on "quality education" and excellence clearly demonstrate.

#### RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PARENTS:

When it comes to formal education and student achievement, the importance of parental involvement cannot be, as research as very often shown, overestimated <sup>84</sup>. Thus, both the Québec Ministry of Education <sup>85</sup> and the Betsiamites Band Council<sup>86</sup> have already insisted that the school should foster such an involvement. The National Indian Brotherhood (NIA), for its part, had written in 1972 that "parental responsibility" was along with "local control of education"- the "education principle recognized in Canadian society" on which Indian formal education was to be built <sup>87</sup> (although it was never

explained what was meant by that).

In fact, the Betsiamites Band Council went as far, in 1981, to order that a special council, named "Conseil montagnais de l'éducation" was to become the sole executive and legislative educational authority in Betsiamites. This council was to be made up of seven members, and the majority of its members had to be parents of students. An essential detail is worth mentioning; the council members were not by any means to be elected by the population but had to be appointed by the Band Council <sup>88</sup>. This last but not least important measure was thought by the Band Council to be indispensable since it was out of the question that the "tradition of the Band Council's political supremacy"<sup>89</sup> be challenged. Not surprisingly, this council never came to be, as some citizens started complaining quite vociferously and straightforwardly during the few explanatory meetings which were held in 1981 and 1982 by the Band Council. Those who complained either asked that the Education Council members be elected or vehemently attacked individual councillors or Band Council employees, especially those who worked in its education sector. This episode caused, amongst the education sector's administration such trauma that no other meeting between parents and the education sector was ever organized and that whenever this proposal resurfaced, the education sector's direction brushed it aside, testifying that such meetings were "useless", since all they lead to is "unjustified and unrestrained criticism".

Thus, "parental involvement" is a somewhat delicate issue in Betsiamites, not unlike most Amerindian reserves. But this is not very different from the other North-American communities be they small or large, white or Amerindian. Fullan has estimated that

communities have three choices with regard to their schools:

[The community can] (a) put pressure on district administrators "to do something" about a problem, (b) oppose specific innovations which have been adopted, or (c) do nothing (passive support or apathy).<sup>90</sup>

Because of both numerous and important "phenomenological barriers" (the worlds of the parent and the teacher are so different) and "logistical barriers" (time, opportunity, know-how), research in the United States and Canada suggests that the most frequent situation is by far the last of these choices (the fact that only 10% of those who are entitled to vote for school commissioners have done so on average for the last two decades in Montréal also supports this finding<sup>91</sup>). Relations between parents and the school are limited to a set of "ritualistic meetings" (parent-teacher meetings, discipline problems) which virtually exclude the former from the school's decision-making process, from direct involvement in instruction or from other forms of school activities. Worst of all is that the poorer the parents are- and the vast majority of parents who live in reserves certainly are poor-, the less likely they are going to intervene in the life of the school attended by their children- as Bridge, quoted by Fullan, says:

The unfortunate fact is that "disadvantaged" families are usually the least informed about matters of schooling and the result is that advantaged clienteles will have the largest impact on school innovations unless extraordinary efforts are made to involve others.<sup>92</sup>

Manifestly, such extraordinary efforts have not been made in Betsiamites, and the relations between the school and the community do not go beyond the usual above-mentioned "ritualistic meetings", a situation which, to put it mildly, seems to be unsatisfactory for some parents.

In November 1993, the administration of the secondary school, eager to learn more about the school's situation, conducted a survey on home-school relations inspired by an inquiry which involved Bangladeshi parents living in London in 1989. The latter research had been undertaken by Tomlinson and Hutchison in Tower Hamlets, and its main aim was to "obtain the views of parents about aspects of their children's education and their expectation of schools"<sup>93</sup>. To achieve this goal, Tomlinson and Hutchison had interviewed 53 Bangladeshi parents and reported their findings in a 31 page document. Uashkaikan secondary school decided to utilize some of the items used by the two authors, since these items appeared to be both culturally relevant and extremely useful in terms of enhanced knowledge about home-school relations in Betsiamites. These items are the following:

- 1-Mothers' views of (white) teachers' awareness of Amerindian culture
- 2-Reasons for satisfaction with school
- 3-Reasons for dissatisfaction with school
- 4-What schools should teach
- 5-Learning home language
- 6-Expectations of school

Furthermore, there are some striking similarities between Betsiamites Amerindian and London Bangladeshi parents and students: these parents undoubtedly experience racism in their daily life much more than some other cultural minorities; unemployment rates are very high in the two communities; the mother-tongue of the two groups is not one of the "prestigious" international languages and formal education is conducted in a second language; and finally, Amerindian and Bangladeshi school achievements are both among the lowest in the two countries. Of course, Betsiamites and Tower Hamlets are worlds apart, but nonetheless, the administration of Uashkaikan had the feeling that **precisely** because of the above-mentioned similarities, a comparison between the two groups would not be a pointless exercise.

As Tomlinson and Hutchison had done with their interviews, the questionnaires at Uashkaikan were composed in order to discriminate between the mothers' and fathers' answers, but as is normal in Betsiamites, more than 80% of the parents who responded to the school's invitation were mothers. And since only 7 fathers answered the questionnaire- as compared to 65 mothers who did the same- it was decided that only the mothers' answers would be retained and compared to the answers given by Bangladeshi mothers in Tower Hamlets. The results are the following (Tomlinson and Hutchison separated the answers between primary and secondary parents, but for practical reasons- Uashkaikan's questionnaire is an adaptation-the two groups' answers are combined below whenever it was possible when Bangladeshi mothers' answers are reported. It is mentioned below when such a situation arises):



<b>Mothers' views of teachers' awareness (Bangladeshi Mothers = 26; Amerindian Mothers = 65)</b>				
	None	A little	A lot	Don't know
	%	%	%	%
Bengali culture	53	35	4	8
Montagnais culture	0	31	23	46

**Source:** Derived from Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) *Bangladeshi Parents and Education in Tower Hamlets*, Ace Publ.; Lancaster, Eng. and UASHKAIKAN's questionnaire on parents/school relations (see Appendix 18).

Bangladeshi and Amerindian mothers both think (proportionately) that teachers know "a little" about their respective culture. However, there are striking differences when it comes to the three other possibilities. While half the Bangladeshi mothers think that teachers know virtually nothing about Bengali culture, not even one Amerindian mother responded in the same fashion. Similarly, while more than twenty percent of the Amerindian mothers feel that teachers know "a lot" about Amerindian culture, only one (out of twenty-six) Bangladeshi mothers gave the same answer to Tomlinson and Hutchison. Those who "don't know", however, are abundant on the side of the Amerindian mothers. This almost generalized uncertainty surely cannot be interpreted as a healthy sign as far as home/school relations are concerned and therefore, there would certainly seem to be room in Betsiamites for enhanced communication between white teachers and Montagnais parents.

<b>Reasons for satisfaction with school (more than one reason given; primary and secondary combined for Bangladeshi mothers)</b>		
	Bangladeshi mothers	Amerindian mothers

<b>Reasons for satisfaction with school (more than one reason given; primary and secondary combined for Bangladeshi mothers)</b>		
Near home	6	47
good discipline	2	26
good/helpful teachers	3	38
high standards	4	33
good teaching methods	6	25
mother-tongue teaching	12	13
Total (answers given):	33	182

**Source:** Derived from Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) *op. cit.*, and Uashkaikan's questionnaire on school/parents relations (see Appendix 18).

When translated into percentages, the reasons for being satisfied with school are remarkably similar for the two groups. Of course, like most parents, Bangladeshi and Amerindian parents both appreciate a nearby school staffed by competent teachers stressing discipline, pedagogy and the expectation that their students will succeed. However while mother-tongue teaching is the most important appraisal factor for the Bangladeshi mothers, it is the least important one for the Montagnais mothers. This major difference between the two groups is linked to their legal status. Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets are members of one of Britain's numerous ethnic minority groups, and immigrants' expectations towards a school's curriculum certainly cannot be as high as those of citizens who enjoy privileged legal status (such as Amerindians in Canada). As a Bangladeshi parent puts it,

We come to this country [England] and we must be grateful for anything they (schools) do.<sup>94</sup>

By comparison, Amerindians in Canada have been the object of "affirmative action" programmes for many years and are now much used to a whole array of "special" rights (e.g. income tax exemption, housing, health, education) that mother-tongue teaching in a reserve school (at least in the province of Québec) is simply taken for granted and is no longer an educational issue. This last statement, however, does not imply that mother-tongue teaching in school is less important for the Betsiamites Montagnais than for the Tower Hamlets Bangladeshis; it is rather an explanation for two contrasting parental perspectives.

<b>Reasons for dissatisfaction with school (more than one reason given; primary and secondary combined for Bangladeshi mothers)</b>		
	<b>Bangladeshi mothers</b>	<b>Amerindian mothers</b>
Not enough Amerindian teachers	N/A	10
school losing teachers	0	6
not enough on Bengali/Amerindian hist. or politics	4	22
too much freedom	3	11
children learn to swear	2	N/A
Total (answers given)	9	49

**Source:** Derived from Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) *op. cit.*, and Uashkaikan's questionnaire on school/parents relations (see Appendix 18).

It appears that the two groups of parents are primarily concerned with what is manifestly perceived as being an incapability on the part of the school to satisfactorily take into account their respective history and politics. Thus, these parents from two distinct ethnic minorities express the same concerns regarding the possible acculturation

of their children. As will be seen in the next figures, these concerns- at least on the part of the Montagnais- represent an ideal which can be sometimes hard to reconcile with the needs and the reality of a modern-day education.

The other factors, for their part, are related to concerns about discipline ("too much freedom"; "children learn to swear") and to the issues- for the Montagnais- of the Amerindian teachers' hiring policy and staff stability.

<b>What schools should teach:</b>		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Bangladeshi mothers</b>	<b>Amerindian mothers</b>
	<b>number = 26</b>	<b>number = 65</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
English (mother-tongue)	100	N/A
English as a second language	42	91
French (mother-tongue)	N/A	100
Maths	100	91
Science	84	59
History	78	56
Geography	86	54
Music/Singing	18	25
Sports/PE	66	42
Arts and Crafts	78	19
Technology	90	25
Health	100	N/A
Sex Education	18	23

<b>What schools should teach:</b>		
Personal and Social Education	78	39
Asian Languages	90	N/A
Montagnais Language	N/A	73

**Source:** Derived from Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) *op. cit.*, and Uashkaikan's questionnaire on school/parents relations (see Appendix 18).

At first glance anyone can see that there are striking differences between the two groups' perceptions of what schools should teach. Unsurprisingly, both groups stress the importance (100%) for their children to learn the dominant language in their respective environment (English for the Bangladeshis and French for the Montagnais). Furthermore, the Bangladeshi parents consider that it is more important for their children to learn English than Asian languages at school (100% vs 90%), and the same phenomenon- but this time with French- is even more noticeable with the Montagnais parents (100% vs 73%). Yet apart from the importance given to English or French as mother-tongue- and from Music/Singing and Sex Education which are equally seen as not very important for the two groups-, there is a substantial disagreement between the two groups in terms of parental preferences in regards to curriculum.

For instance, while the Bangladeshi mothers considered maths to be as fundamental a subject as the teaching of English, nearly ten per cent of the Montagnais mothers did not think this way at all. Further, science, history, geography, art, craft and technology were all, in the words of Tomlinson and Hutchison, "very important" for the Bangladeshi parents<sup>95</sup>. The Montagnais mothers, for their part, clearly saw all these subjects as much

less important (differences with the Bangladeshi mothers range from -22% for history to -65% for technology). Obviously, the Bangladeshi parents favour a technocratic curriculum whose goals were mentioned earlier. But they also insist that the school should teach personal and social education and arts and crafts (both at 78%), along with Asian languages (90%), an indication that they are also concerned with the cultural and traditional development of their children. As regards the Montagnais mothers, the only four subjects which can be identified as being definitely "important" to them are French (100%), maths (91%), ESL (91%) and Montagnais (73%); no other subject being chosen by at least over sixty per cent of the respondents (closest science at 59%). Something quite clear emerges from this distribution; according to the parents, the school in Betsiamites should provide students with basic qualifications in the "essential" subjects (Montagnais being included in these subjects by the parents since it is the students' mother-tongue). The other fields of knowledge are not favoured by a significant proportion of parents. These figures suggest a strong preference for a utilitarian (i.e. job-orientated) educational philosophy on the part of the Montagnais mothers.

<b>Learning home languages</b>		
<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Bangladeshi mothers</b>	<b>Amerindian mothers</b>
	<b>number = 33</b>	<b>number = 65</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
To know about own culture	66	72
Read books in home language	27	55
Talk to other people/family	24	45

Learning home languages		
Important to learn own language	9	82

Source: Derived from Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) *op. cit.*, and Uashkaikan's questionnaire on school/parents relations (see Appendix 18).

There is also a discrepancy between the two groups concerning the importance of learning the home language. As Tomlinson and Hutchison noted, although the Bangladeshi parents were "overwhelmingly in favour of home languages being taught in schools as a separate subject" (so the children can "retain some of their own culture"), they also thought that English was "crucial if the children were to find jobs and adapt to life in England"<sup>96</sup>. This last remark may contribute to explain the low percentage of Bangladeshi mothers (9%) who mentioned that it was "important to learn [one's] own language". By contrast, eighty-two per cent of the Montagnais mothers thought this way. And while "to know about [ones] own culture" was equally favoured by the two groups, more Montagnais mothers than Bangladeshi mothers thought that learning the home language was necessary so that children could read and talk to other people. Certainly, these two perceptions are relevant to the two groups' differing geographic and linguistic situations. The Bangladeshi parents live in a very large urban area where English dominates; the pressure towards assimilation is without any doubt felt quite strongly. For their part, the Montagnais are living in a remote rural reserve surrounded by a French-speaking population. The most significant factor for the Montagnais as regards the home language is the isolation of their reserve. Given this fact, the assimilationist pressures felt by the Montagnais are much less onerous than those experienced in Britain by some ethnic minority groups. For instance, situations

such as those described by Daphne M. Brown in her book, where some Italian or Indian children reject their home language once they have mastered English<sup>97</sup> are unthinkable in Betsiamites, where everyone but a few individuals has Montagnais as his or her mother-tongue. Thus, it is no surprise to note that the Montagnais mothers seem to feel quite comfortable about their home language and that they consider learning the home language both important *per se* and as the key to their own culture, unlike the Bangladeshi mothers who are more concerned about the ability of their children to learn about their cultural background. But more will be said at the end of the current chapter about the issue of language in Betsiamites.

<b>Expectations of school- Secondary (more than one answer given; answers cover boys and girls combined for Bangladeshi mothers)</b>		
<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Bangladeshi mothers</b>	<b>Amerindian mothers</b>
	<b>number = 16</b>	<b>number = 65</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Provide qualifications	63	72
Prepare for college/HE	37	72
Manners- good behaviour	37	9
Prepare for adulthood	37	0
Prepare for marriage	6	0

**Source:** Derived from Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) *op. cit.*, and Uashkaikan's questionnaire on school/parents relations (see Appendix 18).

These last results obtained with the Montagnais mothers are consistent with those which had been pinpointed earlier in the curriculum section. They are also consistent with similar results obtained in 1991 in a survey of Betsiamites parents' educational



values and attitudes<sup>98</sup>. In short, it shows that the majority of parents in Betsiamites see secondary education as a springboard for access to a college or university degree. These percentages (twice 72%) and the courses favoured by the Betsiamites parents (see the part on curriculum above) also say a lot about the careers they have in mind for their children; office worker (hopefully to be employed by the local Band Council). This is hardly surprising, given the two enormous advantages these workers have over those (either Amerindian or white) who work **outside** the reserve system; i.e. no income tax and a formidable job security. The minimal importance attributed by the Betsiamites parents to subjects such as technology or science confirms rather than contradicts the above-mentioned hypothesis; indeed, everyone in Betsiamites knows that very few Band Council-related jobs are linked with modern technology, and that when such a need arises, the Band Council always sees that their employees have access to relevant (and customized) training.

In other words, for an Amerindian, to be hired by the Band Council can be compared to winning a lottery, and almost every Amerindian parent dreams that this is what will happen to his/her children. Of course, extremely low success rates at secondary school prevent the overwhelming majority of Betsiamites students from fulfilling this ambition. However the fact that the **possibility** is always there contributes towards explanation of why the parents consistently favour the instrumental role of secondary education (providing qualifications and preparing for post-secondary education) over its moral role (good behaviour and preparation for adulthood). It is a kind of all-or-nothing situation; either the child goes on to college and later university and then gets a **good** job at the Band Council or he/she ends up on welfare. The differences with the Bangladeshi

parents with respect to the "expectations of school" are very clear: few Bangladeshi parents (mothers and fathers) saw, as Tomlinson and Hutchison write, "secondary schools as a way of preparing for college or higher education". Rather, they want "all their children to gain qualifications, [and to be] offered practical and vocational skills and prepared for adulthood"<sup>99</sup>. Unlike the Betsiamites Montagnais, the Bangladeshi parents know that their children can to all intents and purposes only rely on themselves if they are to have a home and a decent life. Thus they want their children to have access to the **job market**.

For the Betsiamites Montagnais, there are three major problems as regards their children's formal education and training. Firstly, the "failure cushions" with which they have been provided by the Welfare State (e.g. subsidized housing, welfare benefits), for many generations now, have become virtually the way of life for the majority of the reserve's inhabitants and always an option both **available** and **seriously considered** by students at all times, and especially when they reach the age of eighteen or become parents themselves. Secondly the local economy is anything but diversified- there being few available jobs, and because the land has a very special legal status and there are not enough skilled workers, not one "outside" company is interested in setting up a serious business (e.g. there is not even one bank on the reserve and those who do not own a car usually cash their cheques at the local stores). Thirdly an Amerindian who leaves the reserve and starts work in a city will automatically lose almost all of his or her privileges as long as he or she stays off reserve meaning that the difference between what is left once everything is paid for at the end of the month (income tax, rent, etc.) and what would be left if he or she were living on welfare in the reserve, is insignificant. Thus,

whichever way one looks at it, from the reserve Amerindian perspective, there are so few incentives to even bother to try to obtain a vocational degree. So why not aim at the "big diploma"? Apart from a possible job at the Band Council, few other possibilities exist in Betsiamites, and as a result, both parents and students are caught up in a vicious circle where the "salary of boredom" (le "salaire de l'ennui") awaits the majority of current students while only a lucky few will be hired by the Band Council or some other Amerindian organization. Consequently, it can be said that the expectations developed by Betsiamites parents regarding their school are as much adapted to their economic reality as those developed by Bangladeshi parents in Tower Hamlets, since they both take into account the options available in their respective environments. As the famous French historian Fernand Braudel wrote, "the economy cannot exist in isolation from the other sectors of human life; it depends on them, they depend on it"<sup>100</sup>. These fundamental educational differences between the Bangladeshi and the Betsiamites parents are precisely a reflection of differing socioeconomic conditions.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, research has already discovered that parental involvement and student achievement are linked, yet many phenomenological and logistical barriers often prevent parents from getting involved in their school's life. Such barriers are numerous in Betsiamites: i) there is a strong and mutual suspicion which exists between Band Council employees (this includes teachers) and the general population; ii) the Band Council refuses to countenance any challenge to its political supremacy whatsoever and iii) poverty (especially the long-term effects of massive poverty) did not favour until today the emergence of a generalized and strong desire among parents to become involved in the local schools' operations, notwithstanding the

above-mentioned obstacles. Nevertheless, during a meeting between the teachers and the parents which was held at the local secondary school in Betsiamites during the spring of 1994, many parents made interesting suggestions to the school's personnel, and their attitude and remarks testified to the fact that they took a genuine interest in their children's formal education. They expressed concerns about the new provincial curriculum and requirements and were very willing to talk openly about delicate issues such as absenteeism, methods to alleviate student backwardness and discipline. In other words, the elements essential to a real home/school partnership in Betsiamites already exist. Nobody however, has been able to capitalize on them yet.

## CURRICULUM

As mentioned earlier, Betsiamites chose in 1981 to [continue to] use the curriculum of the province of Québec for both its elementary and secondary schools. The reasons put forward by those in charge of education at that time were a desire to allow the Betsiamites students to have access to "universal knowledge"<sup>101</sup> (this knowledge, however, is not defined, but Betsiamites' major concern when referring to "universal knowledge" was obviously- and still is- the students' possible acceptance into post-secondary educational institutions, something which corresponds to the desire of a majority of parents, as already seen) and that it was materially very difficult, if not impossible, to entirely set up, at the local level, a truly adapted curriculum<sup>102</sup>.

On the other hand, Betsiamites has also always attempted to develop, as much as possible, a "local" curriculum which would reflect the unique culture of the Montagnais

students. Thus, Montagnais language at the elementary school has been taught since 1972 and Montagnais language and Amerindian history at the secondary school have been taught since the outset of the 1980s<sup>103</sup>. These courses were seen in Betsiamites as an experiment at the beginning and the teachers- most of the time unqualified in any specific domain- were "pioneers"<sup>104</sup> more than anything else, lacking both teaching materials and teaching strategies. Since these shortcomings were so obvious, a specific educational department- named "Amerindianization"- was created in Betsiamites at the end of the 1970s. The mandate of this five- employee department was (and still is) to design and produce teaching materials for Montagnais mother-tongue language courses at the elementary and secondary levels. It was also involved in an important linguistic experiment- which is discussed at the end of the current chapter- conducted in Betsiamites over a period of nearly a decade. For its part, the course named "Amerindian history" (or "Études amérindiennes", in French) was the work of four employees of Betsiamites' education department (one administrator, the former secondary school principal, and two secondary school teachers) commissioned by the education service's director. The Montagnais courses and "Amerindian history" were recognized as "local courses" by the Québec Ministry of Education (MEQ) during the 1980s and students who pass them accumulate MEQ secondary school credits.

Apart from the courses in Montagnais and "Amerindian history", Betsiamites's curriculum is, like most other Montagnais schools, exactly the same as the province's. Such a situation definitely does not meet the criteria stipulated in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood as regards the curriculum of an Indian school. At that time, it was laid down that "the curriculum [of Indian schools] must be structured to use the child's

awareness of her or his own cultural environment as a springboard for learning about the external world."<sup>105</sup> But in an effort to allow the participation of every member of the community in building up a local curriculum ("The community must participate in, and determine, programme change. **No innovations in curriculum, teaching methods, or pupil-teacher relationships can take root unless parents are convinced of their value.**"<sup>106</sup>) the authors of "Indian control of Indian education" may actually have delayed the emergence of such curricula. Indeed, as a result of this "tradition of consensus", the debate over Indian curriculum progressed remarkably little between 1972 and 1988, when the "Assembly of First Nations" (formerly the National Indian Brotherhood) stated that "all levels of government" should help in "providing a culturally relevant curriculum"<sup>107</sup> and that "adequate federal financial resources must be made available for culturally relevant curriculum development (...) to improve education programmes offered to First Nations students".<sup>108</sup> These things had all been already proclaimed sixteen years earlier.

Clearly, there is a wide gap between this wish list and the current situation in most Amerindian schools. Kirkness surveyed nearly five hundred schools both off-reserve (with significant percentages of Amerindian students) and on-reserve, in 1991. She found out that less than twenty percent of these schools had developed specific Amerindian materials, that language, culture, arts and crafts accounted for eighty percent of the courses concerned and that the teaching of these courses represented only a very small proportion of the total time allotted for instruction<sup>109</sup>. The curriculum of the secondary school in Betsiamites attests to this situation:

Secondary school Curriculum		
	Province of Québec	Betsiamites
French	X	X
English (ESL)	X	X
Mathematics	X	X
Moral education	X	*
P.E.	X	X
Religion	X	X
Arts	X	X
Ecology	X	*
Geography	X	X
History	X	X
Biology	X	X
Technology	X	X
Québec & Canadian history	X	X
Biology	X	X
Science (chem./phy.)	X	X
Economics	X	X
Montagnais	---	X
Amerindian studies	---	X

\* = course has been replaced with compensatory courses in French, English, and mathematics.

**Source: Uashkaikan school records.**

After almost twenty years of local control of education, the "culturally relevant" curriculum (i.e. Montagnais language and Amerindian studies) of the secondary school in Betsiamites accounts for approximately one percent of the total teaching time in its five-year programme, and the situation is much the same at the primary level. This says

a lot about the issue of curriculum development in Betsiamites. It faces three major dilemmas. First- the diversity of Indian cultures in the province of Québec (let alone Canada) and the fact that the native population represents less than one percent of the population in Québec make it less than probable that funding will one day allow bands to present their students with "quality" material which can compete with the production of provincially authorized publishers. The problem is that without this "quality", the students view the local material as cheap, uninteresting, and worthless. Second- this very diversity- even within the nine Montagnais communities-, coupled with the renowned Amerindian tradition of consensus has resulted in local education officers paying mere lip service and uttering generalized statements lacking clear goals and objectives with regard to curriculum. Moreover, it has prevented the Montagnais communities (to name only these) from sharing both funds and knowledge. Third- several surveys conducted in Betsiamites have already shown that while parents want the local schools to protect the Montagnais language and culture, they are particularly concerned with the issues of "quality education" and access to post-secondary studies<sup>110</sup>.

In fact, some of the most critical issues regarding to curriculum remain unanswered in Betsiamites. There is neither an elementary or high school "mission statement" nor a band school philosophy and the issue of the necessary balance between a "culturally relevant" curriculum and the mainstream one has not been tackled yet to this day. In his report commissioned by the Betsiamites Band Council in 1991, François Larose, from the Université de Sherbrooke, argued that the absence of a local curriculum (including official statements about standards of teaching, assessment and pedagogy)-



notwithstanding the Montagnais and Amerindian history courses- was a **fundamental problem** in Betsiamites<sup>111</sup>. For him, it resulted in a multitude of "mini-curricula" (actually as many as there are teachers in the two schools) and the impossibility of comparing the educational outcomes from one grade to another or even from one teacher to another<sup>112</sup>.

Unsurprisingly- given this situation, which is quite similar in the other Montagnais communities-, whenever the issue of Montagnais band schools' curriculum resurfaces during the annual meetings of the band schools' principals (usually a dozen people attend these meetings), the discussions invariably turned into bitter argument between the proponents of a "traditional" curriculum (i.e. hunting and trapping as part of the curriculum) and those who put forward the idea that band schools should prepare Amerindian youths for "real life" in the modern world<sup>113</sup>. A general Montagnais education council was held in Sept-îles (on Québec's North Shore) in April 1995, but none of the above-mentioned approaches (or even an in-between solution) to curriculum policy and/or development was adopted by this assembly. Obviously, this indecisiveness on the part of Montagnais educational authorities in relation to such a crucial area as to "what is actually going on in school and classroom" (to paraphrase British researcher Lawrence Stenhouse<sup>114</sup>) is a major impediment to on-reserve "quality education". It leaves the teachers, the parents and the students in a kind of eternal haze- where the teaching standards and goals vary from one individual to the next- as far as the finalities as well as the operation of Montagnais band schools are concerned.

It is evident that these last statements tend to lead the discourse right into the heart of "resistance to schooling", but as the next chapter is entirely devoted to this topic, a few

more remarks will simply be added for the moment in order to conclude the present part about curriculum in Betsiamites. First of all, in considering curriculum development and policy in Betsiamites, sight should not be lost that, juridically speaking, local authorities have had the power since 1981 to **entirely determine both the legislation and the implementation of all the pre-school, elementary and secondary school programmes themselves**<sup>115</sup>. If the local authorities have chosen not to significantly alter the curriculum beyond introducing two new subjects only (Montagnais language and history), it is mainly because they are well aware that Montagnais parents are particularly concerned- when it comes to formal education- with the issue of access to post-secondary education. Financial considerations have been taken into account, but elsewhere in the province, some Amerindian communities (for instance some Mohawk and Cree bands) have rejected the provincial curriculum on the ground of "cultural irrelevance" and were motivated enough to find the money to create their own material. History (these tribes were the allies of the British at the time of New France) and language (English has become their new **de facto** mother tongue) have played a considerable role in these decisions. These two factors have also immensely influenced the Betsiamites decision-makers, pushing them in the opposite direction (the Montagnais traditionally were the allies of the French and French is their second language, and even their first language in two of their communities: "Mashteuiatsh" and "Les Escoumins"). Thus, when confronted with the consequences of the "'What', 'how' and 'why' of instruction"- which really is what a curriculum is about, as Ladson-Billings has put it<sup>116</sup>- the local authorities have, consciously or not, opted for integration rather than separation. From that standpoint, it becomes possible to suggest that the task of preparing a formal educational policy was then not too inviting, since the path chosen

by the community was in contradiction with the official positions held by Amerindian associations<sup>117</sup> or independent researchers commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND)<sup>118</sup> since 1972.

Cultural diversity within the Montagnais communities, material considerations, the tradition of consensus, the desires of the parents and the difficulty of officially acknowledging a minority position when compared with that of the Canadian "Indian world", all contribute to explain the absence of an official curriculum policy after fifteen years of "Indian control of Indian education" in Betsiamites. Until such a position is adopted, François Larose may well be right when he argues that this situation is a "fundamental problem".

#### ACHIEVEMENT AND UNDERACHIEVEMENT

The educational systems in Canada do not differ from the majority of those in Europe when it comes to achievement. In both cases, schooling is a process which can be compared to a ladder climbing which becomes more difficult as one progresses. Indeed, as Mueller and Karle summarized very well in 1990, schooling has almost become the sole criterion for social selection in industrialized countries:

School systems typically are organized as a series of steps up which the student population moves. At each successive step, only a fraction of the population survives. Let us call this successive shrinking of the student population, the **survival pattern**.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, so essential have "success" or "excellence" become in a modern world characterized by merciless international economic competition <sup>120</sup>, that some very respected scholars have not hesitated to argue that this constant overemphasis now represents a real impediment to significant learning as far as formal schooling is concerned:

There is reason to speculate that success has become an end in itself, has been given priority over learning, and may actually be a deterrent to learning.<sup>121</sup>

In addition, the fact that it is now very well known throughout the world that the aforementioned "survival pattern" is without any doubt linked- amongst other things- to class and race<sup>122</sup> makes it even more difficult for those who belong to the officially "identified" at-risk groups to eventually experience success at school because this self-fulfilling prophecy<sup>123</sup> constitutes for them an additional burden which in turn aggravates further the effects engendered by their already difficult socio-economic environment.

Such a situation prevails in Betsiamites. Traditionally, the majority of Betsiamites secondary school students have had considerable difficulty in obtaining their high school diploma- albeit for a very short period during the 1980s as will be seen in the following section ("assessment methods"). Still today, either these students need an inordinate number of years to reach success levels or else they quit before the completion of their course. In 1976, an independent researcher had concluded that the average success rate for the Betsiamites secondary school students was around 55% <sup>124</sup>. In 1990, this

average rate had dropped to 39%<sup>125</sup>. At the national level, prior to the 1970s, it was widely known throughout Canada that within the reserve system, "most Indian students were not achieving success"<sup>126</sup> and a major report commissioned by the federal Government in 1983 estimated that on average, only 20% of Canadian Amerindian secondary school students were succeeding, as compared to 80% in the general population<sup>127</sup>. Thus, it is clear that what has happened, and still happens today in Betsiamites, can be described as typical of what is going on in most rural reserves, as far as success rates are concerned.

The following tables will give a few more details about secondary school students' success rate in Betsiamites:

<b>École secondaire Uashkaikan Success rates (1992 &amp; 1994)</b>		
<b>Grade (Sec. I to V)</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>
Preparatory year (remedial education)	N/A*	75%
Special education (mixed)**	28%	37%
<b>Regular program</b>		
Sec. 1	70%	79%
Sec. 2	38%	38%
Sec. 3	15%	21%
Sec. 4	40%	67%
Sec. 5	50%	37%

\* This "preparatory year" is intended for students who transfer from the elementary school and who are not ready yet, academically speaking, to register to the regular programme. It did not exist in 1992.

**\*\*The students registered in this programme are usually separated into two groups. Since there are hardly two students who are at the same level in the various subjects, these students work with material from special education programmes designed by Québec schools boards who specialize with such students. However as results obtained were not satisfactory, the school has turned toward material from adult education, and the results have improved since then.**

**Source: Uashkaikan's annual report, 3 June 1994.**

As one can easily see, generalized underachievement- and its host of negative consequences- is one of the major characteristics of the culture of "L'école secondaire Uashkaikan". As time has passed, students, parents and teachers alike have grown accustomed to seeing the same "ritual" taking place- like a kind of fatality- every spring (the end of the academic year); one third of the secondary school students pass their year, one third have to repeat a grade for their first time and one third have to repeat the same grade for the second, third or even fourth time <sup>128</sup>.

Of course, to raise the success rate at the secondary school has traditionally been the top priority of the local education authority, but the efforts of the three local directorates ("services éducatifs", elementary school and secondary school) have not been the object of much coordination, leading to rather poor results to which the above-mentioned statistics can attest. Yet, to impute these figures to a mere lack of administrative cohesiveness would be both simplistic and reductive. Actually, although the secondary school's extremely low success rate is the main cause of concern for the reserve's students and parents, when it comes to formal education, it must certainly not be seen as the root of the reserve's educational problems, but rather as a result of a combination of local social, economic, and political susceptibilities. Some explanation about the way students are assessed and placed in Betsiamites should also help in

obtaining a clearer view of the current situation regarding local formal schooling results.

## ASSESSMENT METHODS

As in most schools in Western countries, the Betsiamites students who attend "l'école secondaire UASHKAIKAN" are submitted at regular intervals to a series of tests (both local and standardized) which can then be used by school personnel in order to inform parents of their child's progress (in comparison with that of his or her peers), to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each student (the better to help him or her) and to decide on the group he or she will belong during the next academic year. However, above all, the tests are instrumental in determining the school's, above-mentioned, "survival pattern"; i.e. to establish who: i) will obtain his or her high school diploma and who: ii) will be allowed to register in a post-secondary educational institution.

But such was not the position of the school prior to 1989. When the last grade (grade twelve) of the secondary school programme was added for the first time in Betsiamites in September 1986, assessment was then seen as a nondiscriminatory procedure which rested entirely on the teachers' shoulders. In other words, the main concern of the education staff was to produce a non-biased assessment (i.e. culturally relevant) in a genuine cross-cultural atmosphere free from racism. This type of assessment was influenced by the ideas put forward at that time by the proponents of multicultural education in Canada, such as the "Consultative Committee" on student assessment and programme placement set up by the Ontario Ministry of Education in 1986 and whose recommendations were published in 1989<sup>129</sup>. However, a trend was soon identified

which would later greatly influence assessment practices at Uashkaikan.

Indeed, it soon became obvious that even though the school had passing rates which could be compared favourably enough to the rates of the province between 1985 and 1989 (usually around 60%), it was clear that things were much less rosy when the holder of a secondary school diploma obtained at Uashkaikan then entered a post-secondary educational institution. It was not long before the word got around among students, parents and teachers: Uashkaikan's standards of teaching were far too low when compared with those of mainstream secondary schools and this particular high school diploma was not worth much at all. To be sure, the post-secondary institutions which had accepted Uashkaikan's students on the basis of the reserve school's assessment usually did not take long before sending back to Betsiamites those entrants, who were, by all objective standards, not on the same level with their peers.

These events represented a real drama in the life of the students concerned. For instance, the numbers of Uashkaikan graduates of 1987-88 and of 1988-89 were respectively twenty-nine and twenty-four, for an overall total of fifty-three. Out of these students, forty-one (or 77%) were living on welfare full-time six years later- the majority of whom had young children-, ten were still attending college (when they should have been out of it at least three years earlier) and only one was registered at university, while the last one of all was working in Montréal as an unskilled labourer. Clearly, the school's "survival pattern" had directly led the Uashkaikan students into a definitive cul-de-sac, and everyone understood this.



What had happened was quite simple in fact. Left to themselves and confronted with an obviously at-risk clientele (mainly because of absenteeism and serious academic backwardness), each teacher had concocted his or her own "customized" programme, assessing his or her students not on what they should have done according to the various programmes (e.g. French, English, mathematics, physics, geography, history) but on what had actually been seen in class, which was hardly impressive, most of the time, given absenteeism rates and the numerous discipline problems. And yet, despite those "arrangements", an important number of students still failed to achieve success, while those who did soon found out that they had few reasons to be proud of their "accomplishment".

In the face of this "crisis", the school's administration was prompt to react, signing, in 1987, the first agreement of its kind with the Québec Ministry of Education (MEQ) <sup>130</sup>. This agreement stipulated that "l'école secondaire Uashkaikan" had the authority (if such was its desire) to have its grade eleven and twelve students sit the MEQ Ministry examinations (which would be corrected locally) and to use (or not to use) the results when assessing its students<sup>131</sup>. Despite the obvious flexibility which the MEQ had agreed to, it was nevertheless a break-through for the MEQ, since it was the first time that the education authority of a Band Council acknowledged the importance and the relevance of the Ministry examinations as a means of controlling the standards of teaching in its schools. The "Betsiamites' education service" thus recognized in 1987 the two principles on which the MEQ policy on Ministry examinations rested, namely justice and equality<sup>132</sup>. Indeed, as a leaflet produced by the MEQ stressed in 1994, "school examinations can vary considerably from one school board to another, from one

school to another and even from one teacher to another" <sup>133</sup>. The Ministry examinations ensure- through statistical procedures such as conversion and moderation <sup>134</sup>- that a student had not received marks which were too low from a severe teacher or too high from a lenient one. The Commission on Skills in the American Workforce concluded in 1990 that this kind of testing was desirable for any modern education system:

...nations with excellent school systems have one thing in common: a set of stringent national performance standards that virtually all students must meet by age 16 and that have a direct effect on their employment prospects. These standards establish high goals for students achievement and provide an objective measure against which the performance of individuals and schools can be assessed. None of these nations has a system of choice <sup>135</sup>.

Of course, the Ministry examinations were used very selectively by the school's educational staff between 1987 and 1989. The results obtained by the students who first sat these examinations were so disastrous that they were dismissed by some teachers as culturally irrelevant because they were written in French. Nevertheless they were the only way to establish with certainty high teacher expectations and teaching standards- "soft techniques" having miserably failed-, as they also represented an extremely convincing argument for the students, parents, and post-secondary educational institutions alike that a high school diploma obtained at Uashkaikan had the same value as one obtained anywhere else. Furthermore as the Betsiamites Montagnais, like most Amerindians, **strongly** wished to have access to parity (with the mainstream

education system) as regards the quality of the formal education they were provided with as well as access to post-secondary education <sup>136</sup>, it was decided by the school administration in September 1989 that all Ministry examinations would from that point on be compulsory for the Uashkaikan students. A typical schedule of such examinations (for the academic year 1994) are referred to in Appendix 19.

Since 1989, the school's assessment policy did not differ from that of mainstream provincial schools. As in any other school, in-school examinations account for 100% of the final mark in some subjects (e.g. religion, P.E., arts, computer science), while they usually accounted for 50% in French, English, mathematics, history, economics and physical science (the other 50% being represented by the mark obtained at the Ministry examination). Every year, the MEQ officially releases tips for teachers concerning the contents of the Ministry examinations, which are based on the province's secondary school programme. The teachers at Uashkaikan also have access all year long to a computerized and updated examination bank named "Banque d'instruments de mesure" (BIM) which was created by an agency dealing with computers as a learning tool and which is affiliated with the MEQ. The examinations, selected because of their quality, originate from provincial schools and/or school boards. They allow teachers to verify if their students are keeping pace with the programme they are teaching and represent an excellent indication of the results students are likely to obtain at the Ministry examinations. As for the subjects which are not covered by Ministry examination, teachers are entirely responsible for the assessment. Consequently, much of the choice of assessment methods favours some courses (i.e. the core subjects) over the other subjects, which are seen rather as a cultural complement. However Betsiamites refuses

to alter this programme since it may jeopardize the future of its students, as the 1986-89 experience showed.

Once again, it is important to mention that Betsiamites school programmes cannot compete with the province's with school programmes, materials and assessment methods, especially at a time when the computer industry is literally invading the last two fields. What is a 10,000 clientele worth for the province's publishers and computer software dealers ? Betsiamites has thus chosen integration, while other bands are opting out and facing exactly the same problem as Betsiamites did in 1986.

However, there is still a serious problem in Betsiamites with respect to these Ministry examinations. There are also Ministry examinations at the elementary level in French and in mathematics. Normally, a child cannot go on to secondary school if he or she has not passed the compulsory French Ministry examination. Despite an official letter of complaint written by the secondary school administration to the local authority ("services éducatifs") in 1990, the local elementary school still refuses to have its students write these examinations, claiming that they are not culturally relevant. Exasperated by the obviously poor standards demonstrated by grade six students who register at Uashkaikan year after year, the school's administration obtained in 1991 the right to have these students sit the Ministry examinations at the local elementary school. Conducted over a period of three years, this experience has allowed the secondary school's administration to conclude that on average, the marks appearing on the elementary school individual records between 1991 and 1994 had to be lowered by a margin of 35% if one wanted to have a real picture instead of an institutionalized

embellishment. Uashkaikan's director has struggled hard during the last years to try to explain to parents the discrepancies between its individual records and the elementary school ones, without causing prejudice to the latter. However most parents dismiss the secondary school's remarks on the grounds of incompetence and keep wondering why the elementary school achieves so much "success" while the secondary school cannot achieve anything but failure.

This example of lack of coordination between two schools belonging to the same school system testifies to the absence of common educational goals at the local level and to the personalization of the decision-making process. Whilst the principal of the secondary school expects his students to achieve parity with the mainstream- which corresponds to the desire of the Betsiamites parents-, the principal of the elementary school believes that this task is unattainable. (François Larose had noted in 1993 that a widespread belief amongst the Betsiamites elementary school personnel was that because of the "language barrier", the children would "inevitably" fall behind the mainstream students. He had also noted that experiences collated over a period of eight years at this school had demonstrated precisely the opposite<sup>137</sup>). The director of the local "services éducatifs" apparently has no opinion on the subject and has given his support to the status quo.

Betsiamites parents and students are, for a large part, unaware of this major "internal" debate, a fact which tends to confirm that the former are virtually excluded from the decision-making process, as mentioned earlier, and that "quality" education is far from being a major public issue in Betsiamites (i.e. susceptible of being debated during a

public assembly) since it is overshadowed by other concerns such as health and housing, as will be evident in the next chapter.

## MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS

Motivation is without a doubt a (if not "the") major factor when one thinks of academic performance. But motives are not, as a team of researchers put it a few years ago, "per se [...] accessible to direct observation"<sup>138</sup>. Other researchers have also claimed that people are seldom aware of their own motives<sup>139</sup>. Moreover, an additional difficulty is the fact that when asked about their choices or preferences, people may wrongly identify their own motives or they may not be interested at all in revealing them, as Segall et al. have demonstrated<sup>140</sup>. Yet, despite these problems, it is nevertheless essential to take into account this crucial aspect of schooling, especially when the students concerned have traditionally been identified by many teachers and researchers as seriously lacking any motivation. For instance, Gilbert Voyat, who studied cognitive development among South Dakota Sioux children in 1982, associated the lack of motivation with generalized academic failure. He concluded that amongst the Sioux children

It would seem that one aspect of this high rate of underachievement is the result of a **lack of sufficient motivation to do well**. To be sure, the parents of school-age children, and the youngsters themselves, see school as the key to vocational success. Many feel that without school one can never achieve self-respect and independence, yet paradoxically

the belief persists that staying in school is a waste of time. Behind this sense of hopelessness, the Indian youth feels inferior and powerless and as these convictions grow, so declines success in school.<sup>141</sup>

The very same situation may prevail today in Betsiamites. One simply has to have another look at the drawing made by one of the school's ex-teachers (see Appendix 17) to understand it. This perfectly unmotivated youth represents, as the title of the drawing indicates, the "average Uashkaikan student" in the eyes of its artist. Of course, other factors, such as high levels of absenteeism (see next section) and grade repetition- which in turn can be related to the deprived environment-, also tend to indicate that young people lack motivation in Betsiamites. However the difficulty is to find a reliable measuring instrument in such a cross-cultural setting.

Such an instrument was designed and tested by Australian university professor Dr Dennis McInerney, who has extensively studied motivation at the secondary school level in cross-cultural settings (mainly in Australia, Great Britain and the United States) since the mid-1980s. His work has mostly focused on the "key determinants of motivation" of Aboriginal, Migrant, Anglosaxon, and Amerindian students in school settings <sup>142</sup>. His conclusions are often in contradiction with traditional beliefs. For example, he writes that:

Such emphases as developing group rather than individualistic learning situations, avoiding competition, structuring short-term learning, and using extrinsic motivation appear not to be **significant factors** in

determining the motivation of Aboriginal children at school.<sup>143</sup>

Indeed, Dr McInerney is essentially looking for "the particular needs of minority children" and those "key motivational variables" (in this particular case they were found to be "self-reliance", "confidence", and "intrinsic motivation"<sup>144</sup>), in order to be able to precisely target the school policies which should be changed and/or adapted to suit those particular needs. The situation of underprivileged minorities is very similar in many respects when it comes to formal education (e.g. poor retention rate, grade repetition, low achievement rates), and thus the measurement instruments designed by Dr McInerney can be extremely useful in helping to identify those "key motivational variables" (in the hope of alleviating this situation), especially since they have already proven to be cross-culturally reliable both for Aboriginal and Amerindian (Navajo) students, to name only two groups.

**The measurement instruments:** The "Inventory of school motivation" (ISM) is a one hundred item questionnaire designed to measure the following ten dimensions (also named "predictor variables"): task involvement (e.g. "I don't mind working a long time at schoolwork that I find interesting"); Striving for excellence (e.g. "When I am improving in school work I try even harder"); Competition (e.g. "I want to be better at classwork than my classmates"); Group leadership (e.g. "At school I don't like being in charge of a group"); Affiliation (e.g. "I try to work with friends as much as possible at school"); Social concern (e.g. "It makes me unhappy if my friends aren't doing well at school"); Recognition (e.g. "Praise from my parents for schoolwork is important to me"); Sense of purpose (future) (e.g. "I want to do well at school to have something



better to look forward to than my parents"); Sense of purpose (school) (e.g. "It is good for me to plan ahead so I can do well at school"); and Sense of competence (e.g. "I often think that there are things I can't do at school"). The one hundred items can be seen in Appendix 20. This questionnaire was translated into French in Betsiamites and then reviewed by three Montagnais teachers to guard against cultural bias (which might have occurred during the translation) and to make sure that the questions would be understood by students, whose first language is Montagnais (even though the students find it much easier to read and write in French than in Montagnais). It was completed under standardized procedures (the teachers reading aloud each item) during regular periods on a single day by 198 students (out of an approximate 250 student body). As for the computed analyses, they were all conducted in Australia by Dr McInerney.

Also, in order to be able to conduct multiple regression analyses, five other variables (named "criterion variables") were included with the ISM. The latter, like the ISM, were constructed scales based upon a five point Likert scale from strongly agree(1) to strongly disagree (5). Presented below are four of the five different criterion variables, and the reliability estimates:

<b>Items, means, standard deviations and reliability estimates (Cronbach's alphas) for criterion variables</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>alpha</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>sd</b>
<b>School confidence</b>	.57	2.5	.69
I am very confident at school			
I think I can do quite well at school			
I succeed at whatever I do at school			

<b>Items, means, standard deviations and reliability estimates (Cronbach's alphas) for criterion variables</b>			
<b>Affect to school</b>	.43	2.61	.95
I like working at school			
<b>Intent to complete school</b>	.63	1.62	.61
I intend to complete high school (HS)			
I'm the kind of person who would complete HS			
Personally I feel that I should complete HS			
<b>Perceived value of school</b>	.67	1.77	.73
I think that it is really important to do well at school			
Doing well at school is important to my future			

Note: Negative items were reverse scored.

Source: McInerney, D.M. & Vien, C. (unp.) (1995) *School Motivation, Traditional of Modern ? A Study Set in a Remote Canadian Indian Village*, Paper presented at a conference on Canadian issues at the University Western Sydney MacArthur, Australia.

The last criterion variable was "desired occupation after leaving school" and was graded on a four point scale, ranging from professional (1) to semi-skilled (4).

As for the tables of reliability for the ISM as such, they were the following:

<b>Cronbach's alpha, means, standard deviations for each of the scales drawn from the ISM for Betsiamites students (predictor variables)</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>alpha</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>sd</b>
Striving for excellence	.77	2.01	.59

<b>Cronbach's alpha, means, standard deviations for each of the scales drawn from the ISM for Betsiamites students (predictor variables)</b>			
Sense of competence	.63	2.58	.42
Recognition	.81	2.85	.72
Social concern	.67	2.59	.67
Affiliation	.64	2.83	.54
Group leadership	.71	3.41	.64
Sense of purpose (future)	.80	1.87	.66
Sense of purpose (school)	.66	2.41	.81
Competition	.67	3.01	.63
Task involvement	.51	1.79	.85

Note: Negative items were recoded.

Source: McInerney, D.M. & Vien, C. (1995) *op. cit.*

The ISM has already been used, as been stated, a number of times by Dr McInerney in educational cross-cultural settings. Its validity in such settings has been proven through exploratory factor analyses and multiple regression analyses<sup>145</sup>. The results obtained in Betsiamites (the coefficients obtained were satisfactory, as can be seen, except for the predictor variable "task involvement", which was not used in the multiple regression analyses) and can thus be identified as being valid and used to make comparisons between the Betsiamites Amerindians and the Navajo Amerindians.

Indeed, these two groups share a common educational "heritage" with regard to formal schooling characterized by repetitive failure, grade repetition and an apparent lack of achievement-motivation<sup>146</sup>. Even the mothers of these children often pointed out lack of motivation as being one of the major causes of underachievement. For instance,

when asked questions by Montagnais interviewers about schooling on the reserve, two Montagnais women (one in her twenties and the other one in her fifties) respectively answered:

We have a major problem: our children take no interest in their studies.

(...) As for education, once again alcohol is responsible for the lack of motivation of our youth and their dropping out of school. <sup>147</sup> [Author's translation.]

In fact, lack of motivation is only **one** element amongst all the other factors which have traditionally been identified by research as valid explanations for what appears to be a chronic maladjustment to formal schooling on the part of Amerindian students. These factors usually put the blame on the school system's cultural inadequacy, the difficult socioeconomic condition of Amerindians, the Amerindians' language deficit and home background variables (e.g. lack of parental support). In other words, these explanations represent a blend of deficit/difference theoretical material which is used alternatively as much by Amerindians as by non-Amerindians. Pedagogy is also often criticized; according to research, Amerindian students (such as the Navajo and the Montagnais) "cooperate and avoid competition", "are reluctant to assume a leadership role" and "are peer-oriented"<sup>148</sup>. The solutions chosen by decision-makers can vary enormously according to which explanation is favoured. Furthermore, as the above-mentioned factors can all affect student motivation, to try to obtain data which can appropriately assess the real motives of the Amerindian students becomes an essential task.

The data produced by the administration of the ISM will be discussed in the following way: first of all, the correlations (between predictor and criterion variables) which have established the key determinants of motivation of Navajo and Montagnais students will be interpreted in the light of the existing literature; and secondly, some individual items drawn from the ISM will be interpreted qualitatively in order to try to obtain a better portrait of the motives of the Montagnais students.

<p align="center"><b>Sets of standardized Beta weights and multiple regression coefficients for each criterion variable for the Betsiamites group (n = 198)</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Criterion variables</b></p>					
Predictor variable	school confidence	perceived value	affect to school	desired occupation	intention to complete
Competition	034	052	085	<u>181</u>	021
Sense of competence	<u>274**</u>	<u>181**</u>	<u>157**</u>	097	<u>161*</u>
Social concern	153	304**	160*	<u>148</u>	109
Affiliation	<u>095</u>	<u>084</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>168</u>	<u>072</u>
Sense of purpose for future	<u>153</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>257**</u>	100	093
Sense of purpose for school	037	<u>014</u>	<u>138</u>	346**	076
Group leadership	098	<u>058</u>	<u>016</u>	058	<u>111</u>
Seeking for excellence	138	243*	387**	<u>026</u>	084
Recognition	022	066	110	032	068
<b>MULT R</b>	<b>371**</b>	<b>433**</b>	<b>408**</b>	<b>359*</b>	<b>321*</b>

**Sets of standardized Beta weights and multiple regression coefficients for each criterion variable for the Betsiamites group (n = 198)**

**Criterion variables**

<b>R Square</b>	136**	188**	167**	129*	103*
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Note: Beta weights are presented without decimal points. Negative beta weights are underlined.

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01

Source: McInerney, D.M. & Vien, C. (1995) op. cit.

**Sets of standardized Beta weight and multiple regression coefficients for each criterion variable for the Navajo Indian group (n = 529) (partial results)**

**Criterion variables**

<b>Predictor variables</b>	<b>school confidence</b>	<b>perceived value</b>	<b>affect to school</b>	<b>desired occupation</b>	<b>intention to complete</b>
Competition	037	040	<u>002</u>	003	047
Sense of competence	<u>229**</u>	<u>054</u>	<u>200**</u>	<u>167**</u>	080
Social concern	<u>057</u>	091	254**	012	112*
Affiliation	004	025	<u>053</u>	<u>031</u>	074
Sense of purpose for future	<u>033</u>	355**	018	022	615**
Sense of purpose for school	089	168**	033	146*	151**
Group leadership	151**	002	028	<u>155**</u>	<u>009</u>
Seeking for excellence	396**	067	285**	043	109
Recognition	023	047	<u>067</u>	<u>026</u>	<u>145*</u>

**Sets of standardized Beta weight and multiple regression coefficients for each criterion variable for the Navajo Indian group (n = 529) (partial results)**

Criterion variables					
<b>MULT R</b>	586**	574**	551**	329**	462**
<b>R Square</b>	343**	329**	304**	108**	214**

Note: Beta weights are presented without decimal points. Negative beta weights are underlined.

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Source: McInerney, D.M. (unpub.) (1994) *Goal Theory and Indigenous Minority School Motivation: Relevance and Application*, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur.

The data collected support some of the common "hypotheses" mentioned above but reject others. First of all, it was assumed that because the Amerindians belong to "collectivist" societies who avoid competition, affiliation could be used by educators as a powerful pedagogical tool (e.g. group work instead of individual work). Yet, for the two groups, affiliation and competition were not identified as being significant predictors. (However, it is important to mention that while Navajo students were identified- from the cumulative percentages obtained- as being "moderately competitive", only 7% of the Montagnais students were in the "agree" to "strongly agree" range on this scale which, in their case, was the second lowest result obtained after the group leadership scale). Also, it is believed that individual performance (i.e. seeking for excellence) is an alien notion in Amerindian culture. On the contrary, for both groups, seeking for excellence was significantly related to two criterion variables. Amerindians are also believed to be unable to cope with delayed gratifications (and formal education certainly is one). In other words, they are past and present-oriented. Once again, the results demonstrate the opposite. For the two groups, the predictor

variables sense of purpose for school and sense of purpose for future were each significantly related to at least one criterion variable (and even to three in the case of sense of purpose for school for the Navajo group). Finally, it is generally an accepted proposition that Amerindian students need a greater recognition from their teachers. Surprisingly, recognition was not significantly related to any criterion variable for the Montagnais, and it was even negatively related to the intention to complete schooling for the Navajo. As McInerney writes:

It would appear that, for the children [Navajo] intending to complete school, the goal of recognition is not important. To the extent the children strongly agreed with the intention of completing school, they strongly disagreed with the need for recognition!<sup>149</sup>

On the other hand, the data did support some of the above-mentioned assertions. Hence, it was demonstrated that the Amerindians were somewhat reluctant to assume group leadership. Indeed, although this predictor variable was not significantly related to any criterion variable for the Montagnais, only 3% of them were in the "agree" to "strongly agree" range on this scale. As for the Navajo, only 11% of them were in the same scale, and those who demonstrated a taste for this orientation had a higher school confidence and were more ambitious as regards their future occupation. In addition, social concern was, for each one of the two groups, significantly related to two criterion variables; a thing which tends to confirm that collectivist values should be taken into account as far as the process of on-reserve formal schooling is concerned. Lastly, poor self-image did emerge very convincingly from these analyses. The sense of competence



was significantly and negatively related to three criterion variables for the Navajo and to four for the Montagnais. This certainly is an indication that many Amerindian students are far from being self-confident and that this constitutes a major impediment in their academic life.

In short, it can be said that the two groups appear to be very similar. For the Navajo students, the major determinants of their motivation are: search for excellence (the more a Navajo student strives for excellence, the more he or she is likely to like school and to be self-confident); sense of purpose for the future (related to the perceived value of school and to the intention to complete schooling); sense of purpose for school (related to the perceived value of school, desired occupation and intention to complete schooling), and sense of competence (the less a student is self-confident, the less he or she is likely to have school confidence, to like school, and to be ambitious with regard to his or her future occupation). Equally important is the social concern variable, related to school affective input and to the intention to complete schooling.

For the Montagnais, the key determinants are also a search for excellence (the more a Montagnais student strives for excellence, the more he or she is likely to understand the value of schooling and to like school), sense of purpose for school (related to the desired occupation), social concern (related to perceived value of school and to school affective input), and sense of competence (negatively related to school confidence, perceived value of schooling, affect to school and intention to complete schooling). Curiously, a sense of purpose for the future was negatively related to school affect (i.e. the greater a student's sense of purpose for school, the less he or she is likely to like that particular

school, i.e. Uashkaikan). This situation seems to be a source of worry for the school's personnel. Indeed, over 30% of students appeared, from the cumulative percentages obtained, not to like school.

A qualitative analysis of the answers obtained for some of the individual items drawn from the ISM can provide more information about the motivations of the Montagnais students. For instance, although group leadership, affiliation and competition (as for competition, it was already mentioned that it was the second-lowest result obtained after group leadership) were not identified as being key motivational determinants, they nevertheless seem to represent salient behavioral goals for the Montagnais students. To the items "I often try to be leader of a group" and "it is very important to me to be a group leader", respectively as little as 13% and 11% were in the "agree" to "strongly agree" scale while 37% and 31% were in the "disagree" to "strongly disagree" range. However, it is noticeable that as much as 29% of students were in the "agree" to "strongly agree" range for the item "I work harder to try to be better than others", which could suggest that individualistic goals and behavior are at least tolerated. The answers to some of the items belonging to the predictor variable "affiliation" give support to this last hypothesis. Indeed, while as many as 38% of the students strongly agreed with the item "I like working with other people at school" (80% were in the "agree" to "strongly agree" range), only 8% strongly agreed that "getting on with other students is more important than schoolwork (and 19% strongly disagreed). Only 5% strongly agreed with the item "not doing better than my friends in class is important to me" (while 27% strongly disagreed).

As stated earlier, the idea that Amerindians are strictly past and present-oriented was not supported by the data. For example, as many as 43% of the students strongly agreed with the item "I aim my schooling toward getting a good job" (sense of purpose; future), while 77% were in the "agree" to "strongly agree" range and only 6% in the "disagree" to "strongly disagree" range. On the other hand, the hypothesis that Amerindians usually do not have a very positive self-image was strongly supported by the data. Although 82% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the item "I think I can do quite well at school" (school confidence), as little as respectively 10% and 18% were in the same range for the items "I succeed at whatever I do at school" (school confidence) and "I think I am as good as everybody else at school" (sense of competence). Clearly then, when the other relevant body of literature on Amerindians is compared to the portrait of the Montagnais students which emerges from the interaction between the various ISM variables and from the qualitative analysis of some individual items, some surprises are to be found while some other assertions are supported.

It is indeed often believed- as stated earlier- that Amerindians are not future-oriented, that they have a greater need for recognition, and that they reject individual achievement. On the contrary, the data obtained with the two groups (Navajo and Montagnais) indicate that the two groups are highly task-oriented, that the majority of these students are striving for excellence, that they strongly believe in the importance of schooling and in the importance of working for one's future, and that in the case of the Navajos, those who intend to complete school have no need for recognition, while 29% of the Montagnais students were in the "disagree" range on this scale (which was,

furthermore, not significantly related to any criterion variable).

On the other hand, results did show that the Amerindians were not very competitive (especially the Montagnais), that the majority were reluctant to assume leadership and that they were socially concerned (although competition and affiliation were not significantly related to any criterion variable for the two groups). The most important confirmation lay in the negative self-image Amerindians are thought to generally have. In the two groups, the results obtained demonstrated that a large proportion of these students believe that they are inadequate learners, a thing which certainly represents a major obstacle to academic achievement.

To fit the particular educational needs of the Navajo students, McInerney suggests a type of schooling which could allow these students to experience success, and to "structure learning around supportive peer interactions" <sup>150</sup>. These pedagogic principles are certainly also valid for the Montagnais, in the light of the results obtained. But one of the greatest achievements of the ISM is that it exposes the fact that some of the ideas related to the Amerindians which are to be found in the relevant body of literature seem to have more to do with an "idée reçue" than with reality. More and more, these hypotheses are being challenged by new research. For instance, Kleinfeld and Nelson have argued that educators and researchers- in their desire not to use any "deficit" language with Amerindian students- have so much insisted and so much focused their attention during the last twenty years on the incompatibility of Amerindians' learning style with that of Non-Amerindians that remarkably little has been done in this period which has really brought the Amerindians any tangible educational benefit <sup>151</sup>. For its

part, the ISM certainly has provided useful information about the type of schooling which could be adapted to the specific needs of Amerindian students such as the Navajo and the Montagnais. Further, the Amerindians' need to experience academic success and their desire to benefit from formal schooling are strikingly apparent in the analysis of the results obtained. These results also appear to be reliable. For example, one cannot pretend that these "motivations" were "inferred", or that there is no reason why the Amerindians- or any other cultural group- would let people know about their deeply-rooted motives. This pretension can be ruled out, since a series of multiple regression analyses have been conducted and correlation coefficients have been calculated, thus demonstrating the reliability of the ISM as a measuring instrument for motivational goals in cross-cultural settings. The next section should also help in building a portrait of Uashkaikan that is as comprehensive as possible.

#### TRUANCY AND ABSENTEEISM

School attendance has been compulsory for Amerindians in Canada since the beginning of the 1950s (age six to fifteen in the 1950s; later the upper limit would be pushed to sixteen). Theoretically, federal Indian Ministry agents or federal police officers had the duty to enforce this regulation; but in practice, above all in Western Canada (where the majority of Amerindians live) Amerindian truants were removed from their homes and sent to far-away residential (boarding) schools where many of them suffered mental or physical abuse (which explains the Amerindians' traditional bitterness towards residential schools). In Betsiamites, the students who attended residential secondary schools and colleges (mostly in Sept-Îles, Chicoutimi, Jonquière or in Québec City)

during the 1950s and the 1960s were not forced to do so. As a result they have not been as traumatized as some western Amerindians were since many of them feel that in fact, this was one of the best periods in their life (a fact which once again demonstrates that there is not **one** Amerindian history in Canada, but almost as many as there are reserves). Nevertheless, it remains a fact that attendance in Betsiamites has traditionally been erratic and that it has assumed today a pattern which is strongly linked to the economic life of the reserve. Traditionally, non-attendance at school has not really been considered by the Amerindian or non-Amerindian authorities as a serious crime on the reserves of the province of Québec and was thus much more tolerated than in western Canada.

School records in Betsiamites tell little about truancy prior to the 1970s. There was no secondary school in Betsiamites until this time and the majority of students dropped out of school once elementary school was over. Students who were old enough to attend a secondary school generally preferred not to do so because they would have missed their family too much (even today in The Northwest Territories, 76% of Amerindian students drop out of high school mainly because they have to leave home to do so, as this passage demonstrates: "Experience shows that when students [in the Northwest Territories] are faced with the prospect of leaving home to go to high school in larger communities, many choose to drop out instead" <sup>152</sup>). Reliable figures on school absenteeism in Betsiamites from 1970 to 1985 are also not readily available and no research has been conducted on this subject. But from the information gathered in Betsiamites from teachers, ex-teachers and ex-students, it appears that truancy was then (between the 1950s and the 1980s) a common practice among students both in

Betsiamites and outside Betsiamites (and it has always been the case, according to these same sources<sup>153</sup>). School records have been easier to access since the new secondary school was built in 1985, and should help in drawing the contemporary absenteeism pattern of the students based on the period ranging from 1985 to 1993 (with a closer look at the academic years 1989-90 to 1992-93).

During this latter period (September 1989 to June 1993), the portrait of student absenteeism and tardiness was the following:

<b>Number of absences and latecomers Uashkaikan</b>			
<b>Academic year</b>	<b>no. absences*</b>	<b>no. latecomers</b>	<b>no. students</b>
1989-90	7289	1800	191
1990-91	8622	2457	215
1991-92	8258	1909	221
1992-93	8755	1964	227
<b>Total:</b>	<b>32924</b>	<b>8130</b>	<b>854</b>

\*Number of periods missed. There are four periods in a school day.  
Source: Uashkaikan school records.

As can be seen, over this four-year period, each student has missed on average 39 periods (or 10 school days in a 180 day calendar) and has been late 10 times on average for every academic year. One can easily imagine the kind of problems that such a situation would create in any school. In Uashkaikan, the problems are the following: Teachers have trouble with their examinations because there is always a substantial

proportion of their students who are not there. Those students who are absent most often from school fall critically behind their peers and become disruptive in class or else disinterested and their teachers get angry with them because they are "slowing everybody down". The school's director is also angry with them because he literally has "to run after them" to know where they are and why they are not attending school. The director then has to contact their parents by phone or has to write them letters. Some of the parents of truants (or members of their extended family) get depressed and/or often blame the school personnel over the phone (or they come directly to school in person), asking why "nobody is doing anything about it". Local journalists (Amerindian and non-Amerindian)- not to mention European (i.e. French) who come almost every year- who conduct regular interviews with the school's director are naturally appalled by these figures and wonder why "nothing is being done" about this situation. Student tardiness also inevitably irritates the average teacher (and anyone who has been himself or herself a teacher certainly knows why). But most of all, the real calamity in this situation lies in the fact that these students **are not learning**. One could indeed wonder why "nothing is being done" when the literature on "effective schooling" suggests such a straightforward and ready-made solution for a problem as serious as this one:

Where student tardiness or absenteeism were potential problems, **good schools** made prompt contact with parents, often by phone. Such communications required set aside staff resources and conceptualizing the means of putting effective pressure on lax parents. **But the supervisors planned for and found the resources; in effect, they chose to invest energy in a quick response while the problem was simpler to**



correct.<sup>154</sup>

As was said earlier however in the section on financing, the decision-making process rests in the hands of a very limited number of people in the different sectors of the Band Council. In Betsiamites, the authority as regards formal schooling rests in the hands of a single person; the director of the education service. It was also pointed out that the decisions were almost always personalized. The problem which is currently being discussed provides an excellent example of this personalization of the decision-making process. Although the secondary school's director has asked every year since 1985 that at least **one** person should be given the job of controlling truancy, nobody has ever been hired by the Band Council, even though the education service "produces" a "surplus" every year. This usually ranges between \$100,000 and \$200,000 or £50,000 and £100,000 and is automatically transferred to the housing sector, which "produces" deficits every year (mostly because many people neglected to pay their rent to the Band Council- a problem which is slowly disappearing as appropriate actions have been taken by the Band Council during the last years). Two persons were hired as aides (one in 1986 and the other one in 1988), but their job was to handle discipline problems **within** the school, and this experience, having produced poor results, was soon abandoned. The current discussion is, once again, at the very heart of "resistance to schooling", although the present chapter is about schooling in Betsiamites. But it is impossible to discuss truancy in Uashkaikan without discussing the reasons which make it almost impossible to eradicate. Many explanations can be inferred from the education service director's decision not to hire a person to hunt down truants: the person, obviously, should preferably speak Montagnais, but no one in Betsiamites seems to be qualified for

this job. The desire to "produce" a surplus is stronger than the desire to make schooling more effective in Betsiamites. Truancy is seen by the director as being so deeply embedded in the student culture in Betsiamites, that it is useless to even think about fighting it. The Amerindian culture prevents anybody from attributing to him or herself the right to tell anybody else what to do with his or her life or with his or her children- or else a combination of all or some of these answers (or even none at all).

Thirteen years of experience as a participant-observer would lead one to suggest that all of these hypotheses are valid. For instance, as for the first hypothesis, one Amerindian teacher was hired in October 1994 with the mandate of working part-time (20%) on parents-school relations (truancy being the most important aspect of these relations), but this person categorically refused to pay a single visit to any parent, pretending all year long that no teacher had ever complained to her, and so "everything was fine". This Amerindian teacher was hired after a non-Amerindian teacher had resigned in October 1994, and as this teacher was working only part-time- 80%- an extra 20% was soon found for her, at her demand, so she could collect 100% of her teacher's salary. She was thus working "accidentally" as a school-parents relations officer- though in October the direction gave her a very specific mandate. However she developed a heart problem in December. She was then absent for a couple of weeks and when she came back, the director was not keen on releasing her from her post, given her health problem. Nothing prevented her though from acting for three weeks as the president of the Betsiamites carnival in February 1995 and making and selling home-made food at home during lunchtime in order to collect "extra" money. Clearly, this last experience was a disaster which contributed to undermine further the idea that truancy

can effectively be fought in Betsiamites and encouraged a laissez-faire.

The second hypothesis- the desire to produce a "surplus"-, also plays a great part in the life of a director in Betsiamites since he or she has to constantly cope with "fresh" politicians (the Band Council members and the chief are elected every two years) whose job is to make sure that the money is wisely spent and that there are no deficits. To "produce" a surplus every year is a perfect way of diverting the attention of these politicians onto other people and to be identified by the Band Council members as a sound administrator.

The third hypothesis certainly cannot be ruled out. It has already been mentioned that the truancy pattern parallels the economic life of the reserve. Feeling that there had to be some logic in the absence pattern at Uashkaikan, the director randomly chose thirteen weeks during the academic year 1990-91 and tried to determine if some interconnections could emerge from this investigation. The result is the graph which can be seen in Appendix 21. Social security benefits are paid on average every two weeks in Betsiamites. As the majority of the parents of the students were on welfare, it was suggested that social security benefit collection had a significant impact on school life. This hypothesis was strongly supported by the data gathered during these thirteen weeks; as can be seen in the graph. The absence rate went up (and some times quite dramatically) every time social security benefits were collected by the population (these weeks are identified on the graph with an X)- as compared with the week which had preceded the collection. The peak during the twentieth week of the school year can be also be attributed to the afore-mentioned winter carnival and to a hockey tournament

both of which are held every year. These last two phenomena demonstrate that the social life of the reserve also has a tremendous impact on the school's activities and that its influence is negative and aggravates the situation. One can wonder why these social security benefits have such a weight in terms of student absence. The answer is very simple, in fact; the parents are involved in intensive shopping in Baie-Comeau (the largest city in the area) during those precise weeks and they need their children because they either want to buy them things or because they have to babysit for their younger brothers and sisters. From a long-term analysis (approximately six years) of the messages sent to the school administration by the parents, it is very clear that for the latter, schooling is subordinate to their domestic life, as these few examples of commonly received messages can attest:

-S. could not go to school yesterday because he had to look after his younger brother all day long. 21 October 1994 [child allowance benefits were collected on the 20th of October.]; -Only to tell you that I needed M. at home yesterday [sic]. 21 October 1994; -L. couldn't go to school yesterday because we all went to Hauterive [the western part of Baie-Comeau]. 18 January 1995.; -I told P. to look after his younger brother yesterday afternoon because his mother and I had to run some errands. 19 January 1995.[Author's translation.]

These messages, along with the statistics extracted from school records and the graph, do illustrate how the students' absence pattern is deeply rooted in the everyday life of

the reserve and cannot be separated from economy, which rests on social security and other transfer payments (e.g. child allowance benefits) for the majority of parents. In fact, another tendency has been observed by the school's director over the last six years, and that is that even the students' parents who work use their child as babysitters during the critical periods of absenteeism because these working parents (or their spouses) then make extra money acting as "taxi drivers" for the welfare recipients, who usually do not have a car. As the price charged for a return daily trip to Baie-Comeau is approximately \$70 (or £35), many working parents do as many errands as they need to do.

This last trend tends to confirm the considerable influence exerted by the massive and regular arrival (at predetermined dates) of government transfer payments in Betsiamites. Actually, even the school's personnel avoids going to the post office on these days because there is always a crowd all day long.

But most of all, these factors reveal the undisputable interconnection between massive student absenteeism in deprived areas and socioeconomic conditions and contributory community factors. What happens in Betsiamites is replicated elsewhere in the world. For example, in the poorest parts of Bombay, school attendance is always at its lowest from the month of January onwards, "possibly [according to two researchers] because seasonal employment attracts children away, or because their interest flags after a few months of school"<sup>155</sup>. In rural Zimbabwe, school attendance is closely linked with droughts; the severer the drought, the greater the number of pupils who are forced to abandon school because their parents cannot then afford the school fees <sup>156</sup>. In working-

class areas of Scotland, it has been observed over a long period of time by teachers that the most popular day of the week for playing truant was Friday. Since no correlation was to be found, researchers attributed this condition to home and school environments, personal involvement of pupils and possibly to the "end of the week syndrome"<sup>157</sup>. In all these cases, only the circumstantial variables are different, the end result is always the same; the students are not present in the classrooms and they are not learning. Now the extent to which the education sector's director (or members of the Band Council) consider this situation as a *fait accompli*, no matter what steps are taken, is difficult to assess. But given the little time, energy and resources devoted by them to alleviate school absenteeism in Betsiamites, it can be inferred that the authorities do believe that this absence pattern is beyond remedy. This hypothesis is at the least worth considering.

The last hypothesis- that Amerindian culture could play a part in that particular area of the school's life- is also, according to some researchers, worth considering since Amerindian parents have very often been depicted by psychologists as being overprotective of their children (and thus reluctant to force their children into school). Further, most Amerindian adults, because of their collectivist values, are averse to assuming any kind of leadership (and presenting oneself as an educational role-model and telling others how to raise their kids, certainly is a form of leadership)<sup>158</sup>. Of course, this list of hypotheses is not exhaustive and absenteeism in Betsiamites can still be thoroughly investigated by a researcher or even a team of researchers, but as it is only one aspect of the present study, this section should be concluded with a few more remarks.

Despite the obvious lack of human resources in Uashkaikan, the director has always attempted to fight truancy and absenteeism as best as he could. Between 1989 and 1993, visits were paid weekly to parents of truants, hundreds of phone calls were made and nearly five hundred personalized letters were written (at least one third of the parents do not have a telephone at home). Also, as many as 1587 individual meetings between students and the director took place in only two years (1989-90 and 1990-91), and absenteeism (27%) and truancy (8.6%) accounted for more than 35% of the total number of these meetings. Furthermore, the director wrote an article about the dangers of absenteeism in the student newspaper every time it was released during this period, warning parents that for the school's director, chronic absenteeism was without a doubt the most important factor as far as educational failure was concerned (a teacher who works in a deprived area in Scotland also feels the same: "If you were to ask me what is the greatest concern of all in areas of deprivation and which is a major cause of under-achievement I would, without hesitation, identify school absence or truancy" <sup>159</sup>). However since all this work brought little return to which the statistics can attest, and since numerous other matters (e.g. quality of teaching, high staff turnover, supervision of young "first-time" teachers, addition of a carpentry course) tended to force the administration back "into" the school. The war against truancy and absenteeism had to be officially abandoned in September 1993, as the "soldiers" were exhausted, demoralized and definitely outnumbered (yet the director has kept on writing letters, making visits at home and making telephone calls- because it is an essential part of the job- but less time is being devoted to these activities than before). To be fought in an effective way, the school's battle against truancy and absenteeism in Betsiamites would require significant inputs (in terms of human resources) and as these resources are not

made available in Uashkaikan. The administration can merely, for the time being, "buffer the instructional core from disruptions"<sup>160</sup>, which is one condition for effective schooling, but certainly not enough. However, another serious attempt was made by the director in June 1994. Two days of meetings were scheduled with parents during which chronic absenteeism was once again discussed, and the parents were given a "Uashkaikan School Guide" which clearly explained to them- among other things- the crucial times of the year (e.g. end of terms, examination sessions, Ministry examinations) where they had to make sure that their child would be present at school. Moreover, a personal student "attendance register" to be used the following year with teachers' individual stamps was presented to the parents who would then be allowed to know at the end of every school day (or even at lunch time) if their child had missed a single period. But between 1994-95 and 1996--97 the absenteeism pattern described above did not alter, thus confirming that the local "economic cycles" have a tremendous influence on the other facets of the village life (e.g. education, health). For this reason the economy of Betsiamites- and its impact on the school's life- will be further discussed in the next chapter.

One last word (at least in this section) about student absenteeism and tardiness in Uashkaikan; evidence suggests that the more a student progresses throughout the regular programme at Uashkaikan (i.e. from secondary 1 to secondary 5), the less he or she is likely to be absent from school or to be late at school. Appendix 22 indeed indicates that while the students in secondary 5 represented, in 1991-92, 5% of the student body, they accounted for only 2.2% of the absences and for 5.5% of latecomers. Students in special classes (C.P.), for their part, represented 17.% of the



student body and accounted for 30.9% of absences and 24.3% of latecomers. This would tend to indicate that chronic truancy and absenteeism are phenomena which are often symptomatic of a wider individual social maladjustment.

## REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

The literature on effective schooling stresses the importance, in "good schools", of pupil discipline and of both schoolwide and classroom level incentives for learning <sup>161</sup>. Rewards and punishments are connected with these two aspects of schooling; while the former honours or promotes learning, the latter discourages inadequate and/or disruptive student behaviour. These two facets of the school's life will now be examined, beginning with the latter.

It is somewhat difficult to create material incentives for learning at Uashkaikan. Some experiments have been undertaken which have failed rather miserably.

For instance, during two consecutive years (1990 to 1992), the best student of each class (as determined by the teachers) was awarded a gold-plated plaque bearing his or her name and grade. The teachers observed twice during the academic years following these awards, that the behaviour of the majority of the students concerned deteriorated significantly enough to be noticed by the whole staff. From informal discussions with some of these students, it was gathered that these students reacted quite negatively and strongly to their being referred to constantly as "teachers' pets", as well as other less polite names by their peers. As for the few students whose behaviour had not

changed, they were reported the same events, and claimed that it did not "bother" them. Nevertheless, another experiment was attempted in 1993 and 1994. This time, a drawing contest was held by the director (most Amerindian students love drawing). The winner would have his or her drawing reproduced the next academic year in the student calendar and would receive a money prize. The first year, only two drawings, drawn by two girls, were submitted to the director (one was from a girl in a special class, the other one from a girl who had already been named twice the best student of her class). To encourage the participation of a greater number of students for the next year, the director reproduced the two drawings and gave a money prize to the two girls. They both reported, the following year, that they were being frequently harassed by their peers with unpleasant remarks regarding their drawing in the student calendar. When the next drawing contest took place the next year, not a single drawing was submitted to the director (out of approximately 250 students). It can be deduced from these two events that the moral and material benefits gained by the students were certainly not worth, according to them, all the negative pressure that these prizes engendered from their peers.

The reasons which could explain such a situation are not simple to assess. The first thing which springs to mind is of course, the commonly referred-to collectivist orientation of Amerindian culture (see section on motivation above). As research has already demonstrated, Amerindian pupils "who excel in terms of personal achievement may be ridiculed and rejected within the tribe"<sup>162</sup>. This last factor cannot certainly be ruled out in the present case, but one has also to take into consideration the fact that individual failure has been a yearly experience for the majority of the school's students

(at least two thirds of the school's student body) for quite a long time and that is has more often than not been the same for their parents as well. In other words, the traditional average student in Betsiamites is one who fails and it is therefore hardly surprising that individual achievement is not well regarded. By definition, a counter culture can develop best through "isolation", "threats", or "common interests" <sup>163</sup> and since these three elements have been found in abundance in Betsiamites ever since schooling was made compulsory in the 1950s, the generalized rejection of personal achievement may be either linked to the Amerindian collectivist culture, to a student counter culture, or to a combination of both. In the latter case, student counter culture maybe acts as an aggravating factor for a cultural "reflex" which pre-exists.

This last area has never been thoroughly investigated in Betsiamites, nevertheless, the one important thing to bear in mind is that from the answers given to the Inventory of School Motivation (ISM), it is clear that a majority of students at Uashkaikan do not voluntarily fail merely to please their friends or because they cannot help it for cultural reasons. The answers to items such as "getting on with friends is more important than schoolwork" and "not doing better than my friends in class is important to me" reveal (see above) that only a very small minority of students comply with these "rules". Given the chance, many more students would succeed, but learning difficulties are most of the time too dramatic to fulfil these hopes. Put another way, it is not because students do not respond in a positive way to traditional incentives for learning, such as prizes, that it must be concluded that academic achievement is unimportant for these students. It seems to be more a matter of low self-esteem, personal discouragement, and the cumulative result of serious educational backwardness (e.g. reading, writing). For the

school's personnel, acting on the latter has always been more essential than brooding over the unconventional responses of students to honour rolls and to recognition of successful students. In fact, the literature on effective schooling certainly does not condemn this choice, as can be seen:

Good schools also maintained systems for identifying students who were not performing at grade level. These youngsters were retained and given extra help. It is my impression that an active policy of retention (instead of promotion) spurred orderly efforts to identify and correct learning problems.<sup>164</sup>

This, however, brings the discussion into the field of punishment. Indeed, it would be very nice if students who are required to stay longer in school for their own educational benefit would experience this as a positive incident. But most of the time, these students are often quite cynical as far as their chances of success are concerned, and thus see the obligation of having to stay in school when the last bell rings as a useless and bothersome endeavour.

Compulsory extra periods were created in 1990 at Uashkaikan. Their main aim was to allow students who fell behind time to catch up with their peers through extra schoolwork, coupled, of course, with further explanations. Teachers were to determine who needed this kind of help in their classroom and were given the duty of preparing relevant schoolwork. Some teachers were designated (and paid) for the supervision of these compulsory extra periods which take place at the end of each schoolday (and

lasted between half an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes). But given the tremendous staff turnover in the school and given the information flow (between director and teachers and between staff, students, and their parents) which is often chaotic at Uashkaikan, these periods were soon interpreted both by the students and the majority of teachers as a way of punishing students who had misbehaved. Realizing that the reason for the creation of such periods had been misunderstood by many teachers who were sending their students because they had been impolite or had forgotten their eraser or whatever, the director felt obliged to send a memorandum to the teachers in 1991 to put things straight. But the very same situation recurred in 1993 and then again in 1994. The administration had to send two other memorandums to the teachers. This demonstrates that there is something wrong with the way these periods were implemented, but worse still, it demonstrates that even simple messages are very hard to get across in that particular school, even if they are conveyed by the administration. For the time being, a kind of *de facto status quo* seems to have emerged concerning those periods. Despite all that was said or written, one group of teachers still see these periods as a convenient way of handling their discipline problems, whereas another group has understood their aim (and thus prepare appropriate schoolwork for the students they send to these periods) and/or give extra lessons themselves at lunchtime or at the end of the day.

For its part, pupil discipline as such is seen as a crucial element for successful learning by the school's personnel, which is also seen as relevant by those who hold to the tenets of "effective schooling"<sup>165</sup>. According to this literature, the rules of a good school should be both elaborate and clear, so that every student always knows exactly what

penalty comes with what violation (e.g. fight, foul language, theft, alcohol use). The rules at Uashkaikan are quite elaborate (they are five pages long) and clear, and the school's personnel ensures every autumn that each student possesses a copy of them, but it is obvious that they are not at all respected by a significant fraction of the students. According to school records, the most frequent violations of the rules consist, in descending order of importance, the following: absenteeism, tardiness and truancy (35.6%, or 27.0% for "abs.\tar." + 8.6% for "desertion"), misbehaviour in classrooms (essentially refusal to work) or during recess (e.g. pushing, rowdiness) (28.2%), losing or destroying school material (books, notebooks, agendas) (19.0%), foul language (9.8%), and stealing or fighting (7.4%).

These statistics support the hypothesis that the two major areas in which resistance to schooling in Betsiamites finds its expression are chronic absenteeism and students' lack of motivation (indeed, a refusal to work on the part of a student certainly testifies to a lack of motivation, as does the frequency- 19.0% of the total number of violations- at which school material is lost or destroyed). Turning again to pupil discipline at Uashkaikan, one of the criticisms which students make- whenever they are given a chance- is the inconsistency with which these school rules are enforced. For instance, every student knows that each teacher has his or her own way of dealing with tardiness, absenteeism, refusal to work or foul language. The students clearly know which teacher will let them in even if they are late while another will not even tolerate one second's lateness after the bell rings. Or else they will be allowed to use quite crude vocabulary by one teacher while another will "blow a fuse" if they say a thing as "harmless" as "damn it!" in the classroom. Consequently, they have become experts in

interpreting to their advantage the room for manoeuvre that they can exploit every time they enter a classroom (i.e. four times a day). The school's extremely high staff turnover has facilitated- if not encouraged- the development of this student culture. During the last ten years (1985-1995), students have seen all kinds of teaching behaviours, which were often not in conformity with the basic principles and ethos of formal schooling. For example- to mention only a few-, they have observed a teacher who had developed the habit of fighting (for fun of course) with students outside the school during recesses; or they have heard others who tell dirty jokes or discuss in a suggestive way the anatomy of certain students during their classes. They have been made aware of the case of at least three young teachers who were either going out steadily with some of their peers' parents or even with their peers themselves. They have also seen teachers who are frequently late for work or absent at crucial times such as paydays or Fridays and another who was arrested for having organized an illegal lottery. But worst of all, they have been confronted with countless types of teacher expectations; from those who are glad if only their students are relatively quiet (even if they are doing virtually nothing) to others who expect them to perform as if they were attending a top-ranking public school.

In this sense, the administration of the school, which is responsible for the implementation of a school ethos, has failed in developing a teacher culture which would promote success instead of carelessness and generalized inconsistency. As a result, every beginning of a new academic year starts as if it were the school's inauguration. How will absenteeism, tardiness, refusal to work, foul language, and misbehaviour be dealt with this year ? To be sure, the rules are constantly reviewed,

which is, theoretically, a good thing<sup>166</sup>. But invariably, the academic year begins with a "new" code of discipline and a host of diverging opinions as far as its enforcement is concerned- which in fact is a characteristic of "bad" schools:

In less coherent schools staff members typically varied widely in their answers to such questions [prohibitions]. Conversely, in good schools all staff members (and usually the pupils) gave uniform answers.<sup>167</sup>

Of course, it will be very hard in the future to eradicate this inconsistent teacher culture since it has firmly established itself in the school. Paradoxically it would have been relatively easy to avoid if appropriate steps had been taken from the start in 1985, notwithstanding the high staff turnover. But then, just as student absenteeism and lack of motivation are often mere symptoms of a deeper malaise, a high staff turnover is also an indication that there is somewhere in the administrative process a major flaw which results in counterproductive dynamics at the classroom level.

It has been shown in this section that traditional rewards cannot be used in this particular school, probably for both social and cultural reasons, that rules were interpreted very freely both by teachers and students and that rule enforcement- including in the case of students who fall behind in their work- is characterized by inconsistency. Obviously, the literature on effective schooling points an accusing finger at this area of the school's life, and it seems that it is proper to do so, because the way this crucial dimension is handled by the school's administration reveals a damaging lack of internal leadership as well as the existence of a tenacious and counterproductive



individualistic teacher culture. Of course, constant staff turnover may be partly responsible for this situation, but to create a school climate susceptible to favourable change as regards student success nevertheless remains one of the major tasks of the administration.

In the last section of this chapter, local language issues will be addressed with the purpose of demonstrating that they are related to the current international debates about the future of aboriginal languages.

## LANGUAGE ISSUES

The Montagnais language, like most other minority languages throughout the world, is at risk. Experts estimate that out of the current 6,000 existing "languages", no more than 600 will still be alive at the beginning of the twenty-second century<sup>168</sup>. Moreover, those which are threatened the most are precisely the minority languages spoken by only 10,000 people or less, as is precisely the case with Montagnais.

In the United States, for instance, few Amerindian languages are currently being learnt by the younger generation in an effective way in California, which has witnessed the death of approximately twenty Amerindian languages since the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>169</sup>. New technologies- especially television and personal computers- have only aggravated this tendency while having also literally imposed English as the lingua franca of modern times on the world's populations<sup>170</sup>.

Montagnais leaders have already acknowledged the existence of these real dangers <sup>171</sup>, even though Montagnais is still considered by specialists as being one of the few "healthy" Amerindian languages in the province of Québec <sup>172</sup>. But warning signals such as a rapidly rising rate of bilingualism amongst the Montagnais (experts believe that from the perspective of language survival, a low rate of bilingualism for any given language is a factor which contributes to its vitality <sup>173</sup>) and the constant use of "code-switching" are an indication that the mother tongue is not what it used to be for the majority of Montagnais, and that it is likely that it will never become a true mother-tongue.

As a reaction against the above-mentioned trends, Amerindian leaders throughout Canada decided in 1995 that the month of March would be designated as the "Aboriginal Languages Month". These leaders want "every First Nation community" to "focus attention and action on the plight of Aboriginal languages" <sup>174</sup>. The national chief of the Assembly of First Nations (formerly the National Indian Brotherhood) expressed his concerns about Aboriginal languages in Canada in the following way:

...our 53 Aboriginal languages are still alive and carry with them our traditions, thoughts, beliefs, cultures, and values. We are asking all Aboriginal peoples to use March as a Month for celebration. This is the month for reflection on our survival as peoples, and a time to plan, as Nations, how we will promote and preserve our Aboriginal languages...<sup>175</sup>

But for many of these existing 53 languages, this "celebration" and advices come a little too late. Out of these 53 remaining Aboriginal languages in Canada, 27 were spoken,

in 1992, by only 600 people or less (out of these 27 languages, 11 were spoken by 100 people or less)<sup>176</sup>. In 1981, there were 492,000 registered Amerindians in Canada. Out of this number, 62,4% declared during the same year as having English as their mother tongue, 4,6% declared French as their mother tongue and only 28,7% declared an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue. But overall, English was the language used daily at home for 71,7% of Canadian Amerindians, a thing which demonstrated, according to a major study conducted in 1985, that Aboriginal languages had been in the past and were still losing ground to English in Canada<sup>177</sup>. In 1994, Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr Victor Goldbloom, acknowledged these figures in his annual report, that less than one third of Canada's natives (including the Inuit) were able to use their language (or rather former language) and that these languages were in a "lamentable condition"<sup>178</sup>. As for the teaching of Amerindian languages in Amerindian schools, the same 1985 case study showed that less than 50% of Amerindian students had access to courses in Aboriginal languages. The situation in the province of Québec was, however, very different, since more than 80% of Amerindian students were given lessons in Aboriginal languages<sup>179</sup> (although it is important to mention that until today, the impact of the teaching of Aboriginal languages in Amerindian schools in Canada was more symbolic than really effective, since it consisted in most cases of no more than a couple of hours of teaching per week<sup>180</sup>. Formal schooling of Amerindian students- on or off-reserve- is normally conducted in one of the two official languages of Canada<sup>181</sup>).

Whatever the situation may be, one is still confronted with the same problem when focusing on the issue of Aboriginal languages (or the teaching of Aboriginal languages)

in Canada, or even in a single province, such as Québec. There is, once again, a surprising disparity from one reserve to another. Hence, in Québec, most experts have divided the Amerindian communities- as far as Aboriginal languages are concerned- into three groups: i) those which have definitively lost their language (e.g. Hurons, Abenakis and some Montagnais and Algonquin communities); ii) those where the mother tongue is seriously threatened, since the younger generation does not learn the language anymore (e.g. Micmac, Mohawk and some Algonquin communities), and iii) those whose mother tongue is still being used and transmitted within the family (e.g. Attikamek, Inuit, Cree-Naskapi, most Montagnais communities and some Algonquin) <sup>182</sup>. Betsiamites belongs to the last group, which makes it an interesting example at the national level (indeed, once a language has vanished, there is not much left to say). Moreover, Betsiamites is also interesting since an important research on Montagnais was conducted by Lynn Drapeau, a "Université du Québec à Montréal" (UQAM) professor, during the 1980s.

The aim of this research-which was called "Projet-pilote de Betsiamites" and lasted eight years (1982-1990)- was to have a group of pupils (the "groupe pilote") being taught almost only in Montagnais at school from preschool to grade three (or the first five years of formal schooling), while their schoolmates would be introduced to formal schooling in the usual way (i.e. preschool in Montagnais, bilingual kindergarten (50%-50%) and French from grades one to six). For their part, the "groupe pilote" followed the following "linguistic" agenda:

<b>École élémentaire Nussim (Betsiamites) Projet-pilote</b>		
<b>Academic year</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>Montagnais</b>
1982-83 (preschool)	0%	100%
1983-84 (kindergarten)	10%	90%
1984-85 (grade one)	20%	80%
1985-86 (grade two)	35%	65%
1986-87 (grade three)	50%	50%

**Source:** Drapeau, L. (unp.) (1992) *Rapport Final*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites.

The idea behind this scenario was to improve the school achievement of Amerindian pupils at the elementary level through the use of mother tongue as the main language of instruction. It was indeed believed that such a transitional programme- where the second language is gradually introduced- was preferable to a submersion programme as far as the overall intellectual development of minority children was concerned. Lynn Drapeau, who speaks Montagnais perfectly herself, was strongly influenced by well-known scholars such as Skutnabb-Kangas and Fishman. In a Minority Rights Group document released in 1990, Skutnabb-Kangas argues that minority children whose mother tongue is used in school as the "media of education" (at least during the first years of schooling) and who have access to "bilingual and well trained" teachers, are more likely to achieve a "High Degree of Success" (HDS) than those who are educated through a "submersion programme" (i.e. using a second language as medium of education)<sup>183</sup>. This was exactly what Lynn Drapeau intended to do with her "groupe

pilote".

Thus the project was carefully prepared and monitored all through its duration. It was financed by the "Ministère de l'éducation du Québec" (MEQ) and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND) and involved- apart from Lynn Drapeau- an impressive team made up of three Montagnais "bilingual and well trained" teachers and four Montagnais support staff responsible for the preparation of teaching materials. The "groupe pilote", for its part, was made up of 19 pupils whose parents had been carefully informed on the project and who had volunteered their children. It is important to mention that all but one of the "groupe pilote" pupils came from two-parent families where at least one parent was working full-time and that another group, called "classe-contrôle", was artificially created in order to present the same socio-economic and linguistic profile for comparison purposes. A third group- called #3- was also included in the study. The majority of its members were pupils who came from divided and disadvantaged families, with a fair proportion of grade repeaters and the results obtained by these students were also compared with those obtained by the "groupe-pilote".

Contrary to what had been expected, the pupils from the "groupe-pilote" scored much lower than the two other groups at the end of grade six in French, mathematics and natural sciences, and even more surprisingly, it scored 10% lower than the "classe-contrôle" in Montagnais and only 3% higher than group #3. Lynn Drapeau indicated at the beginning of her final report that the results obtained surprised everyone since they represented a "substandard performance" <sup>184</sup>. She ascribed this failure to many factors:

- i) one of the Montagnais teachers who were responsible for the "groupe-pilote" went

on an extended parental leave while the pupils from the "groupe-pilote" were in grade 1, and this teacher was replaced by a young and inexperienced Montagnais teacher <sup>185</sup>;

ii) the Montagnais language programme offered to these pupils from grade four to six was not adapted to them and they subsequently became demotivated and uninterested<sup>186</sup>; iii) switching from Montagnais to French in grade four represented a traumatic event in the life of these pupils since they were somehow convinced that they would always be educated in Montagnais <sup>187</sup>; iv) some Montagnais teachers felt that the white teachers responsible for the "classe-contrôle" reacted in a very "competitive way" to this educational experiment and literally behaved all along as super-teachers, a thing which would explain, according to them, the "classe-contrôle's" obvious superiority over the "groupe-pilote". (Lynn Drapeau, for her part, dismisses this explanation, but supporters of the effective schooling movement certainly would find there both reasons for rejoicing and a fertile ground for investigation) <sup>188</sup>, and v) the Montagnais language did not succeed in becoming, even in the eyes of the Montagnais teachers and parents of the pupils from the "groupe-pilote", the real language of instruction which led to all kinds of totally unexpected results <sup>189</sup>.

All these explanations may certainly contribute to help one understand what went wrong, but Lynn Drapeau's research paper certainly strongly suggests that the most compelling reason is the final one, which is linked to the linguistic status of Montagnais. Joshua Fishman had already warned educators in 1989 that the idea that linguistic minority communities were necessarily in favour of having their mother tongue used and/or taught at school was not to be taken for granted:

Finally, ethnic educators must not assume that they have constituencies at all. There are many speech-communities that are disinclined or opposed to having their vernaculars taught and fostered by schools, regardless of whether they are governmentally sponsored or intra-communally sponsored. The view that minority language X is not schoolworthy is not necessarily an outside, mainstream evaluation. Modernization and cultural democracy have fostered the view that all vernaculars are potentially schoolworthy, and this is undoubtedly true, but not all cultures accept this position, not even relative to themselves.[...] Sometimes communities opt for school use of a regional or even international lingua franca, rather than their own vernacular. These choices may strike the modernizer reader as strange, if not bizarre, but they merely help emphasize our general point: without sociological and ethnocultural information, contextualization and insight one cannot prescribe the role of minority vernaculars in educational programmes for and by ethnolinguistic minorities, not even when the goals of ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic maintenance are accepted by all concerned.<sup>190</sup>

The disinclination of minorities for teaching their own language in school settings as mentioned by Fishman took on many forms in Betsiamites".<sup>191</sup>. This would also tend to validate Fishman's hypothesis about minorities, language and school) during Lynn Drapeau's experiment: first of all, many parents of the pupils from the "groupe-pilote" became anxious during the first year of the project at the idea of having their child being taught how to read in Montagnais rather than in French, even though they had been



fully informed of the projects' goals and its development <sup>192</sup>. The team reassured them, but later realized that some of these parents had started to speak French with their child at home to compensate for the school's monolingual teaching <sup>193</sup>. As for the Montagnais teachers responsible for the "groupe-pilote", they insisted on having written French being taught to their pupils during grade one- because they said that the pupils "were ready and impatient to learn how to read in French" <sup>194</sup>- although the original scenario was that this would not take place before the end of grade two, and that these same teachers spent on the project an impressive number of hours in overtime teaching in French for the "groupe-pilote's" weakest pupils, to prevent them from "falling behind"<sup>195</sup>.

These surprising outcomes tend to confirm some of the hypotheses about bilingual education proposed by Miguel Siguan, from the University of Barcelona, who contends that bilingual education must necessarily be based on two "prestige languages" if it is to be successful. The issue of languages of unequal status is far from having been fully explored by social scientists:

...we know very little about the effects of differences in socio-economic status between the language groups and of conflicts of prestige and power on the acquisition and development of the second language and the results of bilingual education. We know even less about the effects of differences and conflicts between the cultures expressed by the two languages.<sup>196</sup>

Indeed, Lynn Drapeau herself wrote that the intrinsic motivation of the pupils for learning how to read in Montagnais- apart from its symbolic aspect- is necessarily very weak and will remain so since there are for the time being, and will be in the foreseeable future, few incentives to do so<sup>197</sup>. Conversely, the intrinsic motivation for learning French in modern Québec is based on extremely strong foundations; television and radio are broadcast in French, newspapers are printed in French, post-secondary educational institutions have French as the language of instruction and French is the official language in the workplace (as Lynn Drapeau writes; "it's not just around the corner that we will see Montagnais printed on Corn Flakes boxes" <sup>198</sup>). In other words, French- one of the few "international" languages- supported by western technology and culture, can not coexist "peacefully" with a traditional language spoken by less than 10,000 people. As a matter of fact, the nearer the Amerindian villages were to the newcomers, the faster they lost their language (hence, Montagnais has disappeared from the two least remote Montagnais communities, i.e. Pointe-Bleue and Les Escoumins). The recent aggravation of code-mixing and code-switching in Betsiamites (and especially in remoter Montagnais communities) is a strong indication that because of modern technology, a significant physical distance from majority communities is not much of a protective factor anymore. In fact, the Betsiamites Montagnais are experiencing through their relationship with French in the province of Québec what many non-English countries are experiencing with English at the international level- take the case of French, for instance<sup>199</sup>, or Portuguese<sup>200</sup> -; the loss of the prestige and relevance of the mother tongue in the face of this new lingua franca. Indeed, some researchers argue that the popularity of English as a second language is increasing so rapidly with the development of the Internet- for instance- that there will soon be more people using English as a

second language than there are who use it as their first, a situation which has never occurred before<sup>201</sup>. This trend implies that an English-speaking population will become more and more reluctant to learn a second language and conversely, minorities will be strongly "encouraged" to learn English as a second language. A British author has very eloquently illustrated these modern linguistic trends:

The main point of learning a foreign language is the understanding of its culture and the access to its literature; but this is beyond the powers and interest of most pupils.[...] Because English is an international language there is little incentive for most of us to learn a foreign language for purely communicative purposes on rare trips abroad. The Dutch and the Swedes are in a contrary position; they speak a minority language and so it is part of their culture to impress upon all the need to speak one or more of the international languages.[...]

So I see no point in making a foreign language part of the core curriculum, partly because it is of no immediate or direct value to the study of the community or the expressive arts, and partly because I am not persuaded that all pupils should spend so much time in learning the rudiments of a **language they will soon forget.**<sup>202</sup>

This attitude is fundamental for the understanding of the poor support the Montagnais language often receives at the school level **within** the reserves, both from parents and from local decision-makers. Actually, apart from the Montagnais teachers who teach Montagnais and a few non-Amerindian specialists, very few Montagnais seem to have

the preservation of their mother tongue listed as a top priority as far as the school curriculum is concerned. Despite all efforts, Montagnais has remained an almost strictly oral tongue and parents and their children do not really see the point in trying to learn how to read Montagnais. As a result, virtually no one in Betsiamites ever reads in Montagnais. Lynn Drapeau pointed out that in Betsiamites, the **written** Montagnais language is unimportant, both culturally and socially <sup>203</sup>. It is therefore not surprising to note that the provincial committee responsible for the pedagogical development of Montagnais (affiliated to the Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais) is literally obsessed with its lack of financial resources and with the obvious indifference on the part of Montagnais leaders<sup>204</sup> regarding the production of "quality" Montagnais teaching materials. The fact that a huge Navajo reserve (150,000 inhabitants) located in Arizona has similarly failed, despite strong and long-term efforts, ending in the traditional diglossia (as far as Amerindian languages are concerned) between the minority and majority languages (Navajo is still used today in oral situations only and English for reading and writing)<sup>205</sup> does also little to encourage local Montagnais leaders to make significant investments in this field.

The situation regarding Amerindian languages and their relation to schooling today in Canada, including Montagnais, is therefore very complex. Although there is a consensus throughout Canada's Amerindian communities that the few remaining languages are in danger of extinction in the long-term <sup>206</sup> and that "something has to be done", there is little agreement over concrete measures and/or policies for implementing or reinforcing, in an effective way, these languages at school while at the same time respecting the traditional wish of Amerindian parents that the school must prepare their youth to fully

participate in the modern economy **while** also developing their cultural identity as Amerindians. The failure of the experiment conducted at the elementary school in Betsiamites exemplifies the difficulties linked with the promotion of (very small) minority languages at school. Lynn Drapeau had to conclude from her study that she had encountered precisely the same problems as those which had been pinpointed by UNESCO in **1953** in a research report on "the use of vernacular languages in education". Those difficulties were: lack of books and teaching materials, lack of trained and competent teachers and reluctance of the local population to have their vernacular used as the language of instruction at school <sup>207</sup>. There has been little or no improvement in recent years in the Montagnais communities regarding the first two obstacles, and as for the last, Lynn Drapeau estimated that only a formidable effort of ideological persuasion would convince the Betsiamites Montagnais to adopt Montagnais as the sole language of instruction for the first years at the elementary level (while also avoiding, of course, the mistakes which her study allows us to clearly identify).

For the moment, however, students in Betsiamites (and in the other Montagnais communities) continue to have only a couple of hours of Montagnais per week on average and to use homemade teaching materials whose contents are relevant but whose presentation is very poor (a thing which greatly depreciates the Montagnais language in the eyes of the students, according to some researchers <sup>208</sup>). Thus, everyone in the field agrees that the creation and publication of "quality" books written in the various Amerindian languages constitute the most important challenge for the survival and development of Amerindian languages in Canada <sup>209</sup>. But given recent developments in this area, in the Amerindian communities, and the fact that the report of the Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- referred to as the new "Bible of the Canadian Amerindians"- was received very badly by the Canadian population. This includes the Minister of Indian Affairs himself<sup>210</sup> and Canada's Prime Minister<sup>211</sup>, and one can hardly see why there would suddenly be major changes leading to positive results in this area, since they would require tremendous investment and long-term commitment on the part of both the federal Government and local Amerindian leaders. For that matter, some parents in Betsiamites are beginning to demonstrate some resistance to the teaching of Montagnais at the secondary school. In the past, there were never more than a couple of students per year whose parents asked to have their child removed from Montagnais classes. For four years now though, there has been a steady and worrying rise in the number of youths (and parents) asking to be allowed to "work on French or mathematics" in the library instead of "being forced" to learn how to read and write in Montagnais.

However, one should not infer, from the above-mentioned remarks, that the Montagnais language is threatened in the short term in Betsiamites. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The language is used daily in Betsiamites at home and whenever two Montagnais **discuss** issues , whether at school or at work. It is just that the transfer from an oral language to a written language has not yet been successfully carried out. This excludes the young Montagnais composers who write, sing and record their songs in Montagnais plus a handful of authors (but this can be considered marginal when compared to the bulk of French literature available in Montagnais schools or at the Band Councils' offices). According to the Committee of Montagnais School Principals, the Montagnais will eventually have to make a choice between the "efficient" teaching of

French or Montagnais at school. A Montagnais principal remarked, during one of the committee's meetings, that the Montagnais were "very keen" on learning French and that they "wanted to study it as soon as possible when they were beginning school". Therefore, the current situation is characterized by ambiguity; there are public declarations of principles at the local level about the importance of the Montagnais language, but manifestly, very few genuine efforts to promote the [written] language at school or workplace. Like the majority of the 6,000 world languages, Montagnais has no established written tradition ("tradition écrite établie") and therein probably lies the tragedy, because school is first and foremost about reading and writing. Thus, involuntarily, the local schools are working against the vernacular in the long term.

It is hard to predict what will exactly happen as regards the promotion of Montagnais at Uashkaikan (and in other Montagnais schools for that matter) but two professors who have studied the issue of the future of Aboriginal languages in the Far North (along with other school-related issues) have expressed their opinion in the following way, which constitutes an excellent assessment of the seriousness and the ambiguousness of the situation:

...given the current condition of most Native languages, that is, their declining use, the large numbers of dialects, their small numbers of speakers, the few teachers prepared to teach in a Native language, and the inadequacies of the language in contemporary Western society, how can it be practicable, indeed feasible, to offer bilingual programmes as a means to perpetuate a little-known language on a sustainable basis ?

From the pragmatic point of view of those who oppose bilingual schooling, the answer most often given is that it is not. It is because of this answer that adequate appropriations for additional linguistic work and development of learning materials are often rejected by those with funding authority. And in part it is because of this that school district officials are less supportive of bilingual programmes, notwithstanding the advantage they offer in pedagogical and psychological benefits to their students. There is no satisfactory solution to the dilemma these two conflicting points of view give rise to. Some argue that to insist on new and more elaborate bilingual programmes in light of the status of Native languages is folly. Others argue that to disallow the human rights of any people to retain their patrimonial identity through language lacks compassion and denies the schools a proven pedagogical technique. Thus, the topic remains at issue and the debate goes on.<sup>212</sup>

Disturbing signs such as the obvious unwillingness of young Montagnais teachers in *all* the Montagnais reserves to consider teaching the Montagnais language as a career (thus complicating the issue of the eventual replacement of the current teachers, who are, on average, in their mid-forties) and a growing use of the practice of code-mixing in the reserves (in Betsiamites, for instance, people aged forty and less do not say "Kuei" anymore when they meet; they say "bonjour" or "salut", not to mention discussions about numbers, dates, money, etc. which always lead to the use of French words) are an indication that the Montagnais language is endangered in the long term. The difficulty of implementing the written language in daily life or at school is not encouraging either.



A dramatic event recently illustrated that these efforts had failed in Betsiamites: a young man in his twenties wrote a letter to the Band Council Chief before committing suicide. His letter, which talked about the importance of preserving the traditional way of life and the culture of the Montagnais people, was written in French...

The trouble with the teaching of Montagnais language in the reserves' schools is that whenever they are asked, all Montagnais answer that it is very important, but when it comes to action, everyone seems suddenly to vanish...Thus, for the moment, the Montagnais communities have adopted, with regard to the issue of the teaching of Montagnais at the elementary and secondary levels, a wait-and-see policy. The mixed results of the Betsiamites linguistic experiment, the rising costs of producing quality books and materials, the growing difficulty of obtaining generous budgets from the government for "cultural" issues , and the lack of interest demonstrated by young would-be Montagnais teachers have created a vacuum around this educational challenge, which probably explains why local decision-makers do not appear to be inclined to resolutely tackle these obstacles, despite the repeated demands of those who are working in this field in the reserves.

## CONCLUSION

The characteristics which emerge from this "portrait" can be interpreted in many ways, depending on one's natural inclination. There is room for pessimism as well as for optimism. However, the "problematic" areas stand out clearly; there are serious structural problems which need to be addressed.

Administratively speaking, the priorities, the guidelines, and the policies as far as education is concerned are often too vague or subject to manipulation or personal interpretation, something which leads to confusion, overlap and uncertainties. A high staff turnover, internal dissension about school rules, questions about the place of the Montagnais language at school, and overpersonalization of the pedagogy are corollaries of this situation.

Academically speaking, students' backwardnesses are a rule rather than the exception and absenteeism is appalling, although, as was seen, there are no problems in terms of intrinsic motivation. Remedial measures are scarce and there is little agreement between the two local schools as regards teaching standards and assessment methods.

As for the parents, a growing dissatisfaction and impatience begin to surface, especially regarding success rates.

However, given that local control of education is a fairly recent phenomenon in Betsiamites and given the socioeconomic profile of the community, these pitfalls are understandable. Serious efforts have been made to improve the quality of education at Uashkaikan (e.g. the adoption of the Québec Ministry of Education examinations, in order to allow the students to gain *real* access to post-secondary education), but they were not *systematic* enough. Remedial education, for example, or the problem of absenteeism, has never been approached in a resolute manner. Separate solutions have often been hastily set up, when manifestly, an overall view of elementary and secondary education matters would have seemed more appropriate.

Recently though, encouraging signs have appeared. The two local schools' staff is now more stable and two parents committees (elementary and secondary) have been created. The members of these two committees (including staff members and principals) have been trained by volunteers belonging to the Québec Parents Association over a one-year period and both have even begun to write the first whole-school policies of the province's Montagnais schools. Inter-Bands teachers' colloquia have been set up, and their conclusions have been made available to all teachers in Montagnais schools. The Committee of the Montagnais school principals published in 1996 a "guide" for teachers in elementary and secondary schools and an "opinion" on the issue of the quality of reserve education especially aimed at *all* the Band Councils, is expected in the Autumn of 1997. Local curriculum development, however, appears to be too much of a challenge for all concerned for the moment.

It remains to see if these positive changes will be of an enduring nature. Indeed, local control of education can have extremely positive effects, just as it can have very perverse effects. Improvements are usually very slow in educational matters, but setbacks can sometimes be felt almost instantaneously.

In the next chapter, the most significant dangers which threaten the development of formal education in Betsiamites will be examined. These include social as well as political, medical and cultural dimensions. The difficulty will be to grasp the interconnection between all these variables, and the way they commonly influence one another. A holistic perspective will be the essential element of this description.

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- 2.Hernandez, H. (1992) "The language minority student and multicultural education", in Grant, C.A. (ed.) (1992) *Research & Multicultural Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, London; The Falmer Press: 144.
- 3.Bennett, K.P. & LeCompte, M.D. (1990) *The Way Schools Work*, N.Y.; Longman:XI.
- 4.Cf. Ministère de l'Éducation (1993) *Principales Statistiques*, Québec; Gouvernement du Québec.
- 5.Cf. Ministère de l'Éducation (1993) *Education Indicators for the Elementary and Secondary Levels*, Québec; Gouvernement du Québec:9.
- 6.Cf. Ibid.:18.
- 7.These figures are extracted from the latest survey on Amerindians living in Quebec (MAINC, (1990) *Guide des Collectivités Indiennes du Québec*, Ottawa; MAINC: 111 pages).
- 8.Cf. Kirkness, V. (1992) *First Nations and Schools*, Toronto; Canadian Education Association:53-55.
- 9.This interview was conducted on the fourth of May, 1994, by telephone, with an employee of the Ministry of Education working in Quebec city.
- 10.Cf. Labrecque, A. "Marcelline Kanapé remporte la victoire", in *L'Objectif* (Baie-Comeau, QC) 20 August 1994:3.
- 11.Cf. CAMO (unpl.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique*, Betsiamites:36-40.
- 12.Information obtained during a phone call to Labour Canada (418-648-7707).
- 13.Gagné, R. (1974) *Project for the Amerindianization of the School*, Québec; Indians of Québec Association:4.
- 14.Phone interview with a Québec Ministry of Education officer on 4 May 1994. This person mentioned the situation of a northern Algonquin rural reserve where neither the director of the secondary school nor the director of the education service had a university degree (actually, one of them did not even have a high school certificate).
- 15.Cf. Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) *A Poison Stronger than Love*, New Haven & London; Yale University Press:152.
- 16.Cf. CAMO (unpubl.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique*, Betsiamites:19.
- 17.DIAND (1994) "Québec Indians" poster, published by DIAND.

- 18.Cf. CAMO (unpubl.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique*, Betsiamites:19.
- 19.Cf. Le Groupe Mallette Maheu (unpubl.) (1994) *Katakuitshet Pesamit*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande:15.
- 20.Cf. Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) *A Poison Stronger than Love*, New Haven & London; Yale University Press:147-9.
- 21.Cf. CAMO (1990), op. cit.:11.
- 22.Cf. Ibid.: 19,34.
- 23.Cf. MAINC (1980)*Les Indiens: Situation Actuelle*, Ottawa; MAINC: 121.
- 24.Cf. Fraternité des Indiens du Canada (NAI) (1972) *La Maîtrise Indienne de l'Éducation Indienne*, Ottawa; NAI: 19.
- 25.Cf. Ibid.
- 26.DIAND (1992) *Indian/Inuit Training Opportunities*, Ottawa; DIAND:51.
- 27.Ibid.:53.
- 28.Ibid.:71.
- 29.Ibid. Cf., for instance, "Native services programmes", at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology: 70.
- 30.Ibid., Cf, for instance, "Indian Teacher Education Programme", at the University of Saskatchewan: 71.
- 31.Ibid., Cf., for instance, "Aboriginal Justice and Criminology Programme for Native Students", at the University of Saskatchewan: 71.
- 32.Ibid., Cf., for instance, "Bachelor of Science Degree", at the University of Regina: 62.
- 33.Ibid., Cf., for instance, "Maintenance Management: Small Communities", at the Canadore College of Applied Arts and Technology: 92.
- 34.Ibid., Cf. "Native services programmes", at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology": 70.
- 35.Ibid., Cf. "Planning and management courses", at the University of British Columbia: 13.
- 36.Telephone interview with the director of the "Centre d'études amérindiennes" of the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi. 9 September 1994.
- 37.Cf. Harbison, R.W. & Hanushek, E.A. (1992) *Educational Performance of the Poor: Lessons from Rural Northeast Brazil*, Wash. (D.C.); Oxford University Press:198.
- 38.For example, when they answered the Tomlinson questionnaire on parents/school relations.

39. Two meetings between the administrations of the local elementary and secondary schools and of the education service were held in Betsiamites on 29 April and 20 May 1994. At each meeting, the administrators of the elementary school mentioned that eight Amerindian teachers were hampering their efforts to improve school effectiveness. These teachers were twice described as either "incompetent" or "totally unwilling to change". None of this was mentioned in the subsequent official meeting reports.
40. Cf. DIAND (1983) *L'Éducation des Indiens- Un Choix pour l'Avenir*, Ottawa; DIAND: leaflet, pages not numbered.
41. Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *Rapport MacPherson, Tradition et Éducation: Vers une Vision de notre Avenir*, Ottawa; MAINC: 49 pages.
42. Cf. Tremblay, R., in *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 27 Sept. 1994: A9.
43. Cf. ICEM (1993) *Actes du Colloque des Enseignants et Enseignantes des Écoles Montagnaises*, Québec; ICEM: 71 pages.
44. Cf. ICEM (1991) *L'Avenir Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais*, Québec; ICEM:11.
45. Desbiens, J.P. (1993) *How Can One be a Native Person ?*, Québec; Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones:13.
46. Harbison & Hanushek (1992) op. cit.:197.
47. Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.:49.
48. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, (1974) Springfield (Mass.); G. & C. Merriam Company:844.
49. Cf. Dumont, R.V. & Wax, M.L., "Cherokee school society and the intercultural classroom", in Cosin, B.R. & al. (eds) (1972) *School and Society: A Sociological Reader*, London; Routledge & Kegan Paul:76-85.
50. Ibid.:81.
51. Cf. Gusdorf, G. (1963) *Pourquoi des Professeurs ?*, Paris; Petite Bibliothèque Payot:44..
52. Cf. Ibid.
53. Cf. Ibid:43.
54. Cf. Ibid.:42.
55. Cf. Ibid.:46.
56. Geer, B. "Teaching", in Cosin, B.R. & al. (eds) (1972), op. cit.:5.
57. Cf. Dumont, R.V. & Wax, M.L. (1972), op. cit.:81.
58. Cf. Berry, J.W. & al. (1977) *Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada*, Ottawa; Ministre d'État au multiculturalisme:246.
59. Dumont, R.V. & Wax, M.L. (1972), op. cit.:83.

60. It is essential to mention that the vulgarity the teachers are referring to is that which can be observed in the interaction between the students and not between students and teachers.

61. Saracho, O.N. & Gerstl, C.K. "Learning differences among at-risk minority students", in *Students at Risk in At-Risk Schools*, London; Sage Publications: 126.

62. This remark was often made by the Amerindian teachers during individual interviews concerning pedagogy.

63. Cf. Dumont, R.V. & Wax, M.L. (1972), op. cit.:83.

64. Geer, B. (1972) op. cit.:5.

65. Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *MacPherson Report on Tradition and Education*, Ottawa; Diand:45; MEQ (unpubl.) (1987) *Cadre de Référence pour la Sanction des Études en Milieu Autochtone*, Québec; Coordination des activités en milieux amérindien et inuit: Annexe 8:422.

66. Whiteduck, G. in MEQ (unpubl) (1987), op. cit.:Annexe 8:428.

67. Cf. Ibid.: 428-29.

68. Marissal, V. "En temps de crise, le Warrior se réveille en chaque Mohawk", in *Le Soleil*, (Québec city), 18 Feb. 1994: A1.

69. Radio-Canada (Montréal, radio news), 12 and 13 October 1994.

70. Cf. Centre des services éducatifs de Betsiamites (unpubl.) (1981) *Devis Pédagogique: École Secondaire de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 7.

71. Cf. Ibid: 31 pages.

72. Ibid.: 8.

73. Cf. Holmes, M. (1992) *Educational Policy for the Pluralist Democracy*, Wash. (D.C.); The Falmer Press: 20.

74. Cf. Ibid.:21.

75. Cf. Ibid.

76. Cf. Kirkness, V.J. (1992) *First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles*, Toronto; Canadian Education Association: 2.

77. Holmes, M. (1992) op. cit. 23.

78. Cf. Ibid.: 13.

79. Paquet, C. "Les jeunes Amérindiens en bonne voie de renverser la vapeur des préjugés", in *Le Plein Jour* (Baie-Comeau, Québec) 13 August 1994: 20.

80. Holmes, M. (1992) op. cit.:1.

81. Cf. Labrecque, A. "Marcelline Kanapé remporte la victoire", in *Le Plein Jour* (Baie-Comeau, Québec), 20 August 1994: 3. In this article, Betsiamites' newly (re)-elected chief refers to the dropout rate at Uashkaikan and mentions that

this is her top priority.; Paquet, C. "Les jeunes Amerindiens en bonne voie de renverser la vapeur des préjugés" (1994), op. cit.:20. The Betsiamites chief tells the reporter that "today [Betsiamites] parents know that the future of their children is linked to educational achievement".

82.Cf. ICEM (1991) *L'Avenir Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais*, Quebec; ICEM: 15 pages. ICEM writes that "all our [the Montagnais] efforts and activities must be aimed at promoting quality education in our schools" (page 6).

83.Cf. Hutmacher, W. "Cultural issues in educational policies: A retrospect", in OECD (1987) *Multicultural Education*, Paris; OECD: 348.

84.Cf. Fullan, M. "The parent and the community", in Carlson, R.V. & Ducharme, E.R. (1987) *School Improvement- Theory and Practice*, Lanham (MD); University Press of America: 551.

85.Cf. Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation (1989) *Rapport Annuel sur l'État et les Besoins de l'Éducation*, Québec; CSE: 51-2; 63-70.

86.Cf. Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites (unp.) (1981) *Devis Pédagogique: École Secondaire de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Centre des Services Éducatifs: 8-9.

87.Kirkness, V.J. (1992) *First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles*, Toronto; Canadian Education Association: 45.

88.Cf. Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites (unp.) (1981) *Devis Pédagogique: École Secondaire de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 6.

89.Ibid.: 9., "[L'élection] brouillerait la tradition de la prépondérance politique du Conseil de Bande".[Emphasis added].

90.Fullan, M. "The parent and the community" (1987), op. cit.:548.

91.Cf. Noël, A., "Personne ne devrait boudier les élections scolaires", in *La Presse* (Montréal) 20 Nov. 94:A1.

92.Ibid.:548.

93.Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) *Bangladeshi Parents and Education in Tower Hamlets*, Lancaster, Eng.; Ace Publications:1.

94.Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990) op. cit.: 23.

95.Cf. Ibid.:28.

96.Ibid.:33.

97.Cf. Brown, D.M. (1980) *Mother Tongue To English*, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press:34-6.

98.Cf. Vien, C. (unp.) (1991) *L'Éducation à Betsiamites: Valeurs et Attitudes des Parents et des Enseignants*, Sherbrooke, Québec; Université de Sherbrooke: 25-40. With respect to the parents' ultimate educational goal, it had been concluded that school was seen in Betsiamites as providing students with an opportunity to be later hired by the Band Council as white-collar workers.

99.Tomlinson, S. & Hutchison, S. (1990), op. cit.:36.



100. Braudel, F. (1986) *The Perspective of the World*; Vol. 3, N.Y.; Perennial Library:543.
101. Cf. Centre des Services Éducatifs (unp.) (1981) *Devis Pédagogique: École Secondaire de Betsiamites*, op. cit.:15.
102. Cf. Ibid.:17.
103. Ibid.:14-5
104. Cf. Ibid.: 15.
105. Kirkness, V.J. (1992), op. cit.:17.
106. Ibid.
107. Cf. Ibid.:117.
108. Cf. Ibid.: 119.
109. Cf. Ibid.:34-44.
110. Cf. Drapeau, L. (unp.) (1992) *Rapport Final sur le Projet-Pilote de Betsiamites*, Montréal; Université du Québec à Montréal:54.
111. Larose, F. (unp.) (1993) *Rapport Final d'Évaluation des Services Éducatifs Offerts à Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 59.
112. Cf. Ibid.: 59-60.
113. For instance, such was the case for the 1994-95 meeting held in March in Québec city.
114. Stenhouse, L. (1981) *An Introduction To Curriculum Research and Development*, London; Heinemann: 2.
115. Cf. Latraverse, C. (unp.) (1987) *Cadre de Références pour la Sanction des Études Secondaires en Milieu Autochtone*, Québec, Ministère de l'éducation (MEQ): 17.
116. Ladson-Billings, G. "Culturally relevant teaching: The key to making multicultural education work", in Grant, C.A. (ed.) (1992) *Research & Multicultural Education*, London: The Falmer Press: 116.
117. Cf. "Recommendations of the 1988 Assembly of First Nations Report", in Kirkness, V. (1992) *First Nations and Schools*, Toronto; Canadian Education Association: 113-20.
118. Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *MacPherson Report on Tradition and Education*, Ottawa; Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development: 45 pages.
119. Mueller, W. & Karle, W. (1990) *Social Selection in Educational Systems in Europe*, Paper prepared for the XIIth World Congress of Sociology, Madrid, July 9-13, 1990: 4.
120. Cf. Hutmacher, W. "Cultural issues in educational policies", in CERI (1987) *Multicultural Education*, Paris; OECD: 346-48.

- 121.Clifford, M. "Student motivation and academic achievement", in Vedder, P. (ed.) (1990) *Fundamental Studies in Educational Research*, Amsterdam; Swets and Zeitlinger: 62.
- 122.Cf. Mueller, W. & Karle, W. (1990), op. cit.: 4.
- 123.Cf. Wineburg, S.S. "The self-fulfillment of the self-fulfilling prophecy", in Anderson, D.S. & Biddle, B.J. (eds) (1991) *Knowledge for Policy: Improving Education Through Research*, London, The Falmer Press: 287. In the article, the author acknowledges the validity of some of the findings based upon the assumptions of the advocates of the "high teachers' expectations for everyone regardless of race or social class" movement, but nevertheless questions the morality of current Western countries' policymakers who favour this psychological incentive over "building new housing or funding new jobs"(p. 287).
- 124.Cf. Hénaire, J. (1976) *L'Univers Scolaire des Montagnais*, Québec, Ministère de l'éducation: 32-8.
- 125.Cf. Vien, C. (unp.) (1990) *L'Éducation à Betsiamites: Valeurs et Attitudes des Parents et des Enseignants*, Sherbrooke; Université de Sherbrooke: 12.
- 126.McCue, H. (1985) *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Edmonton (Alberta); Hurtig Pub.:1214.
- 127.Cf. Ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (MAINC) (1986) *Les Indiens du Canada*, Ottawa; MAINC:106.
- 128.In the mid-eighties, because of grade repeating, it was not unusual to have "old" students in the "regular" groups. For instance, one boy aged nineteen belonged to a grade eight group where the average age would normally have been twelve. Today, such students are streamed towards "special needs" groups, which did not exist at that time.
- 129.Cf. Samuda, R.J., Kong, S.L. et al. (1989) *Assessment and Placement of Minority Students*, Kingston, Toronto; Intercultural Social Sciences Publications:176-89.
- 130.Cf. Latraverse, C. (unp.) (1987) *Cadre de Références pour la Sanction des Études Secondaires en Milieu Autochtone*, Québec; MEQ: 23-4.
- 131.Cf. Ibid..
- 132.Cf. Ibid.:24.
- 133.MEQ (1994) *Exam Tips*, Québec, MEQ.:no page number.
- 134.Cf. Ibid..
- 135.D'Andrea Tyson, L. et al. "Supply-side education and the low-wage economy", in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 7, # 4, Fall 1990: 29.
- 136.Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *MacPherson Report on Tradition and Education*, Ontario: 45.; Latraverse, C. (unp.) (1984) *Les Règles de Sanction des Études Secondaires en Milieu Autochtone*, Québec; MEQ: 27.
- 137.Cf. Larose, F. (unp.) (1993) *Rapport Final du Processus d'Évaluation des Services Éducatifs Offerts à Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 33.

138. Segall, M.H. et al. (1990) *Human Behavior in Global Perspective*, New York, Oxford; Pergamon Press: 225.
139. Cf. Trempe, P.L. (1984) *Plaidoyer en Faveur d'un Jeune aux Prises avec sa Société et son École: essai sur la motivation et son décor*, Trois-Rivières (Québec); Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières: 3.
140. Cf. Segall, M.H. et al. (1990) op. cit.: *ibid.*
141. Voyat, G. (1983) *Cognitive Development Among Sioux Children*, New York and London; Plenum Press: 32-3. (We underline).
142. Cf. McInerney, D.M. (1991) "Key determinants of motivation of non-traditional Aboriginal students in school settings: Recommendations for educational change", in *Australian Journal of Education*, vol. 35, no 2, 1991: 154-74; McInerney, D.M. (1992) "Cross-cultural insights into school motivation and decision making", in *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 13, no 2, 1992: 53-74; McInerney, D.M. (unp.) (1994) "Goal theory and indigenous minority school motivation: Relevance and application", chapter prepared for inclusion in *Advances in Motivation and Achievement*, vol. 9.: 35 pages.
143. McInerney, D.M. (1991) op. cit.: 172. [Emphasis added.]
144. Cf. *Ibid.*.
145. Cf. McInerney, D.M. & Sinclair, K.E. (1991) "Cross-cultural model testing: Inventory of school motivation", in *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1991, 51: 123-33.
146. Cf., (for the Navajo) McInerney, D.M. (1994) op. cit.: 3.
147. ["Nous avons un problème majeur: nos enfants n'ont pas d'intérêt pour les études." (...) "Concernant l'éducation, c'est encore la boisson qui est la cause de la démotivation, du décrochage des jeunes."] in Conseil des Atikamekw et des Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole*, Québec; CAM: 84,86.
148. Cf. Saracho, O.N. & Gerstl, C.K. "Learning differences among at-risk minority students", in Waxman, H.C. et al. (1992) *Students at Risk in At-Risk Schools*, Newbury Park (Cal.); Corwin Press, Inc.: 123.
149. McInerney, D.M. (unp.) (1994) *Goal Theory and Indigenous Minority School Motivation: Relevance and Application*, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur: 21-2.
150. Cf. McInerney, D.M. (1994) *Goal Theory and Indigenous Minority School Motivation*, op. cit.: 23-4.
151. Cf. Kleinfeld, J. & Nelson, P. "Adapting instruction to Native Americans' learning styles: An iconoclastic view", in *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 2, June 1991: 273-82.
152. Hancock, L. (1995) "The Northwest Territories", in *Home & School*, February 1995, Richmond Hill, Ont.: 44-5.
153. However, the Hawthorn-Tremblay report on Canada's Amerindians had estimated in the sixties that on average, the Canadian Amerindian pupil was absent from school as much as forty days per academic year (as compared to five to ten days for mainstream students). These figures appear to be inordinately high since they represent two whole months of schooling - in terms of contemporary schooling- and there is no information about how the data were gathered. For instance, were the

absences of drop-outs taken into account ? Were the pupils leaving for long periods to go hunting with their parents (a thing which one seldom sees today in reserves such as Betsiamites) ? As for the white students, one could infer that domestic duties (farming was then the way of living of a great number of students) interfered severely with schooling, because such figures would today be considered as dramatic in any school in Canada. Cf., for Hawthorn-Tremblay report, Beaudoin, J. "La société amérindienne et ses besoins d'ordre éducatif", in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, Vol. 6, no. 3-4, 1977: 16-22.

154.Wynne, E.A. (1981) "Looking at good schools", in Carlson, R.V. & Ducharme, E.R. (1987) *School Improvement- Theory and Practice*, Lanham, MD; University Press of America: 275. (We underline)

155.Chitnis, S. & Suvannathat, C. "Schooling for the children of the urban poor", in Richards, P.J. & Thomson, A.M. (eds) (1984) *Basic Needs and the Urban Poor*, London; Croom Helm: 192-3.

156.Cf. Gallagher, J. "Ambitions outstrip resources", in *The Guardian Education*, February 2, 1993: 7.

157.Cf. Thomas, W., "The experience of teaching", in Maguiness, H. (1992) *Educational Opportunity: The Challenge of Under-achievement and Social Deprivation*, Paisley, U.K.; Local Government Centre, Paisley College: 33-8.

158.Cf. Brooks, I. "L'école et l'enfant indien, source de conflit culturel", in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. 6, no. 3-4, 1977: 45-50.

159.Thomas, W. "The experience of the teaching profession", in Maguiness, H. (ed.) (1992) *Educational Opportunity: The Challenge of Under-achievement and Social Deprivation*, Paisley, U.K.; Local Government Centre, Paisley College: 35.

160.Cf. Bossert, S.T. et al. (1982) "The instructional management role of the principal", in Carlson, R.V. & Ducharme, E.R. (1987) *School Improvement*, op. cit.: 135-6.

161.Cf. Wynne, E.A. (1981) "Looking at good schools", op. cit.: 277-79.

162.McInerney, D.M. (unp.) (1994) *Goal Theory and Indigenous Minority School Motivation*, op. cit.: 16.

163.Cf. Jary, D. & Jary, J. (1991) *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Sociology*, N.Y.; HarperPerennial: 89.

164.Wynne, E.A., (1981), "Looking at good schools", in Carlson, R.V. & Ducharme, E.R. (1987) op. cit.: 278.

165.Ibid.: 278-80.

166.Cf. Wynne, E.A. (1981) "Looking at good schools", in Carlson, R.V. & Ducharme, E.R. (1987) op. cit.: 279.

167.Ibid.: 278.

168.Cf. Associated Press, "La moitié des langues de la planète sont menacées de disparition", in *Le Devoir*, 20 February, 1995: A8.

169.Cf. Ibid..

- 170.Cf. R.P. "L'anglais monte en force à cause des nouvelles technologies", in *Le Soleil* (Québec city), 10 September 1995: A7; Lippman, J. "In Global Village, TV is Lingua Franca", in *International Herald Tribune*, October 23, 1992.
- 171.Cf. Picard-Canape, M. "L'avenir de la langue montagnaise", in Maurais, J. (ed.) (1992) *Les Langues Autochtones du Québec*, Québec; Conseil de la langue française: 373-79.
- 172.Cf. Drapeau, L. & Corbeil, J.C. "Les langues autochtones dans la perspective de l'aménagement linguistique", in Maurais, J. (ed.) (1992), op. cit.: 393.
- 173.Cf. Maurais, J. "La situation des langues autochtones d'Amérique", in Maurais, J. (ed.) (1992) *Les Langues Autochtones du Québec*, op. cit.: 40.
- 174.Cf. Assembly of First Nations (1995) *Press Release*, Ottawa, Assembly of First Nations: no page number.
- 175.Ibid..
- 176.Cf. Maurais, J. "La situation des langues autochtones d'Amérique", in Maurais, J. (ed.) (1992), op. cit.: 5-8.
- 177.Cf. Priest, quoted in Maurais, J., op. cit.: 35-6.
- 178.Cf. Presse canadienne, "Pour la revitalisation des langues autochtones, in *Le Soleil* (Québec city), 13 April 1994: A5.
- 179.Cf. Ibid.: 36.
- 180.Cf. Drapeau, L. & Corbeil, J.C., "Les langues autochtones dans la perspective de l'aménagement linguistique", in Maurais, J. (ed.) (1992), op. cit.: 391.
- 181.Cf. Ibid.: 391-2.
- 182.Cf. Ibid.: 393.
- 183.Cf. Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1990) *Language, Literacy and Minorities*, London; Minority Rights Group: 17-20.
- 184.Cf. Drapeau, L. (unp.) (1992) *Rapport Final*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 5.
- 185.Cf. Ibid.: 19.
- 186.Cf. Ibid.: 35.
- 187.Cf. Ibid.: 40.
- 188.Cf. Ibid.: 41.
- 189.Cf. Ibid.: 42.
190. Fishman, J.A. (1989) "Introduction; Section 4: Language and ethnicity in education: The bilingual minority focus", in *Language & Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective*, Clevedon, Avon; Multilingual Matters: 423.
- 191.Rev. Jesse Jackson, for his part, is strongly opposed to having Black English taught in the American schools; he was reported saying "you don't have to go to school to talk garbage". In Locke, M., "Black English fit for classroom, board

- says", in *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Dec. 23, 1996: A7.
- 192.Cf. Drapeau, L. (1992) *Rapport Final*, op. cit.: 18.
- 193.Cf. Ibid..
- 194.Ibid.: 19.
- 195.Cf. Ibid..
- 196.Siguan, M. (1990) "Multilingual and Multicultural Education, What for ? Confronting Ends and Means", in Vedder, P. (ed.) (1990) *Fundamental Studies in Educational Research*, Amsterdam; Swets & Zeitlinger: 135.
- 197.Cf. Drapeau, L. (1992) *Rapport Final*, op. cit.: 45.
- 198.Ibid..
- 199.Cf. Agence France-Presse (1996) "Le français est en recul dans le monde", (a report from "Le Haut Conseil de la Francophonie"), in *Le Devoir*, Montréal, 1-2 Feb. 1997: A1, A12.
- 200.Cf. *Le Devoir* "La lutte contre l'anglicisation dans les pays de langue portugaise: Lusophones de tous les pays...", 26 August 1996:A4.
- 201.Cf. *The Economist*, December 21st, 1996, "Language and electronics: The coming global tongue": 75-8.
- 202.Hargreaves, D.H. (1982) *The Challenge for the Comprehensive School: Culture, Curriculum and Community*, Routledge & Kegan Paul; London: 175-6. [Emphasis added.]
- 203.Cf. Drapeau, L. (1992) op. cit.: 52.
- 204.Cf. ICEM, (1992) (unp.) *Recommandations du Comité de développement pédagogique montagnais, "Tiré du compte-rendu de la réunion tenue à Mashteuiatsh les 7 et 8 octobre 1992".: four pages.*
- 205.Cf. Drapeau, L. & Corbeil, J.C. "Les langues autochtones dans la perspective de l'aménagement linguistique", in Maurois, J. (ed.) (1992) *Les Langues Autochtones du Québec*, Gouvernement du Québec, Conseil de la langue française; Québec: 395.
- 206.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People T People, Nation To Nation: Highlights of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa: 91.
- 207.Cf. Drapeau, L. (1992) op. cit.: 52.
- 208.Cf. Mailhot, J. (1996) "L'écrit comme facteur d'épanouissement de la langue innue (montagnaise)", in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. XXVI, no. 3-4, 1996: 27.
- 209.Cf. Fogwill, L. (1992) "Alphabétisation dans les langues et les cultures autochtones", in Hautecoeur, J.P. (ed.) *Alpha 94: Stratégies d'Alphabétisation et de Développement Culturel en Milieu Rural*, Institut de l'UNESCO pour l'éducation; Hambourg: 319.

210. The Minister of Indian Affairs, Ron Irwin, said many times publicly that "this \$58M CAN" (£25M) (the price of the report) should rather have been used to build new houses on reserves. Cf. Leblanc, G. (1996) "La commission Erasmus-Dussault", in *La Presse*, Montréal, 23 Nov. 1996 ; Moreover, some important editorial writers wrote that this report was a real "disaster" since it foolishly asked the federal government, amongst other things, to double the budget allowed to the Amerindians over the next twenty years. Cf. Trudel, P. (1996) "Le rapport de la Commission royale sur les peuples autochtones", in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. XXVI, no.3-4, 1996:135.

211. Cf. *The Gazette* (Montréal), "Jean Chrétien and Ron Irwin both refused last week to meet Aboriginal leaders to discuss the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples". In "Aboriginals need action", 3 March 1996.

212. Darnell, F. & Hoëm, A. (1996) *Taken To Extremes: Education in the Far North*, Oslo; Scandinavian University Press: 195-6.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE DIMENSIONS OF RESISTANCE TO SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES

The analysis of an apparent contradiction as regards educational achievement in Betsiamites is the main purpose of this chapter. The contradiction is: Why is a population, who puts so much emphasis on formal schooling as a means of enhancing its quality of life, so dearly incapable of significantly improving the school success rate of the community's children. The contradiction becomes more striking given the massive investments placed both in the local educational system and in its assessment process. The analysis of this contradiction, offered in this chapter, has three major elements:

i) a definition of the concept of resistance to schooling in rural reserves and an elaboration of the position adopted in the current thesis;

ii) a discussion of various factors which prevent the Betsiamites population from improving the productivity of its educational system;

iii) an analysis of the conclusions of two important commissioned studies on the education system conducted in Betsiamites in the 1990s and the presentation of some suggestions regarding the improvement of the school success rate of Betsiamites students.

In the first part (Resistance to schooling: Definition and conflictual viewpoints), two



conflicting ways in which resistance to schooling in a rural reserve can be viewed are presented, where the current thesis' approach is outlined, along with the way parents in Betsiamites consider formal schooling. In the second part (The cumulative effect of poverty and its impact on the reserve life), the political, economic, social and legal factors which shape reserve life and which have a detrimental effect on the community's economic development and/or on the process of schooling are analysed. In each case, concrete examples are provided to support the hypotheses. In the third part (The future of schooling in Betsiamites), the strengths and weaknesses of the 1990s education system in Betsiamites are compared with the strengths and weaknesses of the 1980s, the conclusions of two major Band-commissioned reports on education (1992 and 1996) are revisited, and some suggestions which could lead to school improvement at the local level (and in other rural reserves) are made.

In this chapter, the current researcher will rely heavily on five main sources of data: firstly, on the knowledge of the community he has accumulated over the years through participant observation, on the annual journals he has kept and on the interviews he has conducted; secondly, on two surveys he has administered (one about schooling and one about socio-economic conditions); thirdly, on students' journals, writings and drawings collected over the years; fourthly, on the various Band-commissioned reports, and on the rich work "Montagnaises de parole"<sup>1</sup> [Montagnais women of their word], and fifthly, on the literature dealing mainly with the issues of Amerindians in general, and on poverty and mental health. Two hypotheses regarding contemporary reserve life are examined in the second part: "the dictatorship of the workless majority" and "time as an enemy" (as opposed to "the teacher as an enemy") with the conclusion that decades

of welfare dependence have resulted in the deterioration of the environment of the young people and in the creation of a serious political obstacle to school improvement in rural reserves.

## PART 1- RESISTANCE TO SCHOOLING: DEFINITION AND CONFLICTUAL VIEWPOINTS

In the field of minority or working-class education, the concept of "resistance" (or "opposition") is closely linked to that of student "subculture" (or "counter-culture"). Thus, when writing about "resistance to schooling", sociologists or anthropologists usually refer to the ways subordinate groups (e.g. minorities or working-class pupils) resist, more or less actively, the domination of the ruling class <sup>2</sup> in educational settings.

This concept is also closely linked to that of "cultural reproduction". As Bourdieu wrote, schooling plays a major part in the reproduction of the culture of the dominant classes <sup>3</sup>, and the repertoire of resistance (of which resistance to schooling is a part) which has been developed by working classes in Western countries since the development of industrial capitalist societies can be viewed as a constant challenge to the dominant classes' "'repertoire' of control", as Clarke et al. have written <sup>4</sup>.

While education may be a key tool in the upward social mobility of any individual, many sociologists estimate that more often than not, the odds are just stacked too high against disadvantaged or minority pupils:

Schools [...] have tended repeatedly to school working-class children for

working-class jobs [...] it is obvious that many young people cannot feel that this society has a use for them at all.<sup>5</sup>...Every use of formal, repressive power reinforces working class experience of education as *imposition* (and not as a good-thing-that-will-extend-my-horizons-and-make-me-a-good-person); every (regular) experience of failure confirms the reality that "this place has *nuthin'* for me".<sup>6</sup> ... Working-class groups, blacks and women have gained little of value from the traditional curriculum.<sup>7</sup>...The limited value of formal education is an obvious enough feature on the cultural landscape of the working class.<sup>8</sup> ... The road to failure is clearly part of the culture and lifestyle of the boys (black Londoners). [...] I have noted that teachers are so wedded to the function of schooling that they will defend it irrespective of its failings.<sup>9</sup>

This viewpoint- i.e. that the "benefits" of schooling are outweighed by its various "disadvantages" (e.g. compulsory attendance, uniforms, use of a "standard" language)- appears to be shared by at least some minority and working-class pupils; those who resist schooling in a multitude of ways. For instance, Carlen et al.'s truants have developed, through their sustained truancy, "alternatives to the 'schooling deal'"<sup>10</sup>, Sewell's Black Londoners "contested their feelings of powerlessness [at school] through phallographic responses" and became "too sexy for school"<sup>11</sup> and Corrigan and Frith's working-class kids turned some British schools into "battleground[s], the pupil's weapons ranging from apathy through indiscipline to straight absence"<sup>12</sup>. We also find such pupils' attitudes to schooling in Amerindian milieux in Canada. For instance, Wolcott's British Columbia Amerindians viewed their "teacher as an enemy" and

ostracized him by "giving slow, reluctant responses to [his] directions, ignoring [his] comments (by not 'hearing' them or occasionally by putting their hands to their ears), mimicking [his] words or actions, constantly requesting to leave the classroom to go to the toilet, and making [him] the target of spoken or written expletives" <sup>13</sup>.

While hypotheses and arguments such as those mentioned above appeared as a response to the "pessimistic determinism" of some former sociological approaches (e.g. the interactionist approach and the structuralist approach <sup>14</sup>), authors such as Madan Sarup contend that they are just as deterministic, since the end result of the pupils' resistance is that it "leads [them] to their own entrapment" <sup>15</sup>. Sarup adds that while Paul Willis had acknowledged that his "lads", by rejecting schooling, were ironically reproducing the "mental/manual division in society", he tended nevertheless to "romanticize the working class" in the sense that "every activity of 'the lads', messing about, 'having a laff' [was] seen as if it were oppositional to capitalism" <sup>16</sup>. However that may be, viewing the process of pupils' resistance to schooling in a somewhat positive manner remains deeply rooted in the field of Amerindian education. Thus, a popular assertion, in North American Amerindian higher education circles, is that "resisting schooling is a *positive* collective behaviour"; Hampton, a Chickasaw (Oklahoma), expressed it very clearly in this way in 1988 in a dissertation at Harvard University:

For the vast majority of Indian students, far from being an opportunity, education is a critical filter indeed, filtering out hope and self-esteem. The Native student who *sees the "teacher as an enemy"* (Wolcot 1987) may have the *more realistic* and, in some ways, the *more hopeful* view than

the student who fails to see beyond the apparently benign purposes of schooling. The *failure* of non-Native education of Natives can be read as *the success* of Native resistance to cultural, spiritual, and psychological genocide.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly enough, Mr. Hampton himself has manifestly *failed* to understand such fundamental issues, having collected an Ed.D. from Harvard University, being the current President of Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina (Canada), and having been the director of the American Indian Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and associate dean at the College of Rural education at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.<sup>18</sup> Such an attitude on the part of a scholar has already been depicted by artists, such as, for instance, Burhan Misirili (see Appendix 23).

To pretend that wilfully avoiding any kind of academic qualifications is "realistic" and "hopeful" is, at best, to demonstrate insensitivity in the face of the intolerable human misery and despair to which such a collective behaviour can lead. The contemporary Canadian Amerindian attitude toward wage work, in urban or rural settings, is, as Peter George has written, "to hold a job, whether full-time, part-time or seasonal".<sup>19</sup> Generalized and chronic unemployment for Amerindians has as many adverse effects on their communities as on White communities. As imperfect the contemporary schooling offered to Amerindian students is, it is nevertheless aimed at improving their current situation, which is far from enviable. The same applied in the past, notwithstanding the cases of abuse which have been reported. Reflecting on this subject, Darnell and Hoëm wrote the following passage:

it needs to be kept in mind that most teachers took their assignment because they were motivated to help develop the children, not destroy them. What they were doing was trying to improve what was a desperate situation, and doing their best according to what was right in their time.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the position adopted here towards resistance to schooling is different. Resistance to schooling is not seen in this thesis as a "healthy" or desirable response to oppression, but rather as a self-inflicted wound which hampers the development of the collectivity and deteriorates its quality of life. In other words, the definition of the word which is retained in this study is that **"resistance [to schooling] is an opposing or retarding force"**<sup>21</sup> for Betsiamites. The school experience of an Amerindian child does not necessarily equate oppression and growing feelings of uselessness and/or powerlessness. Even Wolcott acknowledges that there are reserve schools where "school achievement [is] more acceptable and school success more frequent" than within the school where he taught for a year<sup>22</sup>. For his part, Tomson Highway, a Cree from the Brochet Reserve in Manitoba, attests that his own academic experience had nothing in common with what is described by scholars such as Hampton:

The white people whom I happened to meet and associate with along the way were, almost without exception, tremendously supportive and encouraging. With their help, I am now, like many Indians of my generation, able to go back to my people- equipped, this time, with the wisdom of Homer and Faulkner and Shakespeare and Bach and Beethoven and Rembrandt and McLuhan and many other thinkers, artists, and

philosophers of the white world, but equipped, as well, with the wisdom and the vision of Big Bear and Black Elk and Chief Seattle and Tom Fiddler and Joe Highway and the medicine people, the visionaries of my ancestry- and the Cree language in all its power and beauty.<sup>23</sup>

Stanley Vollant, the first Amerindian surgeon in Canada, who was born and educated in Betsiamites until he was thirteen, views the situation in the same manner. Whenever he comes to Uashkaikan (at least once a year) to address the students, he talks about the importance of schooling, both as a means of gaining personal freedom and as a means of keeping one's Amerindian identity. Dr Vollant also never hesitates to discuss the value, for young Montagnais students, of learning as much as they can about the non-Amerindians' culture. In so doing, Dr Vollant, like Tomsom Highway, advocates interculturalism.

Indeed, whether or not schooling generally reproduces inequality in most [if not all] societies, and whether or not schooling *as it operates now* is totally adapted to the Amerindians' needs could be discussed at length, but one thing remains constant; schooling **may hold out** the promise of increased social equality, but only as long as individuals (and communities at large) can achieve autonomy and freedom by first acquiring the basic requirements which allow access to them. And in 1997, a high school diploma is a strict minimum, whatever the cultural origin of the person. Yet, as far as success rates are concerned in Betsiamites, the situation is catastrophic, and is reproduced almost everywhere else where Aboriginal peoples are to be found (as Darnell and Hoëm have remarked, student performance in the Far North remains "abysmally

low"<sup>24</sup>, and as Waxman et al. have written, "American Indians and Alaskan Natives have a higher dropout rate than any other ethnic group in U.S. schools-from 38% to 87%"<sup>25</sup>).

Parents in Betsiamites are very much aware of the importance of education, and like most parents, they want "the best" for their children. Above all, they want them to obtain jobs and become independent, and thus, agree<sup>26</sup>- although it may sound unbelievable or even horrendous to some- with this statement, made by Prentice Baptiste Jr.:

**Quality education is a prerequisite for a society that intends to compete internationally and globally in today's complex society.**<sup>27</sup>

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has also stressed the "two things" which Aboriginal people want from education:

They [Aboriginal peoples] want schools to help children, youth and adults learn the skills they need to participate fully in the economy. They want schools to help children develop as citizens of Aboriginal nations- with the knowledge of their languages and traditions necessary for cultural continuity.<sup>28</sup>

One will note what the first of these two notions is, and one will also note that this position has not much changed since the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education" in 1972. The two key-words used then were even the same: "participate



fully"<sup>29</sup>.

The vast majority of Montagnais have long since relied on education to improve their standards of living. In a document written in 1981 (four years before the inauguration of the new secondary school, Uashkaikan), the Betsiamites "Centre des services éducatifs" (local authority) prepared a document in which it was clearly stated that schooling in Betsiamites was aimed at abolishing the widespread welfare dependency, first by "restoring" a positive cultural identity through "cultural courses" (such as Montagnais and Amerindian history) and secondly by using "quality teaching" and "excellence" as trademarks (in order to allow the students to have access to higher education)<sup>30</sup>. These objectives have not changed over the years. Moreover, in their document sent to the Band Council in 1993, Uashkaikan grade 10 and 11 students mentioned that they needed a "passport" in order to have access to the job market, and that this passport was a "school diploma". They viewed education as a "prerequisite" which would allow the Montagnais to fully participate in life in the modern world. Hunting, as *a way of living*, belonged, for them, to the past.<sup>31</sup>

And yet, despite these wishes and these values, despite the emphasis that all Amerindians have put on the importance of formal education in Canada (and in Betsiamites), it is still a failure, almost thirty years on, and Amerindians, generally speaking, are far from "fully participating". How can such a contradiction be explained? This is precisely the goal of this chapter. By closely focusing on some of the various aspects of the daily life of the community of Betsiamites (as well as those of some other Amerindian communities), the picture of the *complex* interaction between this

community and its two local schools emerges and a hypothesis about its collective behaviour is formulated.

## PART 2- THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF POVERTY AND ITS IMPACT ON RESERVE LIFE (THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE WORKLESS MAJORITY AND TIME AS AN ENEMY)

The 1967 major study on Amerindians made by Hawthorn pinpointed in a very direct manner the reason why most Amerindians who live in rural reserves in Canada are poor:

Trapped on their reserves, Indians have not been able to work in industry and collect good wages.<sup>32</sup> [Author's translation.]

More recently, other authors, such as Peter George, have somewhat polished the explanation:

The economic base of these communities [remote rural reserves] is mainly a combination of transfer payments and special government grants and programmes, with only a small portion of community economic activity represented by wage employment and by hunting and trapping.<sup>33</sup>

The result though remains the same, an inordinate proportion of those who inhabit rural reserves live in poverty, and this situation entails a host of consequences for those involved at the community level, including, of course, local educators.

The detrimental effects of poverty on Amerindian communities cannot be overemphasized. Poverty *is* the common denominator of most rural reserves. These examples, randomly selected from reports on various Amerindian communities (in Québec, where ten nations and fifty-three communities are to be found) in *Rencontre*<sup>34</sup> magazine, give an idea of the extent of the problem:

Témiscamingue (Algonquin reserve in Western Québec):

The lack of jobs is the most serious problem of the village, and is responsible for the high unemployment rate, loss of self-esteem and alcohol abuse. Economic development therefore is a priority for the Band Council. <sup>35</sup> [Author's translation.]

Mashteuiatsh (Montagnais reserve in the Saguenay/Lake St-Jean region):

The unemployment rate is over 40% in the community. Social problems are important and the drop-out rate is higher than elsewhere in the region. [Mashteuiatsh is the only Montagnais reserve which is not located on Québec's North Shore. It is in the Saguenay/lac St-Jean region] [...] Such a result would nevertheless be seen as enviable in most Amerindian communities, where the situation is often much more difficult.<sup>36</sup> [Author's translation.]

Listuguj (Micmac reserve in Southeastern Québec):

Listuguj social workers are worried at the sight of the community being destabilized by a high unemployment rate, by welfare dependency, by school dropping-out, problems to which alcohol and drug abuse can be added.<sup>37</sup> [Author's translation.]

Lac Rapide (Algonquin reserve in South-western Québec):

Here also, religion, the settling process, the boarding schools, and social assistance have cut us off from our past, a cut which has left the open wounds of alcoholism and violence in exchange for easier material conditions.<sup>38</sup> [Author's translation.]

Importantly, these opinions reflect the viewpoint of the Québec rural reserve Amerindians themselves as to the social effects of poverty and welfare dependency.

Actually, as research has shown, the average income of Québec's Amerindians can be compared with that of people living in the **poorest** urban districts and rural areas<sup>39</sup> in the province of Québec (it is important to mention that this situation is similar in the other provinces). Thus, Delima Niquay, a young Attikamekw woman from Manouane (a reserve in Western Québec) who is actively involved in the struggle against family violence, alcohol, drug and sexual abuse in her community, is quite right in saying that these problems **are not** Amerindian problems, but rather **human** problems<sup>40</sup>. Indeed, while Townsend has proven that a statistically significant association can be made between poor physical health and material deprivation and that "variations in health

tend[] to correspond closely with variations in material deprivation" <sup>41</sup>, Jacqueline Jones, in her book about "America's underclasses" has written that "poverty abides no line drawn by color or culture" <sup>42</sup>. A multidisciplinary research team has recently concluded that the links between poverty and mental health are both dramatic and numerous, adding that one has to look at the economic, social and politic factors which cause this situation before blaming the individuals affected by it <sup>43</sup>. Thus, an analogy can be made between Townsend's Northern Britain "Pit villages without pits" <sup>44</sup> and today's reserves which are, in a way, "Hunter villages without game".

#### POVERTY IN BETSIAMITES, AN ENDURING PHENOMENON

As the following demonstrates, poverty is enduring: Betsiamites, 1979. Two local Montagnais are commissioned by the Band Council to produce a study on the coming transfer- from the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND) to the local Band Council- of various responsibilities. The study focuses mainly on health and social services. These two authors write that the Indian communities are "socially disorganized" and that Betsiamites' most serious problems are "alcoholism, family strife, welfare dependency, youth deviant behaviour, and child neglect" <sup>45</sup>.

Spring 1993. In a magazine report focusing on Betsiamites, we learn that, by their own account, the Montagnais from Betsiamites are suffering from welfare dependency, high unemployment rates, alcoholism, family violence, and child neglect. Parents are often overprotective and demonstrate a lack of interest in the schooling of their children) <sup>46</sup>.

Autumn 1996. A former Band Council Chief and the current Chief ascribe the "social problems" in Betsiamites to welfare dependency. "People have become so dependent", says the current Chief, that "they come to the Band Council for an unmanageable doorknob or a broken window"<sup>47</sup>.

These various opinions are consistent with the figures found in a report produced by the "Directeur de la Protection de la Jeunesse (DPJ), région Cote-Nord" (Youth Protection Officer, provincial government, North Shore region). In his annual 1992-93 report, we learn that the most common problems regarding juvenile protection and child welfare in Montagnais communities (including Betsiamites) on the North Shore are, in order of importance, "child neglect" (57% of total interventions by the DPJ in Montagnais communities), juvenile delinquency (21%), "sexual abuse" (13%), "violence towards children" (7%), and "parental desertion" (2%)<sup>48</sup>. The DPJ was also indicating in his report that the figures involved were "extremely high" proportionally, since these cases represented nearly 30% of total interventions by his department, while the Indian population aged from 0-18 years on the North Shore represented only 8.6%<sup>49</sup> of the total regional population. Moreover, everyone in Québec (including the Montagnais) is very well aware that for each case on which the DPJ works, there are between 5 and 10 more cases of the same nature that go unreported in the various cities, towns, or communities involved.

Unquestionably, the most worrying aspect of these realities is that they are *persistent*. And for that matter, young Betsiamites Montagnais themselves cannot be accused of being oblivious to such social issues. In a document sent to the Band Council in 1993

(this document was produced by grade ten and eleven Uashkaikan students) in which they expressed their position on the issue of Aboriginal self-government, these students pinpointed alcohol and drug abuse, the lack of cultural as well as recreational facilities, and the poor condition of the local economy as the priorities on which the Band Council should be focused<sup>50</sup>. They also added that the inordinately high divorce rate was negatively affecting their schooling. These opinions were concomitant with ones expressed in two other Amerindian communities (Manouane/Attikamekw; Uashat/Montangais) by grade ten and eleven students who had been asked questions about the way they contemplated their future as Amerindians living in reserves.

For instance, about welfare dependency:

-And most of all, [I want] not to depend on the White government. (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve)...- To work one day in order not to depend on someone else or on welfare. (Grade 11 student, Uashat reserve)...-If we give up, we have nothing else but welfare. (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve). [Author's translation.]

On alcohol and drug abuse:

-Alcohol is the deadliest thing in the world." (Grade 11 student, Manouane)...-I think that love has deteriorated in our communities and I think that it is because of drugs and alcohol. (Grade 11 student, Manouane)...-My deepest desire is to see the young people not drinking

too much beer and that they should stay in school. (Grade 11 student, Manouane)...-My deepest desire is [...] not to see violence nor drugs in my community. (Grade 11 student, Manouane). [Author's translation.]

About the importance of schooling and working:

-First of all, I would like to complete my studies in order to be able to earn a living. (Grade 11 student, Uashat)...-[I have realized] the extent to which education is important [...] because of all the problems we have. (Grade 11 student, Manouane)...-My dream is to have a good job so I can do whatever I want. (Grade 10 student, Uashat)...-The best way to destroy a man is to pay him for doing nothing. (Grade 11 student, Manouane).<sup>51</sup> [Author's translation.]

As one can see, there seems to be intergenerational agreement within the population of Québec's rural reserves regarding the links between generalized poverty and certain social problems such as family violence and alcoholism. But in order to allow the reader to appraise the links between schooling and poverty in the rural reserve of Betsiamites, the "obstacles" to school improvement have been separated into four categories: a) political b) economic c) social d) legal. These will be discussed in turn.

#### A- POLITICAL OBSTACLES TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN BETSIAMITES



Since the 1970s, virtually every administrative responsibility regarding Amerindian reserves has been progressively transferred from the Federal Government to the Amerindian Bands themselves. Thus, the Betsiamites Band Council, like most other Band Councils across Canada, directly runs local programmes such as education, housing, health, social assistance and policing<sup>52</sup>. The federal Government is responsible for the funding of these programmes, but has absolutely no say in the way the Band Council is going to spend this money<sup>53</sup>, even though it supposedly does so, according to the Indian Act<sup>54</sup>.

As the federal Government has aimed for the last thirty years at promoting economic development within the Amerindian reserves, the funds allocated to the reserves have steadily increased<sup>55</sup>, which has resulted in an enhanced role and importance for the Band Councils at the local level. For instance, in Betsiamites, the reserve's budget increased from \$7 M CAN (about £3.5 M) in 1989 to \$21 M CAN in 1993<sup>56</sup> (and to \$27 M CAN in 1997<sup>57</sup>). As a result, the influence of the Betsiamites Band Council, which was already considerable in 1989<sup>58</sup>, is even "much more important" in 1993<sup>59</sup>.

This total freedom is theoretically good for the communities, but in fact, some serious problems arise because of strong pressure being put on the members of the Band Council regarding the various needs of the community. Indeed, the mandate of the Band Council is so vast (the Band Council provides jobs and housing and is responsible for cultural events, for education, for economic development, and for the relationships between the community and the Governments, other Amerindian communities, and any other private organization"<sup>60</sup>) that its task is simply beyond realistic expectations and the

Band Council itself, newly elected or not, is routinely buried under demands coming from all sides. By their own account, the members of the Betsiamites Band Council estimate that the majority of their meetings, interventions or decisions (between 70% and 90%) are linked to demands coming from individuals who experience problems with their house (or demand for a house), with social assistance or with police officers, their job (or demand for a job), or from others who wish to obtain funding for a personal "project" (suicide prevention, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, sports tournament, etc.)<sup>61</sup>. All this, not too surprisingly, leaves the Band Council members very little time indeed to even think about the setting up of any kind of long-term economic and/or administrative policies, which is the most serious problem of Betsiamites, according to a consulting firm hired by the Betsiamites Band Council in 1996<sup>62</sup>. The fact that a new Band Council is elected by the population every two years still adds to this tendency of focusing mainly on short-term problems and solutions.

As a result of such a management process, the various sectors which are under the responsibility of the Band Council (e.g. education, social assistance, health, housing programme, policing) are constantly competing to obtain additional funding from the Band Council, and the usual "winners" are the sectors whose action leads to immediately palpable results<sup>63</sup>. For instance, the Band Council Chief who had made education her "top priority"<sup>64</sup> in 1994 was the same who took one-fourth of the education budget (\$800,000 CAN- about £400,000) a year later and spent it on the paving of streets and on house building<sup>65</sup>. A few days before her re-election, she had declared that the Betsiamites population was "very unhappy" because there were not enough houses in Betsiamites and that she intended to do something about this

situation<sup>66</sup>. Once again, this shows the extent to which the recent report from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples lags behind the daily reality of the Amerindian reserves in Canada. When one reads in this \$58 M CAN (about £29 M) report that

In all jurisdictions, spending on Aboriginal education is inadequate to reverse accumulated educational deficits.<sup>67</sup>

One cannot help but think that the problem is not the lack of money, but rather the way the money is spent in rural reserves by the Band Councils- as a Band-commissioned research team investigating Betsiamites' education system suggested in 1996<sup>68</sup>.

Recognizing this political reality is fundamental to an understanding of the internal functioning of contemporary rural reserves in Canada and the way these communities set out their priorities. Fundamentally again, nothing has changed since the 1960s (when the federal Government "began pouring money into Indian reserves to bring them up to the standards of the white society"<sup>69</sup>) regarding the extended responsibilities of the Band Councils and the poor relationships they usually have with local populations. In short, the Band Councils are viewed by the public as the "services providers"<sup>70</sup>, and conversely, the Band population is usually seen by the Band Council's members as "very demanding"<sup>71</sup>, if not "dependent and unwilling to make efforts"<sup>72</sup>. In sum, the relationships between the Band Councils and the local population were doomed from the start, given the fact that an overactive minority (six to twelve councillors for each reserve, supported by a more or less bulky and collaborative body of Amerindian public servants) has attempted to fulfil the needs of an idle population where the majority live

on welfare<sup>73</sup>. Since the Band Council controls unemployment benefits, welfare provision, economic development (i.e. hiring and firing of Band Council employees), police protection and even building and allocation of houses, and since the communities are so small that everyone is related in some way to everyone else and that extended families and kinship groups are extremely important<sup>74</sup>, ethical dilemmas in the decision-making process are often unavoidable. This explains why the most common criticism aimed at the Betsiamites Band Council are accusations of "favouritism" in the allocation of jobs, houses or other benefits<sup>75</sup>. This situation is replicated in other rural reserves, as exemplified by what a thirty year old welfare recipient from Grassy Narrows (Ontario) told A.M. Shkilnyk in the 1980s:

The big division in this reserve is between people with steady jobs, like the people in the band office who don't do anything anyway, and everybody else who is trying to make a living...But those people in the band office, they don't care about us, they only care about themselves, their paychecks, and their own relatives. They don't care about nothing. So, some people have a lot of money, and others, like myself, have nothing.<sup>76</sup>

As a result of this social polarity, Shkilnyk writes, "the Chief becomes a symbol and a scapegoat for the people's discontent, insecurity, and alienation"<sup>77</sup>, and is thus seldom re-elected. Both in Betsiamites and in Grassy Narrows, for instance, only one chief has been re-elected following his first mandate since 1960<sup>78</sup>, although it was a very common practice in both places prior to that date. But as the Chiefs (and the Band

Councils by extension) have solely become "dispensers", instead of remaining the leaders they used to be<sup>79</sup>, they have been turned into victims of the dictatorship of the welfare recipients and the unemployed, who represent the majority in almost any Amerindian rural reserve. The latter define the priorities of the Band Council, and not the opposite. The problem is that given the precariousness of their situation, and the pointlessness in making projects about eventual holidays or purchases, the poor have a strong tendency to be obsessed with the present, and not to think much about the future, as D.T. Ellwood writes:

Ghetto residents are often accused of thinking only of the present and ignoring the future. It is hard to see how looking to the future would give them more initiative or drive, since the future does not look much different from the past.<sup>80</sup>

The long-term psychological effects on individuals of having to live on very little money have been very well analysed by the "Comité de la Santé Mentale du Québec". They have concluded that the chronic lack of money resulted in these individuals "living constantly from hand to mouth"<sup>81</sup>. The immediate, the humdrum invades daily life, and those trapped in such situations describe their perception of time in the following way:

-We live from hand to mouth, when we climb two stairs up, we go down three straight away, we never move forward...-It is always a situation of survival, we do not live. It is frustrating...-My life is boring: getting up, eating, kids, going to bed. There is nothing new in my life. [Author's

translation.]<sup>82</sup>

One Amerindian welfare recipient reacts to poverty in the very same manner when she says that "[she] can only think about tomorrow, the farthest I can think of is the day after tomorrow"<sup>83</sup> [author's translation].

Translated into priorities, the three most important preoccupations for the unemployed in Betsiamites are currently (apart from finding a job) housing, public health and paving the streets of the community<sup>84</sup>. This, then, automatically becomes the political programmes of any newly elected Band Council, since the unemployed represent on average 70% of the labour force in Betsiamites on any given year<sup>85</sup>. Such a situation was completely unanticipated in the 1970s when "local control" in the reserves was being aggressively promoted by the National Indian Brotherhood. The advocates of "local control" were then unaware that the unemployed in the rural reserves would one day dictate their respective Band Council's political agenda. Today, any local Amerindian politician who would adopt policies which clearly move away from preoccupations such as those mentioned above would be committing political suicide. Which explains why significant amounts of money are taken from the education budgets in all the nine Montagnais reserves but one (Mingan, Québec) every year and spent on housing, paving, or various purchases<sup>86</sup>.

Thus, the usual discourse of politicians in the Western world about the "underclass" or the "workless minority" and the moral and economic obligation for government of "[bringing] the dispossessed underclass back into the mainstream"<sup>87</sup> here becomes

totally irrelevant, since the workless class in the micro-state, that every Canadian rural reserve has become, *is* the mainstream. It would take a highly charismatic Amerindian leader to convince the "dispossessed" in Québec's rural reserves to spend less on housing and public health and more on education. Indeed, the collective priorities of the rural reserves are bound to be short-term orientated, given the fact that the majority of the voters are long-term unemployed<sup>88</sup>.

Moreover, the new trend, which has emerged in the 1990s, regarding the relationships between the rural reserves' local populations and their Band Councils gives little hope that this situation is about to change. Canadian Amerindians "have started taking their councils to court" over issues ranging from voting rights for new Band members to subsidized housing being denied<sup>89</sup>. An Amerindian professor of law estimated in 1995 that at least 200 Band Councils were being sued by their own members<sup>90</sup>. In Betsiamites, such lawsuits have even become commonplace, according to a former Band Council director. "And the Band Council", he added, "is currently tagging behind the local population, and strives vainly to satisfy its needs"<sup>91</sup>. He could not have been more right; less than two years later, the population humiliated the Chief at the ensuing election because she was held responsible for social assistance cuts<sup>92</sup>, and the Band Council director was simply sacked because too many people had complained about him.

The issues of the role and level of authority of the local police in Betsiamites provides yet another good example of the political power of the "workless majority". The police on reserves across Canada fall under the jurisdiction of the Band Councils, and thus, the

Highway Code, for instance, may or may not be applied on the reserve territory for the Amerindian population. In 1994, the Band Council decided, for reasons linked to safety, that enough was enough, and that the Highway Code was to be enforced by the local police from now on. A press conference was called, and the following news was printed in a major newspaper: The Betsiamites Chief wanted "the local police to be more severe with [Amerindian] offenders" (e.g. drunk-driving, driving without a licence, driving an off-road vehicle within the community, intoxication on the public highway, disturbance of the peace at night)<sup>93</sup>. The local population, however, resisted, and started to put pressure (the kind that a former Grassy Narrows resident calls "cruel pressure"<sup>94</sup>) on the councillors and the Chief. As a result, these directives were soon abandoned and the local police chief was suspended from office without salary for a month, two years later, because he refused to be lax with Amerindians and tough with whites, as the Band Council had ordered him to be. "It is a principle of social justice", he said to a journalist, "there are not two laws and two police"<sup>95</sup>. Some time after this last event, two local police officers told the current researcher that their work had become pointless, and that they had grown used to being laughed at by local adults and youngsters alike when they issued "warnings" to offenders who knew very well that the local police did not have the authority to arrest or to fine them<sup>96</sup>.

These unhealthy trends are worsening rather than weakening. In the 1960s, researchers were surprised to realise that some Band Councils were sometimes holding their meetings outside the reserves in order to allow the councillors not to be disturbed by inopportune personal demands<sup>97</sup>. In 1997, the Betsiamites Band Council routinely holds one-week meetings in Québec City, three hundred miles from Betsiamites, for the very



same reasons. But obviously, this does not prevent the Band Council from doing exactly what the "workless majority" wants it to do, even though it may be evident, as with the case of the local police, that such conduct is socially harmful and self-destructive. To think that there is no link between such long-term political choices and schooling would be naive. Cultural pathologies and collective behaviour patterns "directly shape", as Dinesh D'Souza has put it, "young people's life prospects"<sup>98</sup>. An analogy between the situation of Canadian Amerindians and that of black Americans can be made. D'Souza suggests that the reason why black Americans are those who are consistently "falling the farthest behind" on the well-known Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is not the blacks' intelligence or the SAT's cultural bias, but rather it is the development of a specific black 'ghetto' culture which has a detrimental effect on schooling, notwithstanding, of course, the difficult socio-economic conditions black Americans often experience:

Blacks have developed a culture that helped them adapt to past circumstances but [which] today is, in many respects, dysfunctional. What appears to have happened is that, in response to past oppression, black culture has sometimes defined itself in opposition to mainstream cultural norms. Contemporary African-American culture is characterized by a high rate of illegitimate births, frequent resort to violence, and, among many of the young, scorn for hard work and academic achievement as forms of 'acting white'.<sup>99</sup>

In response to past oppression, Canadian Amerindians living in rural reserves have also developed a specific culture whose expressions are not always healthy or constructive.

The forced and generalized intergenerational idleness which has become the trademark of American and Canadian Amerindian reserves has led to the development of self-destructive attitudes and collective behaviour<sup>100</sup>. The inordinately high suicide rate on the reserves, for instance, tells a lot about the condition of Canadian Amerindians' mental and physical health. The latter variable is such an important factor regarding educational achievement that it will be discussed below, immediately following discussion of the economic obstacles to school improvement.

The political obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites, for their part, are directly linked to the "workless majority"'s agenda. The Betsiamites Band Council, like so many other rural reserve Band Councils, is "obsessed"- as a Montagnais woman has put it- "with the present moment, with satisfying the needs of some people and forgets about something which is fundamental, the future of our children." <sup>101</sup> [Author's translation.]. When a collectivity voluntarily chooses to take one-fourth of the money which should be spent on the education of its children in order to build a few more houses or pave a couple of streets, one could say that there is something wrong with the political system which allows this to happen, and could thus refer to it as the dictatorship of the "workless majority". A former Betsiamites Chief and current councillor said in 1994 that the population in Betsiamites was "politically immature" and that the local elections which take place every two years "had become a game" <sup>102</sup>. The political events which followed in Betsiamites proved him right, but the results of this "game" on the education of the Betsiamites children and teenagers are not to be taken lightly. As if this political obstacle were not enough in itself, the economic life of the reserve, which we now turn to, does very little indeed to foster educational success and/or school improvement.

## B- ECONOMIC OBSTACLES TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN BETSIAMITES

The economic indicators of the last decade in Betsiamites demonstrate very clearly that its economic structure is moving towards *increased* dependence on transfer payments (unemployment insurance and social assistance) and on Band Council's salaries <sup>103</sup>, which is a worrying trend indeed, as the 'Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites' (SDEB) asserts<sup>104</sup>. The figure in Appendix 24 shows, for instance, that between 1989 and 1993, salaries paid by the Band Council and social assistance have nearly doubled, and that unemployment insurance and child allowances have increased threefold, while the income generated by the activity of the private sector has diminished in terms of percentage of the community's total income (from 18% to 15%), the income from handicrafts has remained the same (1%) and traditional activity (trapping) has fallen by 70% (from \$73,000 CAN to \$22,000). More troubling yet, the forestry department, which had generated 11% of the community's total income in 1989 and 7% in 1993 was closed in 1997, due to a dispute with the Band Council over the hiring of white woodcutters.

In other words, being dependent on the government is the norm in rural reserves, which leads some people to display rather uncommon attitudes towards work, as demonstrated by the following opinions, extracted from "Montagnaises de Parole/ Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat":

- Since I am living on unemployment insurance, I can have a balanced personal budget and I live decently...- The person who works will always

need (much) money. While the one who doesn't will know how much he can spend and can even have a balanced personal budget...- Since I have stopped working, I have got more time for myself. [...] I can read a book, visit friends and walk in the forest...- I have noticed that the young men lack motivation for working, because they only have to wait for the social assistance cheque. The worst is that they are happy with it...- Today's life is not really hard, you only have to sit on a chair.<sup>105</sup> [Author's translation.]

The extent to which these opinions are widespread and the degree to which they influence young people's attitudes towards schooling and working remains to be closely analysed, but one can safely argue that they virtually make school and work appear to be pointless. Peter George suggests, for his part, that modern transfer payments perfectly fit the traditional culture of hunter-gatherer Indians:

The Cree Indians' willingness to accept relief, for example, is longstanding and based on traditional cultural values. Whereas North Americans of European origin regard personal independence as an important goal and try to avoid dependence on others, in Cree culture it is both sensible and friendly to accept gifts. Consequently, the Cree readily accepted the Hudson's Bay Company's relief supplies in the nineteenth century, and the introduction of government transfer payments in the twentieth century was greeted as something to be expected of a patron.<sup>106</sup>

And yet, as seen above, the younger generations of Québec's rural reserve Amerindians have distinctly negative attitudes towards welfare, and wish above all to have a job and to become independent financially. It appears self-evident that it is because they have realized that numerous social problems are directly associated with high levels of unemployment in communities.

As said earlier, poverty plays a major role in educational underachievement in Betsiamites, as in most Canadian rural reserves, but poverty in itself is not the causal factor for the predicament on the reserves today. It is rather a direct consequence of the political process which led to the creation of the reserves in the first place. Once again, and not unlike the setting up of Amerindian studies programmes in North American universities and colleges in the 1960s and 1970s, this process, even though it was well-intentioned, was characterized by hastiness and has had disastrous long-term effects, as the Minority Rights Group asserts:

This colonial policy was hastily conceived and implemented, but the pattern of administration and white/Indian relations which it established has determined the basic social, economic and geographic facts of Indian life for the last 100 years. [...] The reserve system [...] has perpetuated the Indians' social and economic ills. The artificial separation of white and Indian has bred an unhealthy tendency for people of each race to see each other in stereotyped terms.<sup>107</sup>

The two main problems were that the newly-created reserves, because of their size,

could not allow the Indians to resume their traditional way of living as hunters-gatherers, and, because they were isolated, they were also prevented from participating in the wage economy. A century later, these conditions remain essentially the same, as George demonstrates:

From the perspectives of market efficiency, there are formidable obstacles to the development of wage employment opportunities in profit-seeking enterprises in remote reserve communities. [...] These obstacles include: (1) low skill levels; (2) low levels of occupational and capital mobility; (3) high input costs and insufficient input availability, including hydroelectricity supply; (4) low levels of accessibility to markets due to high transport costs. All of these factors make it extremely unlikely that export-based manufacturing activity will develop in remote communities...<sup>108</sup>

The above-mentioned factors are all extremely important for our subject and we will return to them in the conclusion of this thesis. But one thing needs to be made clear now in order to allow the reader to understand that the problem entailed by the creation of the reserves has had much more dramatic consequences than simply causing their people to live in poverty, which is already bad enough. Indeed, it has deeply affected the relations between income, work, and the individual. One cannot overemphasize, for instance, the damage which the creation of the reserves has caused to Indian men. Within a few decades (sometimes even much faster) these latter, who were extremely hard workers, had become economically irrelevant. As wards of the federal Government,

they have since then been merely asked to wait for the State's relief to come to them in all its forms; i.e. at first clothes, blankets, food, and then money payments. Besides, even if an individual had against all odds wished to pursue his traditional way of living as a hunter, this would not even have been possible, in many cases, because there was no more game left to hunt. In this sense, the Indian hunters were exactly like contemporary fisherfolk in Newfoundland's remote villages, where the federal Government has been for the last two or three years paying them not to fish, owing to severe depletion of cod and other traditional catches. If this situation is to endure, there is no doubt that it will also cause havoc in those villages. An American author understood this very well almost sixty years ago. He wrote the following about the North American Indians in 1939:

There is a wise saying: 'One man's meat is another man's poison'. This is true of races and nations even more than of individuals. When a people [the North American Indian] is suddenly forced to give up its customs and ideals for those it cannot understand, its whole social structure crumbles [...] Human beings, however healthy and well fed, lead a mere animal existence unless they have ideals to guide them, ambitions to spur them on, a social organization into which they can happily fit their individual lives.<sup>109</sup>

We can provide recent examples in order to illustrate this. In French Guyana, RMI (French version of welfare payment) was introduced in remote jungle villages in 1984 by the French government. Less than ten years later, village chiefs were complaining

that the men had started to drink heavily, and had stopped fishing and making canoes. One of these distressed chiefs told a French journalist in 1992 that he even knew men "who didn't know how to fish or paddle anymore" <sup>110</sup>. And, as an American journalist wrote, worldwide competitive capitalism has even caused whole countries to also become economically irrelevant, albeit without any form of compensation; "from the standpoint of the market, the hundreds of millions of people merely surviving in places like Bangladesh and across vast stretches of Africa are superfluous. By and large, we don't need what they have; they can't buy what we sell" <sup>111</sup>.

As far as Canada's reserves are concerned, the problem of high unemployment levels cannot be solved by a massive, albeit artificial, creation of jobs. Referring to the problem of high unemployment rates in some countries in Europe, the president of Volkswagen wrote in 1993 that creating "artificial" jobs would be unrealistic and both demoralizing and demotivating for the workers: "hiding unemployment by creating meaningless jobs for all, as was done in the former Communist countries, is not a solution" <sup>112</sup>. Nor can it be solved by massive investments of money in the rural reserves, because this can do more harm than good, as has been demonstrated in some Canadian rural reserves which have been "transformed from poverty to wealth" because of the presence of oilfields on the Indians' land, as Geoffrey York emphasises:

As the oil money poured into Hobbema [Crees, Alberta], the social upheaval was traumatic. Alcoholism increased, cocaine arrived on the four reserves, families broke apart, and the suicides mounted steadily. From 1985 to 1987, there was a violent death almost every week at



Hobbema, and the suicide rate for its young men was eighty-three times the national average.[...] 'There was so much money that people thought it was growing on trees', said Eddie Littlechild, chief of the Ermineskin band.[...] 'The people weren't interested in going to work. The younger people don't know what it is to work for their money. We didn't realize the problems that the money would create'.[...]The story at Hobbema is proof that money by itself cannot repair the damage that has been done to native culture for more than a century. When the flow of money is too great and too sudden, it becomes yet another threat to traditional cultural values. The shift from poverty to wealth was as wrenching as the shift onto the reserves in the nineteenth century.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, because of the creation of the reserves and the relationship it has, from the start, established between the Amerindians and the federal Government (the former becoming wards of the state), and because of the Indian Act which further complicates things, to say the least, for anyone- either Amerindian or white- who wishes to invest money in the reserves<sup>114</sup>, Canadian Amerindians have historically been prevented from developing a 'healthy' attitude towards money. As Judge Dussault (co-chair of the last Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples) has stressed, the fact that there are only nine bank branches on Canada's reserves (six of them being in Québec) says a lot about how the handling of money has always represented a stumbling block for Canada's Amerindians<sup>115</sup>.

Canada is often censured by the UN for its treatment of Aboriginal peoples, but the

truth remains that Canada allocates annually much more money to Amerindians and Inuit (per capita) than countries such as the United States, Australia or New Zealand <sup>116</sup>. As an example, Canada granted, proportionally, in 1983 ten times more to its Inuit population than Denmark did for the Greenland Inuit <sup>117</sup>. And yet, poverty persists in Canada's reserves and Inuit villages. One part of the answer lies in the fact that much of the money is being 'wasted', according to Canadian economists and the Federal Auditor General <sup>118</sup>. There is actually another way in which this issue can be appraised. Indeed, as the administrative and political powers were being gradually transferred to the Band Councils from the beginning of the seventies, the number of Indian welfare recipients sky-rocketed. In just ten years, for instance (from 1981 to 1991), the number of Indian welfare recipients had increased threefold (see Appendix 25). In 1973, it cost the federal Government less than \$55 M CAN (approximately £25 M) to pay Indian welfare recipients; in 1992, this cost had risen to \$529 M CAN (or £265 M) <sup>119</sup>. At the local level, this means that the reserves' population has been putting a constant and ever-increasing pressure on its elected members since the beginning of the seventies to answer its exploding needs, in terms of housing and recreational facilities, health care (both mental and physical), and educational and employment needs, to name only a few. This process can be seen, in a way, as a kind of development of underdevelopment, since the bulk of these expenses are, of course, totally unproductive, and because it is unsustainable despite ever-increasing local budgets, there is growing dissatisfaction on both sides (i.e. the unemployed and the Band Councils) at the local level. In Betsiamites, the local population repeatedly accuses the Band Council of being 'unfair' when allocating houses or hiring people- for instance in 1990 <sup>120</sup> and in 1995<sup>121</sup> - while the Band Council's top representatives do not hesitate to picture the unemployed (i.e. the

majority) as being 'totally dependent' (ref. a nationally broadcast television report in 1996<sup>122</sup>). The worst is, that, given the fact that the fertility rate of the Indian population in Québec is twice the rate of Québec's non-Native population, there are proportionally twice as many single-parent families in Native communities<sup>123</sup>, that these communities' weak economic structure will remain unchanged in the foreseeable future, and that it is a certainty that future transfer payments from the federal Government will be less 'generous'<sup>124</sup>, it is likely that the afore-mentioned social trends will accelerate and aggravate, while yet more social pressures will be added, especially in terms of housing and health needs, and of employment opportunities.

Taking into account these historic realities allows us a better understanding of the complexity of the roots of the economic underdevelopment of the rural reserves, which is, of course, at the heart of the educational problem, since it is largely agreed that schools in very deprived areas have usually much less success than those in wealthy areas.

In short, given all the above-mentioned factors, and given the fact that long-term unemployment in Québec Amerindian reserves averages 60%<sup>125</sup> (which is the approximate rate for Betsiamites), one can safely talk about the existence in the reserves of a large "underclass". It is not a matter of blaming the victim- indeed every effort must be made to attack the roots of this problem, and not those who suffer from it. Nevertheless, it remains, as Dean Hartley (who certainly cannot be accused of being a right-wing extremist) has pointed out that it is a fact (which needs to be taken into account in our analysis):

Dependency culture is by implication accepted as a real phenomenon and the "underclass" is admitted as a legitimate term in political and social policy discourse.<sup>126</sup>

Thus, it is not *poverty in itself* which is to blame for the situation in the reserves, but the *consequences* associated with widespread intergenerational and long-term poverty. As in the poorest urban areas, most people in many Amerindian rural communities suffer, to various degrees, from *relative deprivation*. As Peter Townsend has written, "deprivation [and thus poverty] takes a variety of forms" <sup>127</sup>. On the reserves, it can be said that people are poor because they "lack or are denied resources to obtain" some basic material standards (e.g. balanced diet, housing, stores, recreational facilities, etc.) ordinarily available in mainstream society and cannot "fulfil membership of society" because they are excluded from normal standards of "employment, occupation, education, recreation [...] and social activities" <sup>128</sup>.

One concrete example will illustrate this assertion. Townsend often uses "car ownership" as an indicator of poverty. Indeed, he writes:

...a number of studies show that it is probably the best surrogate for current income. Not only does a family have to buy or replace a car to own one, but it also has to pay for licence, insurance and MOT, together with maintenance and repair. All this represents a substantial proportion of income.<sup>129</sup>

Using this argument, a question was included in a survey about family life which was conducted in 1993 at Uashkaikan. We asked 197 students if their family **had owned** a car, without interruption (we told them that we meant by that a "period which was not longer than a month"- thus allowing those who had been deprived of a car a few days or even a few weeks because they were buying another car or for any other reason, to answer "yes"), during the last five years. The results were the following:

Yes: 96; No: 101

More than half the students (51%) who were present that day at school (thirty were missing, who presumably did not belong to the wealthiest families) answered "no". If we add those who were absent, we obtain a result which is very similar to the socio-economic profile of the community (approximately 60% of the population on average is unemployed). Now, one has to *imagine* what not having a car means when you live in a remote rural community. In Betsiamites, there is no supermarket or chain store, there is no banking institution, there is no recreation or community centre, there is no library, bookstore or stationer's, and moreover, there is no efficient (i.e. frequent and inexpensive) public transportation available. In short, the nearest *normal* facilities are thirty-eight miles away, and to hire a taxi (either local or from the neighbouring towns) costs \$70 CAN (approximately £35) for *one* return trip. One can then ponder the difference between Betsiamites and Issaquena County, Mississippi, where 2,000 black people live.

Issaquena County is one of the poorest areas of Mississippi and the unemployment level

is extremely high, especially during winter, most of the people being poor farmers. Residents say themselves that "Issaquena County is very poor, like at the bottom", "there is no industry", "there's just not any jobs" "all they [the farmers] have to live on is unemployment", "there is no local theater or community center". Consequently, as the manageress of "Tony's grocery" says (and she *has* a car), "We have to go to Greenville, and that's 42 miles away, for a movie. The same with groceries" <sup>130</sup>. The major structural economic problem which faces this county is its small population and its remote location- yet another resemblance with Betsiamites. These similarities with other deprived communities (we could also have used any number of *white* rural communities in Québec or in Appalachia, U.S.A.) support our assertion that the fundamental problem- i.e. poverty- in rural reserves is not a purely *Amerindian* problem , but rather a *human* one.

It is therefore no surprise to see that to obtain a driver's licence is a major concern for both the youth in Betsiamites and their parents alike. It means both personal freedom and the capacity to help others (provided there *is* an available car, of course). As it is also no surprise to realize that many children often miss school for a whole day because their parents are running errands in Baie-Comeau and that they either accompany them or babysit during their absence. When they return to school, these children carry messages from their parents saying that "they were shopping" or the student was "looking after the children while they were shopping".

Thus, the generalized lack of a car has dramatic consequences on schooling itself and even, as will be seen in the following section about physical and mental health obstacles

to school improvement, on the way the Band Council spends its money.

In fact, poverty (and therefore dependence on government) is so entrenched in the daily life of the rural reserves that it even dictates, to a great extent, both the cycle and the nature of the economic, cultural and social activities of Betsiamites to a great extent. Actually, such a social phenomenon is very well known to hospitals and supermarkets located in poor urban neighbourhoods in Montréal; these hospitals always brace themselves for alcohol and drug overdoses during the days which follow the distribution of cheques to welfare recipients<sup>131</sup>, while these supermarkets avoid offering interesting bargains during the first week of the month (the welfare cheques are received at the end of each month) in order to make more money out of welfare recipients<sup>132</sup>. The owner of a Montréal strip club who is also responsible for hiring female strippers for other Québec and Ontario strip clubs is also familiar with these economic cycles; "Last week", he told a journalist in 1995, "[I] did not receive many phone calls from strippers because it was Welfare cheque's week. It's always like that."<sup>133</sup> [Author's translation.]

There are four key dates each month in Betsiamites: the 1st, the 15th, the 20th and the 28th. On the 1st and on the 15th, welfare recipients receive their cheque (elsewhere in the provinces, welfare recipients receive their cheque once a month, but on most reserves, they receive it in two instalments). On the 20th, parents receive child benefit (given the number of children in Betsiamites, the influx of money is significant). And on the 28th, the elderly receive their old age pension. Furthermore, there are two other substantial transfer payments which are eagerly awaited every year; the federal (GST) and the provincial (TVQ) tax refunds<sup>134</sup>.

The two most important payments are of course the 1st and 15th's social assistance cheques, but the other transfer payments bring about the same collective behaviour, only to a lesser extent. When the cheques arrive on the reserve, the post office becomes the centre of attention. It is instantaneously invaded by the many people who come to collect their cheques. As soon as this is done, people rush to the local merchants to cash them (there is no banking institution in Betsiamites) and to buy a few things. On January 20th, 1995, for instance, the day of the child benefit, there was a huge traffic jam at the post office at 11:00 AM. Car boots were open, and people were thrusting cases of beer in them. The nearby restaurant and grocery store were rapidly selling ready-made meals and the cold air was filled with the odour of chips, fried chicken and pizza. Even those who had a steady job were there to collect their cheque, but for the latter, it had obviously more to do with seeing other people, than for the money per se. Indeed, as a Band Council employee said during an interview in 1997,

It is a little like a carnival or a fun fair every time on those days. If the weather is nice, everyone, but absolutely everyone will be out in the streets walking, talking, joking, and having fun. People who usually don't even look at you will greet you in the warmest way.<sup>135</sup> [Author's translation.]

It is on these days, and on the two or three following, that shopping is most intense, and since so few people have cars, and since the normal facilities are so far away, this is no small task. This also explains why this phenomenon has such a very strong and direct negative impact on the local secondary school's attendance rate, as seen in the



previous chapter (see Appendix 21). The local organizations (and even the church) which collect money for various purposes (mostly sports) also use these dates to hold their fund-raising events, and the two most important cultural events (the winter carnival and the summer religious feast) also take place on those dates. The underground economy thrives when the cheques come in. A commissioned private firm (CAMO) estimated, in 1990, that every year, approximately \$250 CAN (about £125) per capita was spent on illegal lotteries in Betiamites, \$300 CAN on local bingos, and at least as much on legal provincial lotteries, which amounts to approximately \$750 CAN (£375) per capita per year<sup>136</sup>. On 9 June 1994, for instance, a National Hockey League playoff game took place for which illegal lottery tickets had been sold at \$50 CAN (£25) apiece, and the next day, a member of the secondary school staff won a fence in another illegal lottery. Another member of the staff won a snow-blower, worth \$1,500 CAN, in another illegal lottery in 1997. The secondary school also participates in this frenzied consumerism. The monthly \$10 CAN cheque which the school gives to each student on the 15th (see preceding chapter) is ironically referred to by the students as "le B.S." (welfare), not to mention the \$80 CAN which is given to parents at the beginning of each academic year (presumably for buying gym clothes for their child). Thus, not only does the school suffer from dependency, it even reinforces it. Heavy drinking, for its part, also takes place on those days. Therefore, it is not a rare event to have students missing school on those periods because "there was a party at home all night long". A 13 year old girl explained in 1994 that she had missed school the previous day because she had kept an eye on her parents who had been drinking and smoking all night. She had been afraid that they might set the house on fire<sup>137</sup>. This aggravates, of course, the absenteeism due to shopping.

But these two or three days of consumerism and partying are followed, once the money is spent, by long periods of waiting until the next cheque comes in- the days during which all you have to do is "to sit down", as one Montagnais woman put it <sup>138</sup>. These "waiting days" are characterized by what the authors of a book about poverty have named "the hardships of everyday life" ("les rudesses du quotidien" <sup>139</sup>). It is during these days that poor people become obsessed with the immediate, focusing on things such as buying food or clothes for the children, paying the electricity bill, and borrowing money from a friend or a relative. These worries are exactly the same for people living on welfare whether one is in North America or in Europe <sup>140</sup>.

One cannot overemphasize the time and energy spent by poor people (whether low-paid or unemployed) trying to manage to stay in the black at month-end. "You may multiply, add up, divide, subtract, there is nothing you can do [...] When you're doing that, you get nervous" [author's translation], a poor person living in Québec told a researcher in 1992. "I have a headache and a stomachache when I do the budget, it never works" [author's translation again], another said <sup>141</sup>. "People struggling on social security" a British journalist wrote in 1992, "are having to make appalling choices between heating and eating"<sup>142</sup>.

Year after year, the majority of people in Betsiamites experience these situations: a few days of frenzied consumerism followed by long days of waiting. But the problem is that both "periods" encourage heavy drinking and other dysfunctional behaviour: on "good" days, people celebrate, and on "bad" days, people drink, take drugs or gamble out of boredom and/or to cope with the heavy stress which arises because of the lack of

money. This behaviour has always been quite common in Western culture; Keith Thomas wrote in 1971 about mid-seventeenth century London's poor that "to make life tolerable, the English turned heavily to drink. Alcohol, indeed, was an essential narcotic which anaesthetized men against the strains of contemporary life" <sup>143</sup>. This phenomenon is so well known by Betsiamites' Amerindian social workers that they can predict with great accuracy the kind of problems they will have to deal with according to the calendar days; on "pay" days, they mostly deal with child neglect and family strife due to partying <sup>144</sup>. They even have sometimes, when the cheques are about to arrive in Betsiamites, demands from welfare recipients who ask for a temporary (i.e. a few days') placement for their child because they anticipate that they will not be able to take care of him or her (due to partying, although this is not the reason evoked, of course). And on "waiting" days, Betsiamites social workers mainly deal with depression and threats of suicide whose frequency and level of gravity is correlated with the welfare recipients' dwindling monetary resources. Also, one of the most frequent demands, during these latter days, on local social workers consists of being asked to help welfare recipients obtain an advance on their cheque from the local social assistance officers <sup>145</sup>.

The local secondary school is not sheltered from these widespread personal worries and problems. On October 28, 1993, an angry parent came to school to complain about the previous (sic) year's gym clothes allowance of his son (\$80 CAN or £40) which "had vanished"; on April 28 and 29, 1994, a parent tried for two days to obtain his son's monthly \$10 CAN allowance from the school. The latter had dropped out from school a month earlier; on May 2, 1994, a drunk mother came to school to collect the monthly allowance of her son, who had also dropped out a month earlier. The son, who was

extremely embarrassed, had accompanied her and was vainly trying to get her out of the school; on June 6, 1994, a long distance phone call came from a Betsiamites parent asking for his daughter's monthly allowance, even though his daughter had missed 80% of her courses; on September 8, 1994, a parent came to school and threatened to "beat up" a member of the school staff because he had not succeeded in obtaining the gym-clothes allowance in advance; on September 12, 1994, two drunk parents phoned the principal and asked for an advance on the gym-clothes allowance, claiming that they were shortly expecting a "large amount of money" and would therefore be able "to reimburse the school"; on September 18, 1995, a fourteen-year old girl phoned the principal and begged him not to give the gym-clothes allowance (\$80 CAN or £40) to her mother because she was drunk; on October 13, 1996, a parent from Betsiamites made a long distance phone call to the secondary school and pretended to register his son in order to obtain the gym-clothes allowance. The school refused, well aware that the boy was attending a secondary school in another town.

These examples are consistent with the findings of a research team investigating the issue of Québec's reserve Amerindians' mental health. Thirty Montagnais and Naskapi women who participated in one of the work sessions of the research team identified dependence on alcohol, drugs, and gambling as one of the main problems on the reserves. One of the participants insisted that the recurrent activity of trying to find the money necessary for the satisfaction of the dependence was taking a toll on her family life. She gave the example of reserve Amerindians who were bingo addicts:

Doing anything to find, when needed, the missing \$1.50 that will permit

them to play; if and when unsuccessful, they manifest their frustrations, aggressiveness, guilt, etc. Some bingo players ask their children to leave them in peace, as an alcoholic when anxious to drink asks his. <sup>146</sup>[Author's translation.]

This example is particularly relevant. Gambling has indeed become such an important part of reserve life that some Amerindians acknowledge that they are "playing bingo in order to try to pay the electricity and the phone bills" <sup>147</sup>.

As a Band-commissioned private consulting firm wrote in 1995, the economic life of Betsiamites seems to be "completely isolated" from that of the region in which it is located, and warns that this is far from being a healthy sign, referring to its ever-increasing dependence on transfer payments <sup>148</sup>.

In this sense, Betsiamites can be compared to contemporary black American inner cities. Discussing these latter communities, Douglas Massey wrote that there is no need for a "biological explanation" (Massey refers to the controversial book written by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein <sup>149</sup>) for the perpetuation of a racial minority that is geographically and economically excluded, overwhelmingly dependent on welfare and wanting in both qualifications and steady jobs, since dysfunctional collective behaviours "naturally blossom out" in such a social environment <sup>150</sup>. "Three generations of unemployment" <sup>151</sup> in some neighbourhoods of Newcastle's impoverished West End (England) and young mothers living in these neighbourhoods "echoing the same sentiments" (ie. despair and hopelessness) that their parents "expressed 20 years

ago"<sup>152</sup> seem to prove Massey right.

Massey argues that only the dismantling of residential segregation can bring hope to black American inner cities. As long as the current social, economic and geographical conditions endure, so will the intergenerational transmission of poverty<sup>153</sup>. This, however, might seem a radical and unrealistic solution for a rural reserve's economic problems. But without going as far as this, the above-mentioned Band-commissioned private consulting firm nevertheless reached a conclusion about Betsiamites which suggests that part of the answer lies outside the reserves. Indeed, it is essential, mentions their report, for the younger generation in Betsiamites to plan their careers according to the economic needs of the province's economy, and not according to the local economic profile, since the development of Band-council-related jobs has obviously reached its limits<sup>154</sup>. The firm criticizes the current strategy of the Band council, which systematically hires every post-secondary student during the summers, thus perpetuating the myth of its economic omnipotence<sup>155</sup>. A former Betsiamites Chief agrees with such an analysis: "We [the Betsiamites Montagnais] take pleasure in welfare dependency", he said during an interview, "we have let our youth believe that they could find jobs within the reserve, when in fact we ought to encourage them to go outside the reserve and see what happens there, to go work outside the reserve"<sup>156</sup>[author's translation].

The important thing to remember, out of all this, is that as far as the reserve's economic life is concerned, too many young people learn, generation after generation, that there is not much they can expect apart from ending up on welfare, which has become the

way of life of the majority of the people. The Governments' transfer payments have shaped Betsiamites' economic, cultural and social life to a great extent. The recurrent periods, as predictable as the tide, of frenzied consumerism and partying followed by those of waiting and brooding have had and still have a destructive effect on the community, and especially on its children. Betsiamites' economic environment is structured, like the environment of most other Canadian rural reserves, by exclusion. In turn, collective exclusion brings about collective dysfunctional behaviour. As the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND) wrote in 1981, some of the most common and serious problems on the Canadian reserves are unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and lack of community involvement "generally"<sup>157</sup>. "These factors", DIAND writes, "can be both cause and effect of a sense of dependency on government which, in turn, can erode the self-image of individuals and their ability to adequately perform their role as parents"<sup>158</sup>. In the next section, the effects of such long-term socially destructive trends on the physical and mental health of the Betsiamites Montagnais, and more specifically on Betsiamites teenagers, are examined.

### C) SOCIAL CONDITIONS

This section attempts to demonstrate that widespread poverty and welfare dependence in Betsiamites dictate to a great extent the lifestyle of the younger Betsiamites Montagnais and even affect adversely their physical and mental health, thus creating a vicious circle into which educational failure fits both as a result of, and as an accelerator of, a self-destructive process.

First of all, the section discusses briefly the links between poverty and social conditions in Western countries, then reviews some of the major social problems experienced by Canadian Amerindians before presenting the perceptions of the young Betsiamites Montagnais themselves regarding their lifestyle and/or the relations between their lifestyle and schooling. Finally, using some more concrete examples gathered through years of participant observation, a second hypothesis- "time as an enemy" (following "the dictatorship of the workless majority") will be made.

#### POVERTY AND LIFESTYLES IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

Poverty, alone, is an extremely strong determinant of collective lifestyle and social behaviour, as Townsend asserts:

...the individualistic approach consistently overlook the fact that smoking and eating habits, as well as the amount of exercise taken by people, are far from being determined solely by individual choice. Diet is profoundly influenced by cultural or local social customs, informal and formal education, the availability as well as price of goods in local markets, advertising, recipes and fashions recommended by the media, and decisions taken by farmers and the manufacturers of food products as well as by Government. Similar considerations apply to other behaviour, like physical exercise, smoking, and drinking. In other words, what is attributed to individual choice is in fact substantially shaped by powerful economic and social forces, the goods and facilities that are immediately



available and level of income.<sup>159</sup>

Moreover, even suicide patterns in Britain have been significantly linked to gender and race<sup>160</sup>. Similarly, the risk of suicide for a young Amerindian man in Betsiamites has been seven times that of the average Québécois since the beginning of the 1990s, a reality which psychologists in Québec (including Amerindian psychologists) have linked to "dislocation and dysfunction of the family unit, followed by idleness, reduced solidarity, and particular situations in which victims find themselves"<sup>161</sup>.

In many Amerindian communities (and this includes Betsiamites), the major mental and physical problems are obesity<sup>162</sup> (due to bad eating habits, which in turn cause diabetes), alcohol and drug abuse<sup>163</sup>, heavy smoking<sup>164</sup> (generally twice the rate of other Québécois), suicide<sup>165</sup> (which, during certain periods, can be seven times that of other Québécois, and even more among the Inuit), physical violence<sup>166</sup>, sexual abuse<sup>167</sup>, depreciation and loss of self-esteem<sup>168</sup>, depression<sup>169</sup>, and aggressiveness<sup>170</sup>.

A special committee on mental health in Amerindian communities (half of its members being Amerindians themselves) had concluded in 1995 that the worst social problems which the Amerindian communities faced in Québec were suicide, family violence, sexual abuse, and alcohol and drug abuse<sup>171</sup>. In 1981, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND) had attributed the causes of child welfare problems in Québec Amerindian communities to "a number of interrelated factors on the reserve" (chiefly unemployment and alcohol and drug abuse)<sup>172</sup>. In this last report, the authors had noted that the Amerindians themselves attributed these social problems to unemployment and

poverty<sup>173</sup>.

The province of Québec has both higher suicide and higher poverty rates than the Canadian averages, and 82% of Québécois see, like the Amerindians do for their reserves, a link between persistent poverty in the province and its suicide rate <sup>174</sup>. Although social scientists in Québec refuse to directly link these two trends, they acknowledge that poverty and unemployment aggravate the risk of committing suicide<sup>175</sup>. Some of these observers compare poverty to a dangerous curve on the road; "it doesn't mean that you are going to miss it", says one of them, but the possibility, obviously, is higher<sup>176</sup>. And an important American study has demonstrated, for its part, that "women on welfare are three times as likely as other mothers to abuse or be addicted to alcohol or drugs"<sup>177</sup>, which also suggests that living in poverty can have a detrimental impact on the life of a collectivity.

To both understand and illustrate in a concrete manner the ways in which the lifestyle of young Betsiamites Montagnais seem to be affected by widespread poverty and welfare dependence, it is essential to allow these young people to offer their opinion on this subject. The following excerpts were taken from the writings of three different groups of students from the Betsiamites secondary school, to whom an Amerindian worker had asked what prevented them from experiencing school success <sup>178</sup>.

The roots of educational failure as seen by Betsiamites students:

-I go to bed at 3:00 AM and I can't get up in the morning. I don't have

time to sleep anymore except only at school.

-I skip school for futile reasons. Because I know that even if I'd go, "they" would tell me that I'm going for nothing since I'm not going to do anything later anyway.

-Sometimes I didn't have enough food, and so I don't feel good at school when I'm working; I am tired and I don't have the energy to work.

-I don't get enough sleep because my brother watches TV all night.

-My father gives me everything I want even though I don't deserve it.

-I never have breakfast in the morning, I don't have time. I get up too late.

-I am always tired because my baby wakes up at night, and my mother can't take care of it because she is tired too.

-How am I going to raise my daughter when her father is in prison ?

-I have to take care of the house, if I don't do it, then who will ?

-When my parents got divorced, I took to drugs to avoid thinking about it, but that only made things worse.

-I have asked my mother to stop drinking. She stopped for three weeks, but started again, although not in front of me.

-When I have a dream, it is never about my future and I still don't know what I'm going to do later.

-I sleep instead of doing my homework. And when I want to do it, my father tells me to mind my brother.

-I am depressed because I tell myself that I will never finish school.

-I don't have time to study because I have more important (for me) things

to do.

-Many other students disturb me when I'm in class.

-I used to take lots of drugs (every day). I really had to take something.

-Every time I go to school, I think about my son and I wonder if he is sleeping or if he's well. [Author's translation.]

These students are very well aware of their (or their friends' or family's) personal situation. They realize that their lifestyle (e.g. sleep, diet, substance abuse, early pregnancies) is counter-productive as far as schooling is concerned, but seem to be trapped in deep-seated discouragement and thus not to expect things to get any better.

A Band-commissioned study on education in Betsiamites conducted in 1996 confirmed that the Betsiamites students usually displayed "unhealthy" behaviour. It pinpointed sleep, diet, smoking, substance abuse and precocious sexuality as worrying ways of life which ought to be corrected "promptly and resolutely" <sup>179</sup>.

But some specialists in Amerindian and Inuit education in Québec suggest that the macro-socio-economic factors which dictate such behaviours are extremely powerful and cannot therefore be easily curbed. Jean-Jacques Simard, for instance, believes that young Québec Amerindians and Inuit are the victims of a socio-economic environment which provides very little hope indeed as regards the delayed gratification and/or merits of schooling. Employment opportunities being so scarce in Québec's Amerindian and Inuit communities and the adults themselves feeling so helpless, the younger generation "chooses" to stick to "immediate gratification" and "enjoy life here, now, for oneself" <sup>180</sup>.

The journals of two of Betsiamites female students<sup>181</sup> attending the local secondary school seem to prove Simard right. The first student begins her journal by writing that "[her] courses are so boring that it would have been just the same if [she] had not gone to them"<sup>182</sup> [author's translation]. Then, the rest of her journal is a long narrative about her evenings spent drinking beer and taking drugs and a follow-up of her (complicated) relations with her girl friends and her (even more complicated) relations with her boyfriend. During this particular year, she broke off and restarted dating him on not less than six occasions. This student often complained, in her journal, about her lack of sleep and her hangovers. "I liked my arts course, but I was so tired"<sup>183</sup>. On one of the days where the welfare cheques are distributed in Betsiamites (Monday, 1 May), she complains that she has to go home because X "will *surely* go shopping in Hauterive" and will want her "to mind [her] nephew"<sup>184</sup>. At the end of her academic year, this student had missed more than 60% of her courses and thus had to repeat a year.

The journal of the second student was very similar to the first, except that this particular student was much more active sexually. This student wrote a whole page about the numerous boyfriends she had had since she was 11 (she was then 16). She had dated, according to her journal, 27 boys and had had sexual relations with 15 of them (some of whom being much older than she). There were also long and detailed accounts of her evenings spent drinking, taking drugs and having sex. At one point, she started going out with a new boy and had sexual relations with him every night during the following two weeks. She became pregnant during this year but had a miscarriage for which she had to be hospitalized. She mentioned school only five times during this whole year, and invariably, when describing her "catastrophic school results". Two of

the most important events of the year, for her, were that her father stopped drinking beer on February 11, 1995, and that he won money on illegal lotteries and bought her some gifts on February 1, 1995. At the end of her academic year, this student failed more than half of her courses and also had to repeat a year.

School, ironically, is seldom mentioned in these journals, and when it is, it usually is a discussion about the number of courses- or whole days- missed and the extent to which the student "doesn't understand *anything*"<sup>185</sup> or else is expecting to fail miserably an important examination<sup>186</sup>. Negative comments about teachers who attempt to help the student to catch up through detention are also common. On the other hand, students will also mention when they have particularly appreciated a course or a teacher's attitude towards them, which provides some hope about the potential of schooling and the eventual place it could take in students' lives. At one point, for instance, the first student wrote in her journal that she and one of her friends had planned to skip a physics course, but that "[she] had decided to go to the course anyway", because "[she] liked it"<sup>187</sup>.

The extent to which these students seem to expect very little from schooling and are actively engaged in having a good time as often as possible is striking. This last characteristic, however, appears to be shared by a substantial proportion of the reserve inhabitants and to be part of the collective behaviour of the community, as is reflected by the journals of the current researcher. Indeed, even the adults devote much energy to sports tournaments and to fairs or festivals, sometimes even at the expense of their own work. Thus, seeing a person neglecting his or her regular job in order to prepare for

a carnival or a "party" is not uncommon. For instance, a person who had been hired in 1990 as the director of the local health service in September spent the next four months preparing the Band Council's Christmas party full-time, and everyone thought it was "normal". Most people thought that it was also "normal" on Friday 7 October 1994 that the Band Council office "looked like a desert" (according to the words of a Montagnais teacher) since there was an Amerindian Music Festival in Québec City that evening. And two Betsiamites Amerindian teachers did not hesitate to take half a day off on Friday 22 January 1996 in order to watch the son of one of them play in a hockey game. In other words, the younger generation follows in the older generation's footsteps. Which explains why only 83 students out of 225 were present at school on Thursday 24 February 1993 because there was a hockey tournament in another town.

Such an attitude is also related to events in private life. A member of the local secondary school staff missed half a day of work on Monday 27 March 1995 because his grand-daughter had been christened the previous day. "That is normal", said another Amerindian member of the school staff, "there was a big party because of the christening. One final example, on Friday 17 December 1993, the Chief called the vice-principal to say that her daughter would not be attending school that day because "there had been a family party".

But there is another side to this collective emphasis on "having a good time". Substance abuse indeed takes its toll on family life and on the social conditions of Betsiamites. On Monday 19 June 1995, six adults from Betsiamites had to be transported by ambulance to the regional hospital after a drug overdose (one of them died a few months later,

following another overdose); on Tuesday 27 April 1995, the principal of the primary school and the vice-principal of the secondary school discovered that not less than 30 of their students were regularly sniffing glue, shoe and clothes protector and various other products (such as "krylon") stolen from the arts' classrooms; on Monday 10 April 1995, a former secondary school student (for a second time) stabbed her boyfriend; on Monday 13 February 1995, one of the janitors of the secondary school found in the school's toilets a number of small plastic bags which had previously contained cocaine (there had been a party in the gymnasium during the previous evening); during the Band Council's Christmas party in December 1995, many Band Council employees were seen openly sniffing cocaine and dropping mescaline in the men's toilets by secondary school staff members; on Tuesday 29 November 1994, the mother of one of the secondary school students called the principal and told him that her son was going to miss the next two weeks of school because he was accompanying her to her alcoholism treatment centre; on Friday 28 January 1994, another former student of the secondary school stabbed his own brother following an argument about a drug deal; on Monday 10 January 1994, the principal of the primary school told the principal of the secondary school that a 12-year old boy had just become a father; on Monday 18 October 1993, a 15-year old student told the principal that she was pregnant for the second time and that she had just discovered that she was suffering from a sexually transmitted disease.

Such social conditions have become the norm rather than the exception in most Canadian rural reserves and Inuit villages. Jean-Jacques Simard's research team witnessed, during a *one-week* visit to four different Québec Amerindian and Inuit villages, the following events: a local airport terminal turned upside down; a drunkard



who spent three nights firing his gun haphazardly through the village streets; ten new and still unoccupied houses vandalized; a telephone exchange destroyed with axes and guns; four helicopter evacuations from glue sniffing and two more from suicide attempts<sup>188</sup>. In Kanesatake (Mohawk), near Montréal, 200 Mohawks took to the street in June 1994 because they could no longer stand the random shooting which was regularly taking place at night in the village's streets (the "gunslingers" were mostly young intoxicated Mohawks)<sup>189</sup>. On November 22, 1993, Radio-Canada (radio news) announced at 8:00 AM that 20 young Northern Ontario Amerindians had committed suicide since the beginning of that year. The young Amerindians interviewed by Radio-Canada in Ontario for this news broadcast had attributed this situation to boredom.

In Betsiamites, there have been so many suicides during the last few years that two new social trends have developed. The first is an apparent casualness towards suicide. On Tuesday 9 January 1996, a 30 year old Betsiamites Amerindian hanged himself just outside the village. Many primary and secondary school students saw his body hanging from the tree on their way to school and went to see it for nearly half an hour before the police arrived and covered the body. During the afternoon at the secondary school, many students were heard saying things such as "it's a body like any other. There is no point in worrying. There'll be another in two or three months" [author's translation].<sup>190</sup> The other new social trend is the birth of a "culture of morbidity" which really suggest that suicides are not taken so lightly in Betsiamites after all. During the summer of 1993, a secondary school student was found by his friends at night while he was hugging and caressing the tombstone of the latest suicide. A few days later, an intoxicated group of secondary school students attempted to dig up the body of their

friend who had committed suicide<sup>191</sup>. Gruesome drawings or graffiti, such as those in Appendix 25 (A,B and C) are often found in the school, particularly following a suicide. Not to mention students' poems about death (some of them "illustrated" with dripping blood and/or macabre titles), which have become the regular reading of dismayed parents and secondary school staff alike (usually, such letters or poems are brought to the school staff by worried friends of the authors).

One may rightly ask what a collectivity which suffers from so many social problems does to make its life easier. The answer is in an overemphasis on medicine and on medical treatment. It was mentioned above that many people in Betsiamites did not have a car. As a response, the Band Council has bought a number of vehicles and has hired drivers and thus, every day (even during the weekends), people from Betsiamites use these vehicles free of charge to go see their physician in Baie-Comeau or take the plane (also free of charge) to go see specialists in Québec City. In 1994-95, for instance, there were nearly 20,000 Betsiamites Montagnais who travelled in a Band Council car or minibus from Betsiamites to Baie-Comeau from July 1994 to June 1995 (an average of approximately 54 persons a day for a 2,300 population reserve). Nearly 600 others took the plane to go to Québec City (an average of 1.6 a day), notwithstanding the 11,000 visits to the local clinic during the same period (an average of nearly 5 visits a year for *each* Betsiamites Montagnais)<sup>192</sup>. These trips cost the Band Council \$769,084 CAN (about £385,000) in 1994 and \$867,367 CAN in 1993 and more than half of these expenses were due to the purchase of plane tickets<sup>193</sup>. As for medication, the Betsiamites Montagnais have become such prolific consumers that a nearby druggist has bought a car and has hired two drivers (one working during the

week and the other at weekends) from Betsiamites to deliver the medicine. During an important meeting on suicide prevention attended by most of the Band Council employees on April 1, 1996, one Montagnais participant said that there was not much to be expected from the elderly anymore since they "were too preoccupied with bothersome officialdom (old age pension, forms, etc.), TV and bingos" and another who mentioned that medicinal drug trafficking was an important phenomenon in Betsiamites since "prescriptions were too easy to obtain"<sup>194</sup>. [Author's translation].

Once again, the younger generation is following in the older generation's footsteps. A survey administered to the secondary school students in 1994 (see Appendix 20) revealed that they went to the dentist's 3.8 times a year on average, to the local clinic or to the physician's in Baie-Comeau, 4 times a year, took the plane to go see a specialist in Québec City, 1.2 times a year, took prescriptions 2.5 times a year and had been hospitalized 2.3 times on average since their birth. As the annual report of the local health service in Betsiamites emphasizes, all these trips and visits to the local clinic mostly take place during the academic year<sup>195</sup>.

Naturally, all these activities take much time and energy and it is so much time and energy diverted from schooling. This allows us to formulate another hypothesis regarding the obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites: "time as an enemy". Relying on the above-mentioned data and from our personal experience, we are suggesting that the students in Betsiamites are so busy participating (as customers or as child-minders) or even as drivers<sup>196</sup> during the recurrent frenzied consumerism periods, dealing with personal or family problems<sup>197</sup>, "having a good time" or recovering

from having had a good time and going to the dentist's or to the doctor's (some of the plane trips can take up to four days) that there is simply not enough time and/or energy left to meet the requirements of regular or even adapted secondary school programmes since the result is the student is either absent from school or only "physically" present. Thus, while Wolcott pinpointed in 1967 "cultural antagonisms" as explanations for the failure of schooling in a British Columbia Amerindian reserve and suggested that the "teacher is an enemy"<sup>198</sup>, this thesis argues that in fact, the persistence of academic failure in Québec's rural reserves can be better explained in 1997 by the extent of adverse social conditions linked to persistent poverty and widespread intergenerational welfare dependence, and that "time" has become the Amerindian students' worst enemy as far as schooling is concerned. Indeed, with every passing year, the average Betsiamites student is likely to fall a little more behind the provincial average, to lose a little more confidence in his or her capacities and to experience progressively worse personal problems (e.g. early pregnancy, substance abuse, sexually transmitted disease, suicide risk). A Québec Ministry of Education survey on the identification of "at-risk" factors regarding educational underachievement in secondary schools conducted in 1994 (see Appendix 27) demonstrated that the Betsiamites students major problems were related, in decreasing order, to their family and to their school performance (both 1st), to their personal academic goals (2nd), to their feeling of loneliness (3rd), to absenteeism (4th), to their level of self-confidence (5th), to their personal reasons for attending school (6th) and to the lack of support from their teachers (7th).

It is not even relevant, in the present case, to talk about a student "subculture". Indeed, as a Betsiamites Montagnais emphasized in 1997, those who refuse, for instance, to

have sex early or to take drugs or to drink alcohol, in Betsiamites, *are* the "deviants" <sup>199</sup>.

As if all the above-mentioned obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites were not enough, the "Indian Act", to which we now turn, has had a far from positive impact on the schooling process.

#### D) THE LEGAL OBSTACLES TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN BETSIAMITES

This section will briefly outline the way in which the "Indian Act" is counter-productive as far as rural reserve schooling is concerned.

The "Indian Act" is a complicated and outdated document which has been blamed for many evils, both by the whites<sup>200</sup> and by the Amerindians themselves<sup>201</sup>. But the last thing the majority of the latter would want to see would be the disappearance of this law since it would mean the end of certain material "advantages". Indeed, while the paternalistic aspects of the Indian Act have been discreetly set aside by the federal Government, the most important provision of this document has remained unchanged, as the Canadian Encyclopedia attests:

Under the Indian Act the interest of an Indian or a band in reserve lands, and the personal property of Indians or bands situated on a reserve, are exempt from taxation.[...] The greatest economic advantage that native people have is that they do not pay income tax, provincial tax or certain excise tax when they reside and work on their reserves.[...] Native

groups can be expected to advocate extended tax exemptions in the course of constitutional and land-claims negotiations.<sup>202</sup>

In a concrete way, this means that an Amerindian working in a reserve and earning \$25,000 CAN (about £12,500) makes only \$5,000 CAN less than a white (or an Amerindian working *outside* the reserve for that matter) who earns \$50,000 CAN. If other privileges of reserve Amerindians such as subsidized housing, free medicine and glasses and free dental care are added, the white (or the Amerindian working outside the reserve) who is making \$50,000 CAN actually ends up earning much less than the reserve Amerindian who earns *half* his salary.

Yet every coin has its reverse side. First of all, the Amerindians are constantly reminded in a very direct manner by other Canadians that they do not contribute to the economy<sup>203</sup>, so much so that Judge René Dussault, the co-chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, has named these "advantages" the "relationship killers"<sup>204</sup>. Secondly, there are so few available jobs within the reserves that these advantages are enjoyed by a very small minority of people, who are the envy of the workless majority.

The negative impacts of this law on reserve life are threefold: i) it contributes to internal division, which is far from negligible, given the size of the rural reserves ii) it complicates the integration of the Amerindians who perhaps would wish to reside in white communities, and iii) at the school level, it acts as a curb on the need for qualifications, since young reserve Amerindians may reckon that the likely gains of formal education

are outweighed by the above-mentioned privileges. Indeed, even a reserve Amerindian welfare recipient is better off financially speaking than a low-paid white (or a low-paid off-reserve Amerindian). Thus, this law involuntarily contributes to trap young Amerindians into a state of welfare dependency. Further some adults in Betsiamites reinforce this negative tendency. Hence, a grandfather told his grandson in September 1993 that "school was crap" and that "[his] wife and [he] had never gone to school and had lived very well all [their] lives." <sup>205</sup>[Author's translation.]

Although the extent of the impact of the "Indian Act" on the process of Canadian rural reserve schooling is difficult to assess and should be the object of further research in rural reserve settings, widespread criticism (see the two endnotes above) and anecdotal evidence indicate that it is far from a benefit to educators in Canadian Amerindian communities.

This concludes the second part of this chapter, where the factors which act as obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites have been discussed. In the third part, we will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the education system in Betsiamites, revisit the conclusions of two major Band-commissioned studies and turn towards some possible solutions to Betsiamites' educational problems.

### 3- THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES

The strengths and weaknesses of the 1980s' Betsiamites education system were

analysed by the current researcher in a previous document <sup>206</sup>.

On the positive side, it was noted therein that: i) the decision-makers at the local level were "autonomous" and "involved"; ii) the education budgets were both "stable and generous"; iii) the Québec Ministry of Education (MEQ) was actively "supportive"; iv) the teacher/student ratio was "low"; v) post-secondary education was "free" for Amerindians vi) there was a consensus of opinion between parents and teachers concerning the ultimate goal of education (self-respect); vii) the secondary school was "new" and "functional"; viii) the library contained "13,000 quality books", and ix) the standardized MEQ tests were compulsory (in accordance with the wishes of the local parents).

On the negative side, it was concluded that: i) the experience of decision-makers in the field of education was limited; ii) the socio-economic status of the majority of the inhabitants was very low; iii) compulsory education was a recent phenomenon in Betsiamites (it was introduced in the 1950s in the reserve) and the experience of the first forty years had been "frustrating"; iv) there was a serious "antagonism" between the haves and the have-nots in Betsiamites; v) many parents were "uninterested" as far as secondary schooling was concerned; vi) young people were watching too much TV; vii) the elementary school was "timeworn"; viii) the standardized tests were not compulsory at the elementary school; ix) there was no library at the elementary school; x) the language of instruction in the schools was not the mother tongue of the students; xi) 38,3% of family heads in Betsiamites were aged between 15 and 19, and xii) there were not enough available jobs in the reserve.



Six years later, many things have changed, some for the better, some for the worse.

On the positive side, i) the elementary school has been renovated and a library has been set up and ii) the parents now express their frustrations about the local education system very clearly. It is criticism, but it demonstrates that the parents really care about the education of their children, something which could be used as a basis for school change. iii) The MEQ is still as actively supportive as it was<sup>207</sup>. iv) The teacher/student ratio is still low and v) post-secondary education for Amerindians is still free. vi) The secondary school has been enlarged to accommodate more students and is currently being decorated and equipped in order to make it more interesting for the students in attendance. vii) The standardized MEQ tests are still compulsory at secondary school and viii) there still seems to be a consensus of opinion between teachers and parents as regards the ultimate goal of education.

On the negative side, however: i) a sizeable proportion of the education budget is taken every year by the Band Council and spent on other programmes (e.g. housing, road repairs) and education does not appear to be as high a priority for local politicians as it once was; ii) the secondary school library has not succeeded yet in creating reading habits and more and more mediocre books are bought every year by the librarian; iii) the reserve's welfare dependency rate and the number of early pregnancies have both increased; iv) the standardized MEQ tests are still not compulsory at the elementary school; v) the gap between the haves and the have-nots has widened; vi) the schooling experience is as frustrating now as it was before; vii) young people still watch as much TV as before, but substance abuse and gas and glue sniffing have also reached higher

incidences during certain periods; viii) suicide has become a major problem for young people in Betsiamites since 1991; ix) the language of instruction in the schools still is not the mother tongue of the students, and x) there are proportionally in 1997 less jobs available in the reserve than in 1991, since the Band-owned forestry company was closed down during 1997.

Overall, one might say that the educational situation has worsened in Betsiamites during the last six years. Youth suicide and substance abuse, for instance, were not major causes of concern six years back, while they have now become top priorities for community social workers and educators. Economic prospects for the community are even gloomier in 1997 than in 1991 and the Band Council is inordinately preoccupied with its social assistance, housing and health programmes. For their part, the success rates of the secondary school students have remained approximately the same over this period (i.e. very low); in 1997, as in 1991, one secondary school student out of three passes, one out of three has to repeat a year and one out of three has to repeat the same year for the second or third consecutive time.

And yet, one could not accuse the Betsiamites Band Council of not having reflected over the issue of schooling in Betsiamites during this period. The local education system has been the object of two important Band-commissioned studies, in 1992 and in 1996 <sup>208</sup>.

#### THE 1992 AND 1996 BAND-COMMISSIONED STUDIES OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The most important finding of the first study was that one child out of four who entered

the elementary school in Betsiamites in 1992 was suffering from "developmental deficits" linked to the physical and socio-economic environment of the reserve <sup>209</sup>. The author concluded that since it was likely that these children would rapidly fall behind the others, an early-intervention school programme and a day nursery should be put into place as soon as possible<sup>210</sup>.

At the secondary school level, the researcher concluded that early pregnancies <sup>211</sup>, the absence of students' regular reading habits and the overconsumption of TV, all contributed to explain the low levels of academic success <sup>212</sup>. His recommendations included the development of a comprehensive career information programme, the coordination (between the two schools and between the schools' teachers) of assessment methods and a complete reorganization of the sciences' classrooms <sup>213</sup>.

Apart from the last recommendation (i.e. the least expensive and complicated), these urgings were ignored by the decision-makers. Actually, the career information officer who used to work part-time at the secondary school was even transferred to another sector in 1997.

The second study focused especially on the lifestyle of the Betsiamites students. According to the researcher, substance abuse, precocious sexuality, heavy smoking and eating and poor sleeping habits all contributed to the development of a general attitude characterized by irresponsibility<sup>214</sup>. This problem was also aggravated, according to the researcher, by the facts that the Betsiamites students usually read very little, if at all<sup>215</sup>, study less than an hour a week<sup>216</sup> and are frequently absent from school<sup>217</sup>. His

two most important recommendations were: i) to adopt higher expectations of and for the students, both at the elementary and secondary schools <sup>218</sup>, and ii) to send a clear message to the students of the two schools regarding the importance of schooling by diminishing significantly the number of sports or leisure-related activities (e.g. hockey and volley-ball tournaments, festivals, winter carnival) which the students usually attended in large numbers <sup>219</sup>.

Obviously, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these latter recommendations on the schools' policies, but as one can see, this is no small task. The following section will analyse the extent to which the above-mentioned recommendations are relevant, feasible or realistic, will compare the case of Betsiamites to that of other Canadian schools in disadvantaged areas and will suggest a few more approaches to school improvement in Betsiamites.

#### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN BETSIAMITES, FROM NOW ONWARDS

The fact that the recommendations made by the 1992 researcher have been ignored and that the ones made by the 1996 researcher will also be difficult to translate into school policies must not be taken as proof that education is taken lightly in Betsiamites. Rather, it is an admission that the Band Council has been, for the last six years at least, overwhelmed by its housing, social assistance and health programmes and has thus not been able to adopt a clear long-term strategy in *any* domain, as another Band-commissioned consulting firm wrote in 1996 <sup>220</sup>. Moreover, the apparent Band Council indifference towards education may also be interpreted as a sign of impatience regarding

the local educational system's results or an indication that the Band Council is in the dark about ways to tackle a deeply-rooted educational problem which appears to be significantly linked to many macro-socio-economic factors and to local political, economic, social and legal variables.

The Betsiamites Band Council totally controls its educational system, but by deliberately choosing to take significant amounts of money away from it every year and to spend on houses and on roads, it sends the message to the local population that it does not hold it as one of its top priorities (or else is responding to those in the population who believe this). Research however has actually demonstrated that effective schooling benefits the pupils from the disadvantaged backgrounds the most<sup>221</sup>. Conversely, as a representative of the Canadian Teachers' Federation said recently, "When education spending is cut, poor kids suffer the most- they need more from their school than middle-class kids"<sup>222</sup>. As Françoise Têtu de Labsade has written, "Education costs society dearly, but society cannot economize on it for in the end, the operation pays off"<sup>223</sup>. By "saving" on education every year, the Betsiamites Band Council may be responding to the short-term demands of the reserve's workless majority, but in the long run, this decision aggravates the already difficult social conditions.

In other words, it is of little use to even talk about school improvement in Betsiamites as long as the political will to really do something about it, in a sustained and convincing way, remains absent. This is the first condition for the implementation of any eventual school improvement programme in Betsiamites.

We need to mention, however, before we discuss eventual ways of improving schooling in Betsiamites, an issue which has been carefully avoided by the two above-mentioned Band-commissioned researches; it is the very delicate issue of (some) Betsiamites Amerindian teachers' competence. On Friday 20 May 1994, during one of the meetings of the Betsiamites' "Comité de gestion" (education), the principal and the vice-principal of the Betsiamites elementary school told the participants that there were at least eight Montagnais teachers in their school (out of a total of 25 teachers) who were both incompetent and reluctant to make any efforts (by way of part-time and/or summer courses, etc.) to become more effective teachers. This, said the principal of the elementary school, sabotaged any serious school improvement effort. These teachers, he added, were a legacy of the universities' special training programmes aimed at prospective Amerindian teachers.

Nothing, however, has been done regarding this matter, even though the Band Council has been made aware of it and has the authority to further investigate the issue. Thus, the first step for the Band Council would be to clarify this matter (good teaching staff are so important for schools in disadvantaged areas that the head of one such school in the UK gives "very careful consideration" to "new appointments" <sup>224</sup>). The Band Council does not have the right, morally speaking, to potentially sacrifice the education of generations of young Betsiamites Montagnais for the sake of providing jobs to a few incompetent Montagnais teachers. It would be very easy for the Band Council to check the professional qualifications of the two schools' teachers, and it also has the means to get rid of incompetent staff (were it to discover that the allegations of the principal and the vice-principal of the elementary school were true), even if this were to cost

dearly sparking political turmoil by the families of the Amerindian teachers concerned. This operation would have the merit of greatly improving relations between parents and the local schools (even if, let it be said, not a single incompetent teacher were to be found) since accusations of "low teaching standards" and "teacher incompetence have been frequent in the past. *Only then*, could the Band Council start looking at ways to make schooling more effective in Betsiamites.

#### WAYS OF IMPROVING SCHOOLING IN BETSIAMITES

The first step would be to identify the school improvement programme's priorities since there is *so much* that needs to be improved, educationally speaking, in Betsiamites. Logic would demand that we start looking at the youngest children first, however it would also be important to appraise the Betsiamites educational change process in a holistic way, a task made easier by the fact that the decision-makers are now fully aware of both the nature and the extent of the major problems of Betsiamites students: i.e. substance abuse, precocious sexuality, bad eating and sleeping habits, early pregnancies, absenteeism, overemphasis on sports and leisure-related activities; little or no reading and/or studying, repeated educational failure and few employment opportunities.

Such "multiple deprivation" translates, as the National Commission on Education wrote, "into lower attainment": "disadvantage both limits access to educational opportunities and reduces the ability of children to benefit from the schooling they get" <sup>225</sup>. However, adds the Commission, even though the "odds are stacked against schools in poorer

aeras", [effective schooling can] "break the chain" <sup>226</sup>.

Much can be learnt by the local schools in Betsiamites by the British and Canadian experience in effective educational strategies in disadvantaged areas. Innovative approaches can be implemented too, of course, but there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Some strategies could be aimed at the two local schools at the same time, while others would be more specifically targeted. To summarize, there are four domains which need immediate attention in Betsiamites. They are: a) the low level of reading abilities; b) the creation of an early intervention programme; c) the language of instruction which is not the mother tongue; d) the lifestyle of its young people.

#### A- Reading

An effective reading programme needs to be implemented as quickly as possible in the two schools. Experts in this field, such as members of the Centre for Language in Primary Education in London <sup>227</sup>, could be hired for a couple of years and could help Betsiamites educators in designing and implementing a good reading programme in the community. Effective reading programmes were being scientifically experimented with in deprived areas in England as early as the 1960s, and many of the recommendations- i.e. for instance the importance of teacher training in reading programmes and strategies- found in this literature are still valid today <sup>228</sup>. The impact of an effective reading programme could be impressive. A British primary school in a disadvantaged area adopted "an innovative approach to boost children's reading" in 1992, and four years later, this school was identified by the National Commission on Education as one



of the United Kingdom's "effective schools in disadvantaged areas" <sup>229</sup>.

#### B- Early intervention programme

An early intervention programme could be implemented at the elementary school, as the 1992 researcher had suggested, even though some researchers argue that early intervention does not significantly improve a child's educational situation in the long run:

Getting off to a bad start in school is the justification for early intervention. Yet, the long-term track record for traditional interventions is not very impressive. Head Start, for example, has shown short-term positive effects, but they fade quickly.[...] These efforts notwithstanding, we must seek ideas for interventions. <sup>230</sup>

Indeed, the alternative to an early intervention programme aimed at disadvantaged children is to do nothing, which is unacceptable, as Donna Cansfield, the president of the Canadian School Boards Association stressed in a particular way: "you would have to be a total moron to ignore the evidence about the importance of early intervention" <sup>231</sup>, she told two Canadian journalists in April 1997.

There is still no kindergarten in Betsiamites, while one of the poorest elementary schools in Toronto (Westmount Park School) offers parents "full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds [and] prekindergarten for four-year-olds" <sup>232</sup>. Such a measure in Betsiamites, where one child out of four is already behind by the time he reaches school, would be more

than welcome.

John Brierly, who is quoted above, has also written about the importance, for a child, of being offered learning experiences which are not 'compartmentalized'. He gives "dance, sculpture, painting, drawing, drama and music" as subjects which are "essential to balanced development"<sup>233</sup>. An author who visited a primary school in England at the end of the 19th century and described it as a model school also stressed the importance of providing children with sensory experiences. He thought the school he visited was remarkable because it offered pupils subjects such as talking, writing, reading aloud, recitation of poetry, singing, Morris-dancing, dancing, acting, drawing, clay-modelling, informal gardening, informal carpentering, informal cookery, cutting out and making garments.<sup>234</sup>

### c) The language of instruction

The fact that Montagnais is the mother tongue of Betsiamites students and that French is the language of instruction in the two schools cannot be overlooked. Such a situation should not, however, be seen as a handicap, but rather as an additional educational challenge.

In fact, Betsiamites has, amongst the nine Montagnais communities, the most competent Montagnais language developmental team, as the 1992 researcher emphatically remarked<sup>235</sup>. But the trouble- once again- is that there is no money available

to publish good quality books in Montagnais. The Betsiamites team has to photocopy its teaching materials which students and parents find "interesting", but obviously not "captivating" when compared to the hard-bound and colourful books in French. The "Institut Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais" (ICEM) published one such book aimed at Montagnais elementary students in 1996, but this was the exception rather than the rule. This is currently the greatest disadvantage facing the teaching of the Montagnais language in Betsiamites. The importance of "quality books" cannot be overemphasised, as John Brierly attests:

To help in the early stages of reading, children need books which are attractive and relevant to their interests, experience and imagination and also to see their teachers turning to books with enjoyment. If the material is dull with no relevance to any prior knowledge they may have, reading will become more difficult and they will cease to scan naturally for context clues and stick on bits of the text.<sup>236</sup>

Another good strategy would also be to give the opportunity to the various Montagnais language developmental teams to be connected together by electronic means (Internet). The physical distance between them is so great that they do not have the chance to see each other very often.

As for teaching strategies, the continuing success experienced by a primary school in Tower Hamlets (Columbia Primary School), where only 6.8% of the children are white and where there are "children who have been in the country only a short time"<sup>237</sup>

teaches us that any student can succeed at a school even when he or she speaks a different language at home. As suggested with reading, an indeterminate number of specialists in the issue of second language teaching could be hired at Betsiamites for a couple of years to help the community in designing and implementing an effective strategy in second language teaching.

d) The lifestyle of the community's young people

This may be the most problematic area of all. Our experience suggests that the local young people are indulging in such risk-related activities to excess out of sheer boredom. One of the secondary school students supported this hypothesis when he said during an interview in 1996 that "there is nothing to do here [Betsiamites], apart from staying home, walking round the reserve, going to the grocery store or having a look at the last call at the bar [i.e. watching the drunk men coming out of the local bar at 3:00 AM.]"<sup>238</sup>.

At the above-mentioned Wesmount Park School, there are "cultural offerings such as music, dance and museum trips. [...] Dance classes are compulsory, and all Grade 5 and 6 students take guitar lessons. There are enriched French programmes, chess lessons, maths games and lunch-time baseball and soccer. The school houses a Discovery Room, a mini-museum of natural fossils, and the opportunities to gaze through microscopes, observe Venus fly-traps and learn about lizards"<sup>239</sup>.

In Betsiamites, the music teacher at the elementary school left in 1989 and was not

replaced. Apart from volley-ball or basketball practices or games in the secondary school gymnasium in the evenings and hockey practices and games in neighbouring towns (which involves busing and going to bed very late...), there is indeed little or nothing to do. The local schools could therefore start enriching the academic courses by offering music, dance or theatre lessons- in fact, anything which would make life more interesting for students in Betsiamites. And here too, literacy- which is "the major thrust" of education in disadvantaged areas, according to one principal <sup>240</sup>- can help. If the students take to reading and if the schools provide them with quality books, the evenings should be at least a little less boring since those who read regularly know the immense pleasures which reading can provide.

As for the students aged between 14 and 19, a special programme aiming at informing them about careers can be organized. This programme should include regular visits to industries or workplaces (airport, court, hotel) and summer training periods- paid or not- on worksites. Without a clear goal, it is indeed doubtful that formal education will appear relevant for many young Betsiamites Montagnais.

The above-mentioned suggestions would not turn the two local schools around immediately, nor would they change the lifestyle of young people overnight, but they are necessary first steps towards a "long-term improvement path", which starts, as the National Commission wrote, by "recogniz[ing] the need to improve [and by] defin[ing] success criteria"<sup>241</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

We started this chapter by asking why school improvement was so slow to materialize in Betsiamites when there was such obvious agreement on the part of adults and youth alike on the importance of schooling. From an overall perspective, the answer appears, as was seen above, to be multi-faceted.

There is no question, given its socio-economic profile, that Betsiamites can be identified as a disadvantaged rural area. There is also no question that the language of instruction in the two local schools is not the mother tongue of the students. And yet, these two factors need not lead Betsiamites young people directly into generalized educational failure nor trap them in welfare, especially since lack of money for adequate schooling is not the problem here.

The factors which make a school effective in Western countries are fairly well known. The internal forces which interact and combine to prevent a school from improving in a Canadian rural reserve are a little less known. This thesis suggests that the major impediments to school improvement in Betsiamites are linked to poverty *and* to internal political, economic, social and legal factors. Only when all those factors are taken into account simultaneously can the above-mentioned contradiction be explained.

Most people in Betsiamites say that education is important, but the Band Council, "encouraged" by the workless majority, takes away from it one-fourth of its budget every year. Doing your homework or studying for an examination is important, but attending a hockey tournament or a music festival or selling tickets for an illegal lottery is seen as even more important. Health is a collective priority but overutilization of

prescriptions (and even trafficking in medication) is common and hangovers following a two-day family celebration are seen as being sacred rites of passage. Young people in Betsiamites are bombarded daily with such conflictual messages and, more importantly yet, conflictual behaviours. Thus, there is no point in talking about a student subculture in Betsiamites; students are actually following the older generation's behaviour patterns regarding things such as substance abuse and overconsumption of sports, leisure-related activities, medical treatment and medication. In Betsiamites like in so many other Canadian rural reserves, the workless majority dictates the Band's economic and political priorities. It is hardly surprising then that there is indeed very little collective time and energy left to focus on long-term challenges, such as education, once the numerous short-term needs have been satisfied.

This is not "victim-blaming". This is saying that the "underclass" in most Canadian rural reserves is no underclass at all. It constitutes from now on the solid majority and dominates the political, economic and social life of these communities. And education has fallen victim to this ruling. The mythical 1970s' issue of "local control" has led to an unexpected social outcome, even though it may take a little more time before Amerindian leaders and the federal Government acknowledge this. The Amerindian leaders who dare question the consensus of opinion about 'self-government' as the 'official' top priority for Amerindians are not legion. But their voices are heard from time to time. Hence, Ghislain Picard, the Assembly of First Nations Québec representative, who is from Betsiamites, said the following during the 1996 Québec Native Women's conference on violence in Amerindian communities:

Up until now, self-government has been our main fight. But my opinion is, and several chiefs share this opinion, that this goal must no longer be considered to be our only way out. If our autonomy is to retain all its sense and value, if we are to govern ourselves, our communities need to regain their strength. Our communities must become healthy again in all aspects. And we must help them. We must be physically and mentally strong.<sup>242</sup>

Ghislain Picard was referring to the "socio-pathological pathogenesis of disease" which affects most Canadian rural reserves (see Appendix 28) To acknowledge in such a way that there is a serious collective problem constitutes the first step towards its solution. Once again, an analogy with the American blacks who live in inner-cities can be made. James T. Patterson writes that black activists who "had dismissed talk about the 'pathology' of lower-class black life as racist [now sound] almost as alarmist as people such as the former Education Secretary, William Bennett, a strident conservative voice on the subject"<sup>243</sup>.

Most of the obstacles to school improvement in Betsiamites (and in many rural reserves), to which we have referred in this chapter, are found in the above-mentioned "socio-pathological pathogenesis of disease" (i.e. economic dependency, unemployment, poverty, boredom, depression, violence & suicides, alcoholism & substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, obesity, lifestyle diseases, school dropouts), but one of the most important of them, the political obstacle, is not mentioned, except in terms of an "alien system", "lack of power, meaningful expression and self-determination". These



expressions refer essentially to external factors, but this thesis argues that although it is true that the most important part of the damage which has been inflicted on Amerindian communities over the years came from *outside*, it is equally true that the solution will only come from *within* the communities. Some Amerindians who attended the above-mentioned conference on violence clearly expressed a similar viewpoint:

-One of these days, we'll have to stop thinking that others are responsible for our troubles. We can be wounded and have the right to have the wound recognized. But we can also understand that we're going nowhere when we find fault with our aggressors. It's only another war to wage.[...] We all have a choice. We can be responsible for ourselves. (Dr Marilyn Cook, Winnipeg)...-I can tell you that the will to change must come from the people themselves and that they must unite to work together. (Catherine Anichinapéo, Kitcisakik)...-The experience of my community confirms to me too that the solution does not come from the outside. (Berna Bushi, Hollow Water)...-The community must reconquer its own power. To achieve that, it must stop believing that the solution will come by magic from outside. (Arlene Delaronde, Kahnawake)...- Why don't alcohol and drug abuse programmes work ? Why don't they yield any concrete results after all these years despite all the money we sink into them ? Because the community doesn't think it is its own problem. As long as the community will not consider it to be its problem, nothing will happen, (Bill Mussell, Chilliwack)<sup>244</sup>

Using the same argument as these participants, who were discussing issues such as violence and substance abuse, this thesis argues that as far as educational problems in Betsiamites (and in many rural reserves) are concerned, the change will only come from inside. For the moment, it is the very community of Betsiamites which is working against itself in the long-term by imposing on its Band Council an exclusively short-term orientated political agenda. This is also the situation in the United States, which helps to understand why a Lakota Amerindian from South Dakota who ran for Chief in 1984 in Pine Ridge reserve was soundly defeated; his political programme was to abolish welfare<sup>245</sup>. The "dictatorship of the workless majority" in rural reserves is a relatively new political phenomenon, which had not been anticipated in the 1970s. It represents the ultimate outcome of decades of welfare dependence in rural reserves. The impact of this "dictatorship" on the educational process of a rural reserve such as Betsiamites is twofold: the students who come to school are not prepared, neither physically nor mentally, for learning- they are too tired and/or preoccupied because they live in an adverse environment (see second part of the current chapter: "time as an enemy"). The schools these students attend are underfunded *precisely because* they are locally controlled, while Canadian Amerindians are convinced, since 1972, that local control is the *solution*<sup>246</sup> to Amerindian educational problems. Local control is potentially a positive thing but it is not necessarily so. School improvement in disadvantaged areas is already complex enough; school improvement in overproportionately politicized (even invading private affairs such as housing) and divided (between haves and have-nots) disadvantaged areas is obviously more complex. To paraphrase R.J. Blendon, the desire for an "easy, simple" solution may sometimes be an oversimplification, "as pervasive as it is self-deluding"<sup>247</sup>, and in the present case, it certainly has been.

Nevertheless, however gloomy the prospects may look on Canadian rural reserves with respect to school improvement, it will be seen in the conclusion of this thesis that the situation is far from hopeless, provided some things change as regards local social conditions and educational policies.

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Welfare dependency:  
"Et surtout, ne plus dépendre de l'autre ou de l'aide sociale."

(Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

"travailler un jour pour ne plus dépendre de l'autre ou de l'aide sociale." (Grade 11 student, Uashat reserve.)

"Si nous lâchons, nous n'avons rien d'autre que l'assistance sociale." (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

#### Alcohol and drug abuse:

"L'alcool, c'est la chose la plus meurtrière au monde." (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

"Je crois que l'amour dans les communautés se détériore de plus en plus et je crois que la drogue et la boisson en sont la cause." (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

"Mon plus grand désir c'est que les jeunes ne prennent pas trop de bière et poursuivent leurs études." (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

"Mon plus grand désir c'est [...] de ne pas avoir de violence ni de drogue dans ma communauté." (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

#### Importance of schooling and working:

"Avant tout, j'aimerais terminer mes études, pour gagner ma vie." (Grade 11 student, Uashat reserve.)

"[J'ai réalisé] à quel point l'éducation est importante [...] avec tous les problèmes qu'on vit." (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

"Mon rêve est d'avoir un bon job pour pouvoir faire ce que je veux." (Grade 10 student, Uashat reserve.)

"la meilleure façon de mener un homme à sa perte, c'est de le payer à ne rien faire." (Grade 11 student, Manouane reserve.)

52.Cf. *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985), Edmonton; Hurtig Publishers: 1215-6; Institut Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais (ICEM) (1994) *Pessamit/Betsiamites*, Québec; ICEM: 32-3.

53.Cf. Two different Department of Indian Affairs officers acknowledged during two telephone interviews that the federal Government de facto did not have the privilege anymore to discuss the financial decisions of the Band Councils. Thus, funds which should be allocated to education may very well be used for other purposes, "depending on the importance education has for a given Band Council". First interview conducted on 21st February 1994. Second interview conducted on 18th September 1996. This proves that the Indian Act is lagging behind the daily reality of the Amerindian reserves.; Already in 1990, a commissioned private firm hired by Betsiamites had written in a study about the economy of the community that it had become obvious that the Federal Government "would be less and less involved" in the near future as to the way the Band Councils were spending their money. Cf. CAMO (unp.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique: Communauté Montagnaise de Betsiamites, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites*: 20. ["Le rôle central du Conseil de Bande sera amplifié du fait que les subventions accordées par les Affaires Indiennes seront de moins en moins discrétionnaires et que le Conseil de Bande verra lui-même à la répartition des fonds de développement et à établir les priorités."]

54.Cf. *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985) op. cit.: 1214-6.; Ministère des Affaires Indiennes et du Nord Canada (MAINC) (1990) *Guide des Collectivités Indiennes du Québec 1990*, Ottawa; MAINC: 5.

55.Cf. *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985) op. cit.: 1215.; Moreover, the Ministry of Indian Affairs' budget will be the only one of all the Federal Government programmes which will increase between 1996 and 2001 (by 16%). The budget of all the other ministries will be reduced by 24% on average during this period. Cf. Radio-Canada News (Radio) 6 and 7 March 1996. This says a lot about the politicization of the issue of Amerindians in Canada in recent years.

56.Cf. Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (SDEB) (1995) *Betsiamites: Planification Stratégique et Développement Économique*, Betsiamites; SDEB: 14.

57.Interview with the former director of the education service in Betsiamites on September the 4th, 1997, in Betsiamites.

58.Cf. CAMO (unp.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique: Communauté Montagnaise de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 20.

59.Cf. Ibid.

60.Cf. Institut Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais (ICEM) (1994) *Pessamit/Betsiamites*, Québec; ICEM: 32.

61.Cf. Réunion du Comité de Gestion des Services Éducatifs. 14 Octobre 1994. Betsiamites.; *Résumé des Discussions Tenues dans le Cadre de la Session de Travail du 16, 17 et 18 Avril 1996* (unp.) (1996) Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 3-5.

62.Cf. Maranda et Associés (unp.) (1996) *Rapport d'Étape: Diagnostic Structurel et Organizationnel*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 5.

63.This problem is the same in every rural reserve. For example, during one of the meetings of the "Comité des directeurs et directrices d'écoles montagnaises", one of the directors said that she had officially complained to her Band Council after it had taken some of the money from the education budget in order to buy heavy machinery. She received a letter from the Band Council informing her that housing, health and social assistance were all priorities, while education was not. Québec City, 3 au 5 Fevrier 1997. The "Comité", needless to say, is strongly opposed to such an administrative practice. Cf. Comité des directeurs et directrices d'écoles montagnaises (to be published in Autumn 1997) *Avis sur la Qualité de l'Éducation dans les Écoles Montagnaises*, Québec; Institut Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais.

64.Cf. Labrecque, A. (1994) "Marcelline Kanapé remporte la victoire", in *L'Objectif Plein Jour*, 20 Aout 1994: 3.

65.From meetings with Band Council members and Education director between January and June 1995.

66.Cf. Paquet, C. (1994) "Betsiamites a un urgent besoin de 200 logements", in *L'Objectif Plein Jour*, 13 Aout 1994: 20.

67.Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) op. cit.: 83.

68.Cf. Bonneau, G.A. (unp.) (1996) *Évaluation des Services Éducatifs de Betsiamites, Rapport Final; Annexe C, Ensemble des Recommandations*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 17.

69.Cf. Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) *A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community*, New Haven; Yale University Press: 104.

70.Cf. *Résumé des Discussions Tenues dans le Cadre de la Session de Travail du 16, 17 et 18 Avril 1996* (unp.) (1996) Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 3.

71.Cf. Ibid.



72.Cf. Hawthorn, H.B. (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens Contemporains du Canada: Besoins et Mesures d'Ordre Économique, Politique et Éducatif*, Ottawa; Direction des Affaires Indiennes: 222.

73.A former white Betsiamites teacher who lived for two years in Betsiamites was struck by the extent of the reserve's internal division between the two social classes, the "haves [Band Council employees who do not pay income tax] and the have-nots [welfare recipients]". In a book which he wrote later about his experience in Betsiamites, he concluded that this social disparity reminded him of "the economic gap between the North and the South, reproduced at the micro-level". Cf. St-Pierre, R. (1990) *Le Feu des Jours, Tome 1, Chicoutimi*; Édition Livre de Bord: 150.

74.Cf. Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) op. cit.: 106-7.

75.Cf. Maranda et Associés (unp.) (1996) op. cit.: 6.; Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (SEDB) (unp.) (1995) op. cit.: Figure 18.; CAMO (unp.) (1990) op. cit.: 40.

76.Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) op. cit.: 105.

77.Cf. Ibid.: 102.

78.Cf. Ibid.: 103; Institut Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais (ICEM) (1994) *Pessamit/Betsiamites*, Québec; Betsiamites: 33.

79.As Shkilnyk writes, in the new reserve economy, the "chief's role in encouraging self-help, sharing, and communal efforts to care for the sick and the needy has, in effect, been made irrelevant". Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) op. cit.: 102.

80.Ellwood, D.T. (1988) *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family*, N.Y.; Basic Books: 213.

81.Cf. Robichaud, J.B. et al. (1994) *Les Liens entre la Pauvreté et la Santé Mentale*, Montréal; Gaëtan Morin Éditeur: 18.

82.Ibid.: 28-9. ("On vit au jour le jour, quand on monte deux marches on en descend aussitôt trois, ça n'avance jamais".; "C'est toujours une situation de survie, on ne vit pas, c'est frustrant."; "Ma vie est monotone: lever, manger, enfants, coucher. Il n'y a rien pour changer ma vie.")

83.Conseil des Attikamekw et des Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole/Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM: 74.

84.Cf. Paquet, C. (1994) "Je ne suis pas une lâcheuse", lance la chef Marcelline Kanapé", in *L'Objectif Plein Jour*, 28 Mai 1994: 5; Labrecque, A. (1994) "Marcelline Kanapé remporte la victoire", in *L'Objectif Plein Jour*, 20 Aout 1994: 3.; Paquet, C. (1994) "Betsiamites a un urgent besoin de 200 logements", in *L'Objectif Plein Jour*, 13 Août 1994: 20.

85.Cf. Paradis, S. (1996) "Le développement économique est perçu comme la voie de l'avenir pour Betsiamites", in *L'Objectif Plein Jour*, 20 Janvier 1996: 33.

86.Cf. This situation has been mentioned at every meeting the "Comité des directeurs et directrices d'écoles montagnaises" has held for the last eight years.

87.Cf. Tony Blair, quoted by Macintyre, D. (1997) "Poverty's the problem, work is the solution", in *The Independent*, 3 June 1997: 19.

- 88.Cf. Migué, J.L. (1990) "L'État-providence nuit aux autochtones en serre-chaude", in *Le Soleil* (Québec city), 13 Septembre 1990: 10.
- 89.Cf. Derfel, A. (1995) "Indian summer", in *The Gazette*, September 16, 1995: B2.
- 90.Cf. Ibid.
- 91.Cf. Meeting of the "Comité de Gestion" at Betsiamites, 14 October 1994.
- 92.Cf. Paquet, C. (1996) "Marcelline Kanapé quitte avec résignation", in *L'Objectif Plein Jour*, 24 Août 1996. [The Band Council is responsible for the Social Assistance programme and could theoretically do whatever it wanted with it. But usually, and this is the case in Betsiamites, a Band Council uses the provincial programme as a basis since the funding is provided in accordance with it. Thus, the Betsiamites Chief was not the least responsible for these cuts, which were nationwide. But the population did not see it this way.]
- 93.Cf. St-Pierre, A. (1994) "Betsiamites resserre les reglements: Fini le laxisme!", in *Le Soleil* (Québec city), 23 Février 1994: A1.
- 94.Cf. Shkilnyk, A.M. (1985) *A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community*, New Haven; Yale University Press: 102.
- 95.Cf. St-Pierre, A. (1996) "Réserve de Betsiamites: Le chef de police suspendu; il refuse d'être indulgent envers les autochtones", in *Le Soleil*, 23 Mai 1996: A1. ["C'est une question d'équité sociale puisqu'il n'y a pas deux justices et deux polices."].; St-Pierre, A. (1996) "Betsiamites: Le chef de police suspendu", in *Le Soleil*, 22 Mai 1996: A3.
- 96.Cf. Interviews with two Betsiamites Amerindian police officers at the "École secondaire UASHKAIKAN". Betsiamites, 3 and 4 October 1996.
- 97.Cf. Hawthorn, H.B. (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens Contemporains du Canada*, Ottawa; Direction des Affaires Indiennes: 222-3.
- 98.Cf. D'Souza, D. (1995) "The failure of 'cruel compassion'", in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 15, 1995: B3.
- 99.Ibid.
- 100.Cf. "Au revoir les Indiens", in *Géo*, No 126, Août 1989: 142-55. [Alcoholism and violence in the two Dakotas' Amerindian reservations.]; Larose, F. (1989) "L'environnement des réserves indiennes est-il pathogène ?", in *Revue Québécoise de psychologie*, vol. 10, No 1, 1989: 21-33. [A study of suicide in Québec's rural reserves.]
- 101.Cf. Conseil Attikamekw Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole/ Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM: 39. ["la politique s'arrête au moment présent, à la satisfaction immédiate de certaines et oublie quelque chose de primordial, l'avenir de nos enfants."]
- 102.Cf. Meeting of the "Comité de Gestion". Betsiamites, 14 October 1994.
- 103.It is important to note that the Band Council's income also comes from the federal Government.
- 104.Cf. Ibid.: 12.

105. Conseil des Attikamekw et des Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole/ Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM: 35; 44; 69; 74. ("Depuis que je suis sur le chômage, je m'arrange pour faire un budget équilibré et je vis convenablement. - Celui qui travaille, il aura toujours besoin d'argent et de beaucoup. Tandis que celui qui ne travaille pas va savoir combien il peut dépenser et même faire un budget. - Depuis que je ne travaille plus, j'ai plus de temps à me consacrer. [...] J'aime ma vie présente, je peux lire un livre, visiter des amis et me promener en forêt. - Je remarque aussi chez les jeunes hommes le manque de motivation au travail, cela est dû au fait qu'ils n'ont qu'à attendre le chèque du bien-être. Le pire, c'est qu'ils s'en contentent. - La vie d'aujourd'hui n'est pas vraiment dure, t'es seulement assis.")
106. George, P. (1988) "Native peoples and community economic development in Northern Ontario", in *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1989: 60.
107. Minority Rights Group (1974) *Canada's Indians*, London; Minority Rights Group: 5-6.
108. George, P. (1988) "Native peoples and community economic development in Northern Ontario", in *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1989: 62-3.
109. Embree, E.R. (1939) *Indians of the Americas*, Cambridge, Mass; The Riverside Press: 239.
110. Cf. Lemoine, M. (1992) "La Guyane en danger d'explosion", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Août 1992: 15.
111. Gardels, N. (1993) "East Asian-led prosperity for some, tough luck for the rest", in *International Herald Tribune*, April 14, 1993: 8.
112. Goeudevert, D. (1993) "Unemployment: Toward solidarity and a novel view of work", in *International Herald Tribune*, April 27, 1993: 4.
113. York, G. (1990) *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*, London; Vintage U.K.: 89-91.
114. The Indian Act makes it illegal for anyone to seize goods on the reserves' premises, which explains why Canadian bankers are often reluctant to lend money to reserve Indians.
115. Cf. *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, Vol. XXIV, Nos 1-2, Printemps 1994: 132.
116. Cf. *Ibid.*: 133.
117. Cf. Simard, J.J. et al. (1996) *Tendances Nordiques: Les Changements Sociaux 1970-1990 chez les Cris et les Inuit du Québec*, Québec; Getic/ Université Laval: 19.
118. Cf. *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, Vol. XXIV, Nos 1-2, Printemps 1994: 133.
119. Cf. Ministère des Affaires Indiennes (MAINC) *Données Ministérielles de Base*, Ottawa; MAINC: 65.
120. Cf. CAMO (unp.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique: Communauté Montagnaise de Betsiamites, Betsiamites*; Band Council: 40. [This is a Band-commissioned study.]

- 121.Cf. Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (unp.) (SDEB) (1995) *Planification Stratégique Développement Économique*, Betsiamites; SDEB: Figure 18.
- 122.Cf. Société Radio-Canada/ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/ CBC) (1996). *Le Point*, Novembre 1996. Uashkaikan Library.
- 123.Séguin, L & Chaumel, G. (1994) "Quelles familles !", in *Rencontre*, Automne 1994, Vol. 16, Nu. 1: 5.
- 124.Cf. SDEB (unp.) (1995) op. ci.: 33.
- 125.Cf. Séguin, L. (1994), op. cit.: 18.
- 126.Dean, H. & Taylor-Gooby, P. (1992) *Dependency Culture: The Explosion of a Myth*, London; Harvester Wheatsheaf: 37.
- 127.Cf. Townsend, P. (1987) *Poverty and Labour in London*, London; Low Pay Unit: 85.
- 128.Cf. Ibid.: 85; 100.
- 129.Townsend, P. et al. (1988) *Health and deprivation: Inequality and the North*, Beckenham, Kent; Croom Helm: 37.
- 130.Wilkie, C. (1994) "Poor of Mississippi Delta see no way out", in *The Boston Globe*, June 26, 1994: 1; 8.
- 131.Cf. Clément, E. (1996) "Parfois ça joue dur !", in *La Presse*, (Montréal), 20 Janvier 1996: B1.
- 132.Cf. Pichette, J. (1995) "La nouvelle carte de la faim à Montréal", in *Le Devoir*, (Montréal), 18 Juillet 1995: A8.
- 133.Cf. Lortie, M.C. (1995) "Des propriétaires de bars veulent la légalisation de la danse à \$10", in *La Presse* (Montréal) 3 Septembre 1995: A4.["La semaine dernière, il n'a pas reçu beaucoup d'appels de danseuses 'parce que c'est la semaine des chèques de B.S. C'est toujours comme ça'."]
- 134."The greatest economic advantage that native people have is that they do not pay income tax, provincial tax or certain excise taxes when they reside and work on their reserves". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, (1985) Edmonton; Hurtig Publishers: 1212. This right is extended outside the reserve for Amerindian reserve residents. Consequently, even taxes paid outside the reserves are reimbursed by the governments, as long as the original bills are sent to the governments' offices once a year. These reimbursements generally represent hundreds of dollars per person.
- 135.Interview with a Band Council employee, 18 March 1997. Betsiamites. ["C'est un peu comme un carnaval ou une fête à chaque fois ces jours-la. Si la température est belle, tout le monde, mais absolument tout le monde est dans la rue, à marcher, parler, blaguer et à s'amuser. Même des gens qui ne te regardent même pas en temps normal vont te saluer de la manière la plus cordiale."]
- 136.Cf. CAMO (unp.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique: Communauté Montagnaise de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 30.
- 137.A young girl explaining to the vice-principal why she had missed school on Monday 2 May 1994. Vice-principal's office, 8:30 AM, 3 May 1994, UASHKAIKAN secondary school, Betsiamites.

- 138.Cf. Conseil Attikamekw Montagnais (CAM) *Montagnaises de Parole: Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM: 69. ["La vie d'aujourd'hui n'est pas vraiment dure, t'es seulement assis." (Life today is not so hard, you only have to sit down.)]
- 139.Cf. Robichaud, J.B. et al. (1994) *Les Liens entre la Pauvreté et la Santé Mentale*, Montreal; Gaetan Morin Editeur: 18.
140. Cf. Mills, H. (1993) "Despair on the breadline", in *The Independent*, 24 February 1993: 6. Lorraine Patterson is an unemployed 21 year old single mother living in Scotwoods Estate (Newcastle upon Tyne's West End), where "8 out of 10 families [are] on benefit or low paid, part-time employment and living on or below the poverty line". "It's a money-go-round", she says, "we live out of each other's pockets, borrowing benefit until we get our own. It's hard, it's really hard. Sometimes I feel I just get up to survive. If I had the courage, I would shoplift or take up prostitution".
- 141.Cf. Robichaud, J.B. et al. (1994) *Les Liens entre la Pauvreté et la Santé Mentale*, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin Éditeur: 19. ["Tu as beau multiplier, additionner, diviser, soustraire, il n'y a rien à faire [...] Dans ce temps-la, tu t'énerves."; "J'ai mal à la tête et à l'estomac quand je fais le budget, ça n'arrive jamais."]
- 142.Cf. Phillips, M. (1992) "The new road to Wigan Pier", in *The Guardian*, November 21-22.: 25. Cf. also PBS's *America's War on Poverty*, a five-hour special broadcast from 16 to 18 January 1995. In the fourth part ("My brother's keeper"), an American female politician who, along with other fellow politicians, tried to live for one single week on the money paid to American welfare recipients during the mid-1960s' American war on poverty, says she was astonished at how one became obsessed with the immediate: "I remember the time it took me to figure out how to stretch the money was incredible, and to this day my children remember this week".
- 143.Quoted in Patterson, J.T. (1995) *America's Struggle Against Poverty: 1900-1994*, Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press: 9.
- 144.This assertion was corroborated by two Amerindian Betsiamites police officers, who often work in collaboration with local social workers when families, children or teenagers are involved. Interviews conducted at UASHKAIKAN, Betsiamites, 5 and 6 March 1997.
- 145.Interviews conducted with two Amerindian Betsiamites social workers at UASHKAIKAN, 18 and 20 February 1997.
- 146.Petawabano, B.H. et al. (1994) *Mental Health and Aboriginal People of Québec*, Montréal; Gaëtan Morin Éditeur: 54.
- 147.Cf. Conseil Attikamekw Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole/Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; 73.
- 148.Cf. Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (SDEB) (unp.) (1995) *Betsiamites: Planification Stratégique et Développement Économique*, Betsiamites; SDEB: 12-4.
- 149.Cf. Murray, C. & Herrnstein, R. (1994) *The Bell Curve*, N.Y.; Free Press.
- 150.Cf. Massey, D. (1995) "Regards sur l'apartheid américain", in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Février 1995: 3.
- 151.Cf. Mills, H. (1993) "Despair on the breadline", in *The Independent*, 24 February, 1993: 6.

152.Cf. Ibid.

153.Cf. Massey, D. (1995) op. cit.: 3.

154.Cf. Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (SDEB) (unp.) (1995) *Betsiamites: Planification Stratégique et Développement Économique*, Betsiamites; SDEB: 9-10.

155.Cf. Ibid.: 17-8.

156.Cf. Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/CBC) (1996) *Le Point*, "Betsiamites", 17 November 1996. [A twenty-minute special report about Betsiamites, broadcast at the national level.] UASHKAIKAN library. ["On se complait dans la dépendance. L'illusion qu'on a donnée aux jeunes, c'est qu'ils pourraient se trouver du travail dans la communauté, là il faudrait qu'on les motive davantage à aller à l'extérieur, aller travailler à l'extérieur."]

157.Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND) *Review of Child Welfare Services in Québec*, Ottawa; DIAND: 3;6.

158.Ibid.: 6.

159.Townsend, P. et al. (1988) op. cit.: XIV.

160.C.F. Raleigh, V.S. (1996) "Suicide patterns and trends in people of Indian Subcontinent and Caribbean origin in England and Wales", in *Ethnicity & Health*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1996: 57; 61-2.[Those who are most at risk of "precipitating self-harm" in England are young Asian women, both foreign-born and UK-born (while the risk is significantly low for Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi born men). The researcher attributes this situation to "the stress and social isolation [experienced by young Asian women] associated with intergenerational or marital conflicts, arising particularly from restricting relationships and pressures to conform to traditionalist expectations."]

161.Petawabano, B.H. & al. (1994) *Mental Health and Aboriginal People of Québec*, Montréal; Gaëtan Morin Éditeur: 48.

162.Cf. Tremblay, A. (1995) "L'organisation de la santé dans une réserve montagnaise", in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, Vol. XXV, Nu. 1, Printemps 1995: 32.

163.Cf. Ibid.: 33-4.[This article also reports the findings of a major provincial survey, which found that 17% of Québécois had admitted having taken the same drug more than five times in their lifetime. The same survey administered in a large Montagnais community had shown that this proportion had climbed to 60% for the Montagnais. As for cocaine, there were proportionally nine times more Montagnais than Québécois who had "tried" it. By his own account, the researcher was "surprised".]

164.Cf. Ibid.: 32.

165.Cf. D'Amours, Y. (1995) *Le Point sur la Délinquance et le Suicide chez les Jeunes*, Québec; Conseil Permanent de la Jeunesse: 85; 102.

166.Cf. Petawabano, B. et al. (1994) *Mental Health and Aboriginal People of Québec*, Montréal; Gaëtan Morin Éditeur: 36-40.

167.Cf. Ibid.: 40-43.

168.Cf. Robichaud, J.B. et al. (1994) op. cit.: 29.

169.Cf. Ibid.: 30.

170.Cf. Ibid.: 31.

171.Cf. Séguin, L. (1994) "Santé mentale: Équilibre et harmonie", in *Rencontre*, Vol. 16, Nu. 2, Hiver 1994-95: 18.

172.DIAND (1981) *Review of Child Welfare Services in Québec*, Ottawa; DIAND: 6.

173.Cf. Ibid.: 84.

174.Cf. Soulie, J.P. (1996) "Le suicide: des comparaisons s'imposent entre les divers points de vue", in *La Presse*, 17 Février 1996: B8. [Moreover, the two highest unemployment rates in the province on a fifteen-year period - 13.9% in 1982-83 and 12% in 1994-95- correspond to the two highest suicide rates during the same period.]

175.Cf. Ibid.

176.Cf. Lévesque, L. (1994) "Courbe dangereuse", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal) 2 Décembre 1994: A2.["Ça ne veut pas dire qu'on ne pourra pas prendre la courbe..."]

177.Cf. Associated Press (1994) "Study says quarter of welfare mothers substance abusers", in *The Boston Globe*, June 28, 1994: 5.

178.In order to protect the privacy of these students, we cannot disclose the exact year when this task was carried out (between 1991 and 1996), nor their grade. The aim of this four-month Band Council project was to obtain as much information as we could in order to implement more effective schooling strategies. Names do not appear in these excerpts (and sometimes we have also changed "brother" for "sister", or grade 9 for grade 10, etc., in a further effort to protect the privacy of the students) and any event which might have allowed the identification of the student has been left out. The statements selected were the only ones who were shared by a significant number of students. ["Je me couche vers 3:00 AM et je ne peux pas me réveiller le matin. Je ne trouve plus le temps de dormir sauf à l'école, des fois."; "Je m'absente pour des raisons inutiles. Parce que je sais que si j'irais à l'école pareil on me dirait tu y vas pour rien, tu ne feras rien plus tard."; Des fois aussi je manque de nourriture quand je ne mange pas et à cause de ça, je me sens pas bien à l'école quand je travaille. Je suis fatigué, je n'ai pas beaucoup de force pour travailler."; "Je manque de sommeil parce que mon frère regarde la TV toute la nuit."; Mon père me donne tout ce que je veux sans que je le mérite."; "Je ne mange jamais le matin, je me lève trop tard."; "Je suis tout le temps fatigué parce que mon bébé se lève la nuit, et ma mère ne pourrait pas s'en occuper, parce que elle aussi, elle est fatiguée."; "Comment je vais élevé [sic] ma fille, quand X est en prison?"; "Il faut que j'entretienne la maison, si je ne le fais pas, qui va le faire?"; "Quand mes parents ont divorcé, j'ai dû prendre de la drogue pour ne pas y penser, mais ça a empiré le problème."; "J'ai demandé à ma mère d'arrêter de boire. Elle a arrêté pour deux semaines, mais elle a continué après, même si elle ne boit plus devant moi."; "Quand je fais un rêve, ce n'est jamais de mon avenir et je ne sais pas encore c'est quoi que je veux faire plus tard."; "Je dors au lieu de faire mes devoirs. Quand je veux les faire, mon père me dit de garder mon petit frère."; "Je suis découragé parce que je me dis je ne finirai jamais l'école."; "À chaque fois que je vais à l'école, je pense à mon fils. Je me demande si il dort ou si il est bien."]

179.Cf. Bonneau, G.A. (1996) *Annexe B: Rapports Détaillés sur les Habitudes de Vie*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: ii.

180.Cf. Simard, J.J. et al. (1996) *Tendances Nordiques: Les Changements Sociaux 1970-1990 chez les Cris et les Inuit du Québec*, Québec; Université Laval/Getic: 176-77. ["Dans ces circonstances, autant sauter sur les occasions immédiates de jouir de la vie, ici, maintenant, pour soi." page 177].

181.These two journals were collected, along with others, between 1991 and 1996. Such journals (the school's student diary used as a personal journal) are either found in the corridors or classrooms, or brought in by teachers or students. They have become such a "regular" teacher's or other students' read that one of the students even wrote at one point that "she had lost her journal, again".[Author's translation.] ["J'ai encore perdu mon journal..." Student # 1, May 1, 1995]. Once again, any event which could lead to the identification of the student has been left out. These two particular journals are interesting because they "cover" a whole academic year.

182."Mes cours sont tellement plattes ça aurait été pareille (sic) si j'étais pas venue." September 12, 1994.

183."J'ai bien aimé mon cours d'arts plastiques mais j'étais tellement fatiguée." March 14, 1995. [The day before- Monday evening-, she had left her girl friend's house, where she had "f... enjoyed herself", at 1:40 AM. "On a eu du fun en ta..."]

184."Sûre et certains (sic) je m'en vais chez-moi because (sic) X s'en va à Hauterive faire des commissions, il faut absolument que je garde mon petit neveu." May 1, 1995.

185.For instance, the first student wrote at one point in her journal that she was sitting her math exam (sic) and that "[she] didn't understand anything (scatterbrained !)". ["Nous sommes en plein examen de mathématiques (sic), j'te dis que je ne comprends rien (tête de linotte !) February 23, 1995.]

186.Cf. The second student writes in her journal on Monday February 13, 1995: "S..., an EXAM !", as if she had totally been taken by surprise. ["M... un EXAMEN !"]

187.["Avec X, on était supposé (sic) rater le cours de physique mais j'ai décidé d'y aller quand même. Je l'aime bien ce cours." Thursday 16 February 1995.]

188.Cf. Simard, J.J. et al. (1996) op. cit.: 180.

189.Blanchard, S. (1994) "Des Mohawks en ont assez de la terreur", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal) 11 et 12 Juin 1994: A1; A10.

190."C'est un corps comme les autres. À quoi bon s'en faire ? Il y en aura un autre dans 2 ou 3 mois."

191.Interview conducted at UASHKAIKAN (Betsiamites) with an Amerindian teacher on Thursday 9 June 1994.

192.Cf. Service de Santé Betsiamites (1995) *Rapport Annuel 1994-95*, Betsiamites; Service de Santé: 8.

193.Cf. Le Groupe Mallette Maheu (unp.) (1994) *Katakuitshet Pesamit: Rapport Financier Annuel*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 31. Actually, the plane trips were costing the Band Council approximately \$700,000 CAN a year at the beginning of the 1990s. One of its aims had therefore been to reduce significantly this number.



194."les aînés sont pris dans les tracasseries administratives (pensions de vieillesse, formulaires, prescriptions) et par la télévision et les bingos."; "il y a un trafic important de médicaments à Betsiamites parce que les prescriptions sont trop faciles à obtenir."

195.Cf. Ibid.

196.For instance, a 17 year old student who had just gotten his driving license in August 1993 missed all the schools days during this academic year (1993-94) which fell on a 1st or a 15th because he was driving a taxi for the welfare recipients who were going shopping in Baie-Comeau on those days.

197.The case of a 16 year girl student who had to abandon school on March 15, 1994, is very revealing in this respect. This girl's grandfather had just died, her grandmother had stomach cancer, her two year old son had just broken his leg and since her mother had to look after her grandmother, she had no one to look after her child anymore.

198.Cf. Wolcott, H.F. (1967) (reissued 1984) "The teacher as an enemy", in Spindler, G.D. (ed.) (1987) *Education and Cultural Process: Anthropological Approaches*, Prospect Heights, Ill.: 136-7.

199.Cf. Interview conducted at UASHKAIKAN with a former secondary school student who is starting a career as a teacher in UASHKAIKAN (Betsiamites) in September 1997. 27 April 1997. Also, the second of the two students whose journals were discussed above mentions at one point that she refused to sleep with a boy who had strongly insisted, and added: "I know that no one will believe me when I'll say that I said 'no' to a guy like X. But that's true, I'd rather be friend with him rather than make love. But all the same, nobody will want to believe me !" [Author's translation.] ["Je sais personne ne voudra me croire que j'ai dit 'non' à un mec comme X. Mais c'est vrai, j'aimerais (sic) être ami (sic) avec lui que d'avoir une relation. Pareil personne ne voudra me croire !"]. Tuesday February 28, 1995.

200. In 1994, for instance, the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, Max Yalden, vigorously criticised the federal Government, in his annual report, for the "paternalism of the Indian Act". Cf. Dion, J. (1994) "Autochtones: "Max Yalden fustige Ottawa. Il faut en finir, dit-il, avec le 'paternalisme' de la loi sur les Indiens", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 18 Mars 1994: A5.

201.Michèle Rouleau, the former Chair of the "Québec Native Women's" association, argued on April 21, 1993, during a conference at the Université Laval (Québec City) that the Indian Act "[was] mak[ing] [the Amerindians] childish, [was] keep[ing] them in ghettos, [was] controll[ing] them from cradle to grave and [was] govern[ing] their wills". [Author's translation.] ["Elle [Michèle Rouleau] parle avec calme et conviction de la Loi sur les Indiens qui infantilise les siens, les garde dans des ghettos, les contrôle de la naissance à la mort, régite leurs testaments."]. Cf. Lachance, L. (1993) "Le gouvernement fédéral attise la haine des Blancs envers les Indiens", in *Le Soleil*, April 24, 1993: A9.

202.*The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985) Edmonton; Hurtig Publishers: 1212; 1220.

203.Cf. Turenne, M. (1993) "Les autochtones à Montreal: La ville, pour échapper à la misère et à l'ennui", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal) 27 Juillet 1993: 14.

204.Cf. *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* (1994) "Dossier spécial: Le Québec et les autochtones", Vol. XXIV, Nos 1-2, Printemps 1994: 131.

205.Cf. Interview with a 15 year old student who wanted to drop out in 1993 as soon as the academic year had started, conducted at UASHKAIKAN, Betsiamites, on September 13, 1993. ["L'école, c'est de la m... Ma femme et moi, on est jamais

allés et on a bien vécu toute notre vie."]

206.Cf. Vien, C. (unp.) (1991) *L'Éducation à Betsiamites: Valeurs et Attitudes des Parents et des Enseignants*, Sherbrooke; Université de Sherbrooke: 44-5.

207.This was even mentioned by a Montagnais participant during a meeting of the "Comité de Gestion" (Local Education Authority). "Everything [i.e. help and advice] comes from the province now." [Author's translation.] ["Tout vient du provincial maintenant. Le fédéral ne fait plus rien."]

208.Cf. Larose, F. (unp.) (1992) *Rapport Final du Processus d'Évaluation des Services Éducatifs Offerts à Betsiamites Incluant le Dossier Pédagogique de la Clientèle et son Profil Psychosocial (1990-1992)*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 79 pages.; Bonneau, G.A. (unp.) (1996) *Rapport Final: Évaluation des Services Éducatifs de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 186 pages.

209.Cf. Larose, F. (1992) op. cit.: 9.

210.Cf. Ibid.: 10-11.

211.Cf. Ibid.: 48-51.

212.Cf. Ibid.: 55-6.

213.Cf. Ibid.: 65.

214.Cf. Bonneau, G.A. (1996) op. cit.: 26.

215.Cf. Ibid.: 31-5.

216.Cf. Ibid.: 41.

217.Cf. Ibid.: 42-3.

218.Cf. Ibid.: 50.

219.Cf. Ibid.: 52.

220.Cf. Plourde, J.D. (unp.) (1996) *Rapport D'Étape: Diagnostic Structurel et Organisationnel*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 5-6.

221.Cf. National Commission on Education (1996) *Success Against Odds: Effective Schools in Disadvantaged Areas*, London; Routledge: 172.

222.Cf. Galt, V. & Unland, K. (1997) "Schools try to ease poverty's effects", in *The Globe and Mail*, April 30, 1997: A10.

223.Cf. Tetu de Labsade, F. (1993) "The die is not cast", in *Forces*, No 100, Hiver 1992-93: page ? [Photocopy from UASHKAIKAN library.]

224.Cf. National Commission on Education (1996) *Success Against the Odds: Effective Schools in Disadvantaged Areas*, London; Routledge: 343.

225.National Commission on Education (1996) *Success Against the Odds: Effective Schools in Disadvantaged Areas*, London; Routledge: 3.

226.Cf. Ibid.: 5.

- 227.Cf. Centre for Language in Primary Education (CLPE) (1991) *The Reading Book*, London; CLPE.
- 228.Cf. Cane, B. et al. (1971) *The Roots of Reading: A Study of 12 Infant Schools in Deprived Areas*, London; National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales. [...the most important school variable was the quality of teaching, particularly participation in long training courses and their degree of experience and responsibility". Page 17.]
- 229.Cf. National Commission on Education (1996) op. cit.: 47-50.
- 230.Tanner, C.K. & Galis, S.A. (1997) "Student Retention: Why is There a Gap Between the Majority of Research Findings and School Practice ?", in *Psychology in the Schools/ Special Issue: School Readiness*, Vol. 34, No. 2, April 1997: 111.
- 231.Cf. Galt, V. & Unland, K. (1997) op. cit.: A10.
- 232.Cf. Ibid.
- 233.Cf. Brierly, J. (1994) op. cit.: 67.
- 234.Cf. *A Village School* (ca. 1900) A paper read at a meeting of an Education Club, Liverpool; Lyceum Press: 18-9.
- 235.Cf. Larose, F. (1992) op. cit.: 67.
- 236.Brierley, J. (1994) *Give Me a Child Until He Is Seven: Brain Studies & Early Childhood Education*, London; The Falmer Press: 66.
- 237.Cf. National Commission on Education (1996) op. cit.: 98.
- 238.Cf. Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (SRC/CBC) (1996) *Le Point*. [A special programme about Betsiamites broadcast at the national level on 17 November 1996. UASHKAIKAN library.]
- 239.Galt, V. & Unland, K. (1997) op. cit.: A10.
- 240.Cf. Ibid.
- 241.National Commission on Education (1996) op. cit.: 9.
- 242.Wawanoloath, C.S. & Pelletier, C. (1996) *Highlights of the Conference This is Dawn*, Québec; Québec Native Women: 59.
- 243.Patterson, J.T. (1995) *America's Struggle Against Poverty: 1900-1994*, Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press: 226-7.
244. Wawanoloath, C.S. & Pelletier, C. (1996) op. cit.: 25; 28; 32; 34-6.
- 245.Cf. Abel, F. (1989) "Au revoir les Indiens", in *Géo*, No. 126, Août 1989: 154-5.
- 246.Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) *MacPherson Report on Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future*, Ottawa; Department of Indian Affairs: 6.
247. Cf. "Health", in *The Boston Globe*, June 26, 1994: 26. [The representative of the Harvard School of Public Health was referring to American health-care reform.]

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

This chapter reviews the themes which have been discussed throughout the thesis in order to come to the conclusion that although the current educational policies have mainly failed, resolution of the issues is possible, utilizing the resources, both cultural and economic, that this Amerindian community already possesses. Education can have a role in reducing welfare dependence and this chapter also suggests some ways forward in this respect. To do this, the chapter pinpoints the most salient issues regarding the current educational situation of the community under three headings, namely:

- 1- Affirmative action
- 2- Local control
- 3- The welfare trap

From this analysis, a way forward is proposed under the heading of 'The treasure within', which argues that Betsiamites already has all the tools it needs to improve significantly its local educational system and can thus help its youth to "traverse adolescence successfully"<sup>1</sup> despite an adverse social environment characterized by isolation, widespread poverty and welfare dependence. Quality schools can indeed act

as a strong "protective factor"<sup>2</sup> regarding the development of adolescents who are living in "high-risk settings"<sup>3</sup>, as the young Betsiamites Montagnais do. This goal can be reached, provided the long-term effects of affirmative action programmes, local political control and welfare dependence on formal schooling in Betsiamites are analysed and understood by those who suffer directly from them. Ironically, these three well-intentioned social measures (at the time they were implemented) have been transformed over the years into 'risk factors'.

#### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Arguments can be advanced in favor of and against 'affirmative action', but the long-term effect of this choice at the community level- the devaluation of the diploma granted Amerindian teachers and the loss of confidence on the part of Amerindian parents concerning Amerindian teachers and the reserve school<sup>4</sup>- maybe was too high a price to pay for easier Amerindian access to post-secondary education. Montagnais parents, like all Amerindian parents, demand "parity [with mainstream education] in the quality of education" being provided to their children and "the education and training necessary for making a good living in modern society"<sup>5</sup>. Parents in rural reserves are very well aware of the cases of some prospective Amerindian teachers who take ten years as full-time students to complete a university course which normally lasts three or four years<sup>6</sup> and are rightly worried that these individuals are maybe not the best people to educate their children, especially since the teaching licence which Amerindian teachers used to receive allowed them to teach *only* in reserve schools. Although the above-mentioned cases are hardly abundant, their very existence says much about the

lack of seriousness manifested by some higher education institutions, which have not hesitated to turn themselves into diploma mills for Amerindian students, particularly after the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education" in 1972. The criticisms coming from Montagnais parents and reserve school principals has been so vociferous in recent years that the colleges and universities attended by students coming from these communities have been forced to raise their admissions standards and their course requirements<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, the damage which has been done in Canadian Amerindian education has spread to other domains also, namely the Québec film-making and music industries and the reserve health services. A journalist working for the most respected Québec newspaper complained in 1995 that hiring inexperienced Amerindian actors *only because* they were Amerindians had become a damaging *trend* in the Québec film industry<sup>8</sup>. A critic from the same newspaper wrote a few months later that the most well-known Montagnais duo Kashtin who have made four records and have travelled worldwide, would have been totally unheard of in Québec had they not been Amerindians who sing in Montagnais<sup>9</sup>. Also, a white nurse who worked for two years in Betsiamites submitted a report when she left in which she wrote that in her opinion, the work carried out in the elementary school by the Amerindian who had been hired as drug-addiction prevention officer had resulted in a marked increase in the number of children sniffing gas, simply because he had merely taught them how to do it<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, the current researcher shares the view of Shelby Steele that preference programmes are "a deflection from the real business of developing [Amerindians] to

parity with whites"<sup>11</sup>. Even American civil rights activists such as Roger Wilkins, have compared recent affirmative action policies to "exhortation":

I don't think you can solve the problems of the black poor or the Native American poor or the Hispanic poor in the big-city barrios or South Texas by exhortation.[...] People need jobs. Kids need education. Families need decent housing.<sup>12</sup>

The Amerindian leaders were wrong in 1972 to ask for 'flexible' entry requirements and programmes for post-secondary Amerindian students. And the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was equally wrong when it merely reformulated the same demand in 1996<sup>13</sup>. Actually, Georges Erasmus, the co-chair of this Royal Commission, is so enthusiastic about the outcomes of affirmative action programmes in the fields of Amerindian teacher-training and law schools that he wishes to see "other disciplines"<sup>14</sup> (such as "medicine, social work, MBA's"<sup>15</sup>) taking those steps which would increase accessibility to university for Amerindian students. "When we are going to have our first Dene doctor ?", he asked the Honourable Richard Nereysoo at a public hearing held in the Northwest Territories in 1993. "That's what I'd like to know", answered the latter, "but at least in many respects we are trying to move in the direction that you pointed out..."<sup>16</sup> (i.e. "...the proposal that they would be happy if somebody were to take the lead with that kind of affirmative action programme for training medical doctors"<sup>17</sup>). But the wish of co-chair Georges Erasmus may be unrealistic. An Amerindian teacher in Betsiamites told this researcher in September 1997 that he would simply "refuse to be examined by an Amerindian doctor who would had been registered

to the kind of training programmes Amerindian teachers are offered in some universities"<sup>18</sup>[Author's translation.]

Post-secondary Amerindian students have 'benefited' from lax educational policies in higher education for the last twenty-five years. These policies have failed lamentably, mainly because the training offered to Amerindian young people since the publication of "Indian Control of Indian Education" in 1972 has not allowed them even to "get Grade 12 [end of secondary course]"<sup>19</sup>, as an Amerindian said at a public hearing held in Alberta in 1992. Maybe Amerindian leaders and the federal Government should start focusing on ways to give rural reserve students first-rate elementary and secondary schools for a change.

#### LOCAL CONTROL

'Local control' is another myth-ridden issue as far as Amerindian education is concerned. Amerindian leaders truly believed in 1972 that local control automatically meant 'quality education'. As these leaders were surprised, by the mid-1980s, that this dream had not become reality, the demand for local control has relentlessly expanded since 1972: local control, in other words, became 'self-government'. As MacPherson wrote in 1991, "Indian self-government" [is the] "solution to the current problems in Indian education"<sup>20</sup>. In turn, 'self-government' also attained mythical status; so much so that the Chief of Kanasatake (Mohawk, Québec) said in 1993 that two young Mohawks, who had just drowned while trying to cross on the ice of a lake, would still be alive if his community had had self-government (because, as he said, Mohawk youths do not



listen to the provincial police)<sup>21</sup>.

In fact, there is every reason to believe that 'self-government' would have no more positive impact on the rural reserve classroom than 'local control' has had. To paraphrase a Canadian Amerindian from Calgary, educational achievement "is a very personal journey", and 'self-government' looks more like another educational mirage than a genuine solution. Bea Shawanda, who is quoted below, was talking about the social problems of the Canadian reserves at a conference, but she might very well have been talking about their educational problems:

As for me, I have noticed that our distress as Native people has brought us to jump on all the bandwagons that passed. First there was the American Indian Movement of the 1960s where we sought to reconquer our rights and our culture. Then we became Born Again Indians and we exaggerated, we played missionary with ourselves.[...] We also became anonymous alcoholics to escape from our shame and whatever else. In which new movement, in which new therapy should we all throw ourselves? We had forgotten or not yet learned that the spiritual itinerary is a very spiritual journey which can take many forms and which lasts a lifetime.<sup>22</sup>

One can justly wonder why it looks as if it has not yet occurred to Amerindian leaders or to the federal Government that maybe 'local control', as it is practised now, had little to do with the quality of education in rural reserve schools. An analogy with the Second

Amendment of the American Constitution (the right to "bear arms shall not be infringed") could be made. Robert Dole contends that because the founding fathers of America said so two hundred years ago, it has become a kind of eternal truth in the United States<sup>23</sup>, even though, adds another author, "there is no rational argument for guns in American society"<sup>24</sup>. In the same manner, because the founding fathers of 'Amerindian education' in Canada said some thirty years ago that 'local control' automatically meant 'quality education' in rural reserves, the federal Government does not dare raise an eyebrow when local Amerindian leaders take huge chunks from the budgets of the local schools in order to pay for other 'bills'. On the contrary, it even encourages such a tendency, when the Department of Indian Affairs states that "the flexibility built into the new on-reserve housing policy enables First Nations to combine housing, training and social assistance programme resources in more productive, innovative ways. For example, a community could choose to use social-assistance-based training programmes [or the education budget] to renovate existing housing or to build new homes"<sup>25</sup>. The Department of Indian Affairs knows very well that many communities have 'chosen' to use their education budget to build a few more houses. Band Councils which are "dipping into education...to offset deficits in other areas"<sup>26</sup> has become a phenomenon so frequent during the last two decades that no one has even thought about questioning it even when a participant mentioned this during the Royal Commission's public hearings on education held in Manitoba in 1992. In such conditions, to dare to pretend that "spending on Aboriginal education is inadequate to reverse accumulated educational deficits"<sup>27</sup> as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples said in 1996, is at best evidence of muddled thinking, at worst, completely thoughtless.

'Local control' has been perverted in the Canadian rural reserves at almost every level, not just at the education level. The 1972 advocates of local control did not foresee that the 'workless majority' in rural reserves would one day dictate the political and economic agenda of their respective Band Councils. The political situation on rural reserves can not be compared to that of the urban ghettos in Western countries. In the latter, the local population elects one *representative*, not the *government*. The fact that even the houses belong to the Band Councils in rural reserves renders matters even worse. Accusations of favouritism in the allocation of houses (and even jobs and transfer payments) in rural reserves have become commonplace<sup>28</sup>. David Simon, who has reflected, among other things, on the issue of African councillors' "favouritism"<sup>29</sup>, pinpointed the "lack of experience (and sometimes formal education) on the part of newly elected councillors"<sup>30</sup> and "apathy and ignorance"<sup>31</sup> as possible explanations for favouritism. More fundamentally, he writes that remote villages are a little like islands:

It may be increasingly possible for metropolitan residents to consider themselves part of a global village, but in peripheral states and societies, the town, let alone the village, is often still quite remote from the centres of political and economic power.<sup>32</sup>

In Betsiamites, the Chief who was elected at the end of the 1980s had no more formal education than a second grade (elementary level) and was functionally illiterate, and one Councillor is renowned in Betsiamites for having won his seat, at the last three elections, by buying votes with cases of beer. Thus, 'local' politicians in remote areas, Amerindian or non-Amerindian, are more often than not taken up with all kinds of 'local'

problems which they solve, most of the time, in a very personal manner, as an ex-vista-volunteer from Appalachia during the American War on poverty emphasized:

I wasn't really aware of a middle-class sense of having a right to... I mean... It was really amazing to me that they [the other volunteers who were not from Appalachia] were amazed at how local politicians would be little demagogues and would put stumbling blocks because the things they were trying to help communities get made good sense to them. There was a middle class... any middle class community would have moved towards improving the roads, or improving the school system, or any of the kinds of things we were trying to do.<sup>33</sup>

And yet, Band Councils can do, and sometimes do, wonderful things for their communities, as the Department for Indian Affairs wrote in 1981:

Our observations suggest that reserves with the most serious problems generally have the least qualified leadership and Band Councils are not prepared to assume further responsibility for programmes. These Band Councils are the least organized and lack any sense of goals. Without goals and direction, the decisions made often reflect 'favouritism'.[...] Conversely, reserves with fewer problems have more qualified leadership and Band Councils are prepared to assume greater responsibility.<sup>34</sup>

Unluckily, anecdotal evidence and the Band-commissioned report written by a private

consulting firm on the evaluation of the Betsiamites Band Council both suggest that the Betsiamites' Band Council is lacking direction and is prone to favouritism <sup>35</sup>.

Maybe part of the solution lies in the establishment of rules such as minimal qualifications for the job of Chief or Councillor. Hawthorn suggested such a nine-point list of minimal qualifications and/or attitudes for would-be local politicians in rural reserves in 1967<sup>36</sup>. To turn the two-year mandates into four-year mandates would also be a good start, but such a measure was rejected by referendum in 1995 in Betsiamites. The Betsiamites Montagnais were reportedly afraid of being stuck with an incompetent Band Council for four years instead of only two. This confirms that there really is a serious problem in Betsiamites at the political level.

#### THE WELFARE TRAP

The impact of widespread and long-term welfare dependence on the life of the Betsiamites reserve, and especially on its youth, were thoroughly analysed in the Dimensions of Resistance to Schooling Chapter.

The serious adverse effects which this situation has had on the health of young Canadian rural reserve Amerindians cannot be overemphasized. One simply has to look at the appallingly high suicide rates among these young people <sup>37</sup> and at the various "Advice on Health" brochures aimed at them as well as the workshops on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (see Appendix 29), to appraise the extent and the seriousness of the problem.

In short, young Betsiamites Amerindians, like so many other Canadian rural reserve Amerindians, have become so hopeless about their future that significant numbers of them attempt to take their own life. A Québécois physician, Dr Roger Cadieux, who still works in Montréal at age 73, firmly believes that youth suicide in Québec is caused by psychological distress linked to the lack of jobs and to an uninteresting social environment<sup>38</sup>. Dr. Cadieux was referring to young Québécois living in deprived urban settings, but his observations are also relevant for young rural reserve Amerindians.

Take the case of two young Betsiamites Montagnais, a girl and a boy. When the girl was twelve (in 1986), she participated in a film on Québec Amerindians produced by a French company (Office Culturel de Cluny). This girl's photograph appeared on the cover of a magazine<sup>39</sup> which was published once the film was shot and distributed in Europe. Her head was resting on her arms, she was smiling widely and looking exceedingly happy. Six years later, this girl dropped out of school to collect social assistance, and the smile has disappeared from her face. The twelve year-old boy, for his part, was interviewed in 1993 by a journalist and two photographs of him appeared in the magazine *Rencontre*. He said to the journalist that he was going to be a "dentist" or a "lawyer" and looked extremely determined. In 1997, this boy is about to repeat his grade 9 for the third time and he has already attempted to commit suicide<sup>40</sup>. Take this boy and take this girl and multiply them by approximately twenty every passing year (for a 2,300 population). This is what welfare in a rural reserve is about; it is about the loss of hope, the participation in the recurring cycles of welfarism as consumers or child-minders (see graph on absenteeism in Appendix 21), grade repeating and early pregnancies. This last problem is a very real one in rural reserves. While some

sociologists refuse to contemplate the possibility that some teenagers have a baby so that they can collect welfare<sup>41</sup>, a group of mothers on welfare in the United States estimate that 50% of mothers on welfare who have many children keep on having more children in order to collect bigger welfare checks. Says one of them:

I know a woman, she has seven boys. The oldest is about 10, and she just had one six months ago. She's still waiting for a little girl? Come on. It's a lifestyle for them.<sup>42</sup>

One teenage American mother (aged 17) also says, for her part, that "she will find a way to stop having more kids if the Republican plan [to eliminate several federal aid programs] becomes law"<sup>43</sup> and many Montagnais women firmly believe that a significant proportion of teenage Montagnais girls, who get pregnant, do so in order to collect welfare cheques<sup>44</sup>. Whatever the reason (to prevent their boyfriend from leaving them, to give a meaning to their life or to become 'independent'), the fact remains that early pregnancies are more common in rural reserves. This partly helps to explain why Amerindian women in Québec have twice as many children on average than Québécois mothers<sup>45</sup> (in Betsiamites it is 2.5<sup>46</sup> times the provincial average). Also, it presupposes that many children will not be very well looked after, as Ellwood has emphasized: "no one believes it is good for children to have children"<sup>47</sup>. As for single families, 14% of Québécois families are headed by a single parent while this percentage increases to 54% in Betsiamites (45% on average in Amerindian communities)<sup>48</sup>. As work is scarce in rural reserves and grade repeating common, what else is there to do rather than to go on welfare, especially if you have a young child to take care of? Which explains why an

Amerindian administrator who supervises the distribution of welfare payments in Eskasoni (Nova Scotia) expressed himself this way:

There's an almost total dependence on welfare, he says. It's become a way of life. The welfare dependency is a direct result of the centralization. It's been ingrained in generation after generation.<sup>49</sup>

Regarding the economic situation in Canadian rural reserves, Peter George has demonstrated that there are "formidable obstacles to the development of wage employment opportunities in profit-seeking enterprises in remote reserve communities"<sup>50</sup>. These formidable obstacles will endure in Betsiamites, and other avenues, such as those formulated by CAMO (a commissioned private consulting firm) in 1995 (e.g. to encourage youths to start looking outside of the reserve for work<sup>51</sup>) will soon have to be explored. Indeed, welfare dependence is the Canadian reserves' stigma, and although welfare recipients should theoretically not be treated differently than other people, discrimination against them is so widespread in Canada that even Jean Chrétien, the current Prime Minister of Canada (and a former Minister of Indian Affairs), said at a conference in Toronto in 1994 (in front of two hundred newspapers editors) that they were "useless people who stay home, drinking beer"<sup>52</sup> [author's translation]- view which seems to be shared by other members of his party. Five months later, one of the Liberal party candidates said during an interview in Montréal that he "would kick welfare recipients in the butt"<sup>53</sup> [author's translation] if he was elected. It is precisely because of such contemptuous attitudes that young Betsiamites Montagnais are desperate to get



out of the welfare trap<sup>54</sup> and count on education to do so<sup>55</sup>. Betsiamites could offer them this kind of education.

#### THE TREASURE WITHIN

In 1993, the "International Year of the World's Indigenous People", during one of the "major conferences" which then were taking place throughout Canada, one ambitious educational objective was adopted by more than 201 committees; "The goal is to make high school a better place so that some day 10 out of 10 [Amerindian] students will finish with a diploma in hand"<sup>56</sup>.

This proportion is currently one out of ten in Betsiamites. And yet, there is absolutely no reason to believe that these children and these adolescents are unmotivated or uneducable. As research has demonstrated, schools can be effective even in disadvantaged areas and can make a tremendous difference<sup>57</sup>. As Sol Stern wrote, "over the past several years, Cardinal John J. O'Connor has repeatedly made New York City an extraordinary offer: send me the lowest-performing 5 percent of children presently in the public [i.e. *not* private] schools, and I will put them in Catholic schools- where they will succeed."<sup>58</sup> Such confidence rests on solid ground; the firm belief that schooling can be effective for anyone and that everybody benefits from formal education.

Betsiamites has the means not only to offer its children a first-rate elementary and secondary education, but the *post-secondary education* of all the Band members is also

fully subsidized (including travelling, accommodation and living expenses), while the rest of Canadians have to pay everything themselves (including school fees). At a time when fewer and fewer people can afford post-secondary education, this measure, which is not currently being challenged in any way by the Canadian population at large, amounts to a real gold mine.

Canadian Métis students, who do not benefit from the same advantages, certainly are well aware of the significance of such a privilege, as Donna Doepker emphasized in 1992 at one of the public hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:

Métis students' dreams of financial security and a fulfilling career have been tainted with the reality of an ongoing debt that prevents them from breaking the cycle of poverty. Even more disheartening is the fact that further post-secondary education study has become almost impossible [...] Métis students know that their children too may be faced with an insurmountable financial handicap as they compete for education and ensuing employment with the prospect of a similar debt burden. Sometimes one thinks that they might have been better off on social assistance or working at a minimum wage job.<sup>59</sup>

Canadian Amerindian post-secondary students do not have to worry about such things. As the head of the Sept-Îles (Québec's North Shore) College pointed out to the same Royal Commission a month later:

I do not believe that there are any aboriginal students who are deprived of or prevented from going to college for financial reasons. I believe that the communities have sufficient funds or at any rate attach sufficient importance to this now to financially support all community members who wish to pursue a college education. To my knowledge...I have no indication that this is a handicap.<sup>60</sup>

The importance of this prerogative cannot be overemphasized, and minority parents in North America understand this probably better than anybody else. In Harlem (New York), a black American magnate had offered a whole class of six-graders "college education on the house ! [...] One boy said his mother told him, 'If you blow this opportunity, I'll kill you !'"<sup>61</sup>

And yet, few Betsiamites Montagnais really benefit from this unique policy, because most of them simply do not have access to higher education because they do not have a high school diploma. Also, more often than not, those who do gain access to it are unable to stay the course, once they are in, because their initial preparation was inadequate.

This demonstrates that the educational problem of the Betsiamites Montagnais lies at the elementary and secondary levels, and not, as the National Indian Brotherhood asserted in 1972 and as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples repeated in 1997, at the college or university level. Thus, efforts must aim at correcting the shortcomings of reserve schooling, and not at finding new means of increasing Amerindian

accessibility to university. As one of the commissioners of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples candidly asked a participant at a public hearing in 1993; why are we keeping on focusing on Amerindian adult learners, instead of looking at the Amerindian children ?

What could be done other than trying to compensate for it [learning problems] at a later stage, as you're [Canadian colleges and universities] trying to do, what can be, what can be done to, to remedy that situation at the secondary school level ? Do you have any suggestions as to what ?<sup>62</sup>

Very sadly, this \$55 CAN M (approximately £25 M) Royal Commission deemed that such a logical question was irrelevant regarding matters as essential as Canadian Amerindian education and suggested instead in its final (and shelved <sup>63</sup>) report, more 'significant' and 'innovative' steps such as "assistance [to Amerindian adult students] to qualify for entry to colleges and universities" and "special supports to stay the course"<sup>64</sup>. Thus, reserve schooling will have to wait for another thirty years, it seems.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1.Cf. Jessor, R. (1993) "Successful development among youth in high-risk settings", in *American Psychologist*, Vol. 48, No. 2, February 1993: 126.
- 2.Cf. Ibid.: 120.
- 3.Cf. Ibid.: 117.
- 4.Cf. Conseil Attikamekw Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole/Eukuan Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM: 84-6.
- 5.Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.: 3; 45.
- 6.These cases were discussed at a "Comité de gestion" (education) meeting in Betsiamites on May 20, 1994. The case of a Betsiamites student who took eight years to complete a two-year college course and who cost the Betsiamites Band Council more than \$80,000 CAN (approximately £40,000) was also discussed.
- 7.Cf. Ibid.
- 8.Cf. Tremblay, O. (1995) "Cinéma: Les meilleurs du siècle", in *Le Devoir*, 10 Mai 1995: B8. ["En fait, cette tendance a déjà été remplacée par une autre: engager des acteurs autochtones qui manquent de métier et nuisent à la crédibilité des films (voir *Windigo* et *Dance me Outside*)."]
- 9.Cf. Cormier, S. (1995) "Lynda Lemay: L'efficacité décroît avec l'usage", in *Le Devoir*, 9 Août 1995: B8.
- 10.Cf. Cloutier, L. (unp.) (1995) *Santé Scolaire à Betsiamites: Rapport Confidentiel Remis aux Directions des Écoles Nussim et Uashkaikan*, Betsiamites; Uashkaikan: 2-3.[The Amerindian worker had been trained for an extended period by Health Canada.]
11. Steele, S. (1990) "Booker T. Washington was right", in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Fall 1990: 25.
- 12.Mitchell, A. (1997) "Defending affirmative action, Clinton urges debate on race", in *The New York Times*, June 15, 1997: 22.
- 13.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) op. cit.: 86. ["Mainstream colleges and universities see high drop-out rates among their Aboriginal students. To improve retention, barriers to success must be dismantled. Students may require assistance to qualify for entry to colleges and universities, and they may require special supports to stay the course."]
- 14.Cf. "I think your [Professor John Borrows] presentation really speaks for itself, how, if the same kind of First Nations educational program was involved in the other disciplines, would create a larger return of Aboriginal people, no question about it." Quoted in *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, (CD-ROM) (1997) Public hearings on education; Vancouver, BC; 93-06-02: pages 159-60.
- 15.Cf. Ibid.: 141.

- 16.Cf. Ibid.: Public hearings on education; Hay River, NWT; 93-06-17: 110.
- 17.Co-chair René Dussault at a public hearing on education; Montréal, 93-12-02: 1223.
- 18.Cf. Interview with an Amerindian teacher at Uashkaikan (Betsiamites), 10 September 1997. "Je refuserais d'être soigné par un médecin amérindien qui aurait suivi un programme médical inspiré des cours en éducation que certaines universités offrent aux étudiants amérindiens."
- 19.Cf. Mike Mercredi, director of Athabasca Native Development Corporation; quoted in *For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, (CD-ROM) (1997) Public hearings on education; Fort McMurray, Alberta; 92-06-16: 154.["Every time we [the Amerindians] go to a job with industry, they want to train us or they want to ask us if we've been trained. And to get the training, we've got to have Grade 12 and as you've already heard, education doesn't help us get Grade 12."]
- 20.Cf. MacPherson, J.C. (1991) op. cit.: 6.
- 21.Cf. Cornellier, M. (1993) "Le Chef Peltier impute à Ottawa les noyades de deux jeunes Mohawks", in *La Presse*, 13 Janvier 1993.
- 22.Shawanda, B. (1996) quoted in Wawanoloath, C.S. (1996) *Highlights of the Conference This is Dawn*, Québec; Québec Native Women: 55.
- 23.Dole, R. (1996) "Le cauchemar américain", in *Le Devoir*, 24 mars 1996: A11.
- 24.Ivins, M. (1993) "Guns: Stop the carnage, ban the damn things", in *International Herald Tribune*, March 25, 1993: 5.
- 25.Indian and Northern Affairs (1996) "New on-reserve housing policy emphasizes flexibility and community control", in *Transition*, Vol. 8, No. 15- Oct./Nov. 1996: 2.
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- 27.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) op. cit.: 83.
- 28.Cf. CAMO (unp.) (1990) *Plan Directeur de Développement Économique: Communauté Montagnaise de Betsiamites*, Betsiamites; Conseil de Bande de Betsiamites: 40.; Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (SDEB) (unp.) (1995) *Planification Stratégique et Développement Économique*, Betsiamites; SDEB: Figures 17-18.
- 29.Cf. Simon, D. (1996) "Restructuring the local state in post-apartheid cities: Namibian experience and lessons for South Africa", in *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 378, January 1996: 78.
- 30.Cf. Ibi.: 77.
- 31.Cf. Ibid.: 78.
- 32.Ibid.: 51-2.
- 33.PBS's *America's War on Poverty*, 17 January 1995. Third Part: "City of Promise". A five-hour special broadcast from 16 January to 18 January 1995.

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36. Cf. Hawthorn, H.B. (1967) *Étude sur les Indiens Contemporains du Canada: Besoins et Mesures d'Ordre Économique, Politique et Éducatif*, Ottawa; Directions des Affaires Indiennes: 218.
37. Cf. Sansfaçon, J.R. (1995) "Le suicide chez les autochtones", in *Le Devoir*, 13 Février 1995: A9.; *Journal du Québec*, "Suicide chez les autochtones", 17 Janvier 1996: 37.; Chaumel, G. (1995) "Le suicide: Ceux qui restent", in *Rencontre*, Vol. 16, No. 3: 15-7.
38. Cf. Perreault, M. (1996) "La personnalité de la semaine: Roger Cadieux", in *La Presse*, 11 Février 1996: A8.
39. Cf. *Le Courrier Nouvelles de Cluny*, (1986) "Les minorités culturelles", No. 47, Office Culturel de Cluny.
40. Cf. Chaumel, G. (1993) "Betsiamites", in *Rencontre*, Vol. 14, No. 3: 6-8.
41. Cf. Ouellet, H. (1996) "L'élimination de la pauvreté, c'est faisable", in *Le Devoir*, 18 Décembre 1996: A9.
42. Kasindorf, J.R. (1995) "Are they the problem?", in *New York*, February 6, 1995: 31.
43. Cf. *Newsweek*, Dec. 12, 1994, "Welfare Booby Traps": 35.
44. Cf. Conseil Attikamekw Montagnais (CAM) (1992) *Montagnaises de Parole/Eukuan Ume Ninan Etentamat*, Québec; CAM. ["Maintenant, sur la réserve, il y a des filles qui se font faire un enfant parce qu'elles ne vont plus à l'école et que c'est le seul revenu qu'elles peuvent avoir.", page 18; "Je crois qu'elles vivent très bien, elles reçoivent de l'assistance, elles ont de l'aide. Ce qui n'était pas le cas dans notre temps.", page 21; "Certaines jeunes filles, tout ce qu'elles espèrent de leur grossesse, c'est l'argent, car un enfant amène une augmentation des prestations mensuelles.", page 33.]
45. Cf. "Quelles Familles", in *Rencontre*, Automne 1994: 5.
46. Cf. Radio-Canada (Radio News), Sept-îles, June 1, 1995: 5:00 PM. "Une année, des familles".
47. Cf. Ellwood, D.T. (1988) *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family*, N.Y.; Basic Books: 72.
48. Cf. Ibid.
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50. Cf. George, P. (1988) "Native peoples and community economic development in Northern Ontario", in *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1989: 62.

51.Cf. Société de Développement Économique de Betsiamites (SDEB) (unp.) (1995) *Betsiamites: Planification Stratégique et Développement Économique*, Betsiamites; SDEB: 17-8.

52.Cf. "Ces types inutiles qui restent chez eux à boire leur bière", in *Le Soleil* (Québec city), 21 Avril 1994: A6.

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61.Cf. Ellwood, D.T. (1988) *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family*, New York; Basic Books: 215.

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63.Cf. Lesage, G. "Tablette et petits pas des autochtones", in *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 1er Août 1997: A8; Aubry, J. "Action plan for Indians ready in fall, minister tells First Nations", in *The Gazette* (Montréal), August 1, 1997: A11. "Stewart [the current Minister of Indian Affairs] warned [the chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations] that the response would take into consideration the government's current budget restraints [...] The report recommends that the federal Government pump up to \$2 billion CAN more annually into aboriginal affairs over the next 20 years. The government spends more than \$5 billion a year [approximately £2,5 billion] in Indian Affairs and it is the only department whose budget has not been cut or frozen in the past four years. 'There are those who are saying that the (commission) report is being shelved. Well, let me tell you it is not true,'", said Stewart, in announcing the federal review to the chiefs. 'I am reading it, it's on my desk, it is beside my bed.'"



64.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People, Nation to Nation: Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and Services: 86.

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## APPENDIX 1

## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this thesis, the word Amerindian is used to identify the subjects of this study, instead of the word Indian. However, other words are also commonly used in Canada, such as Native, Aboriginal, and member of First Nations. Thus, when quoting various authors, these words (including Indian) frequently appear in the text; they must all be viewed as synonyms.

In the same manner, the words Community and Reserve are used as synonyms for the areas in which the majority of Amerindians live in Canada <sup>1</sup>.

As for the population of the Amerindian community of Betsiamites (Québec), the principal focus of this study, they are described as the Betsiamites Montagnais. The word Montagnais is in the process of being abandoned in favour of the word Innu <sup>2</sup>, but it will take years before this becomes common practice in Canada.

Amerindian communities in Canada are run by Band Councils, which are the equivalent of a local council, albeit with extended powers. The word Band is also frequently used in the Canadian literature to describe the population of a particular Amerindian community.

The most important Amerindian national organization in Canada is the Assembly of First Nations (formerly the National Indian Brotherhood).

For their part, the Montagnais are represented by the "Institut Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais", better known as "ICEM". The Montagnais are a nation, as the Mohawk and the Cree are.

Canada's Amerindians have special legal status. They fall under the jurisdiction of the Indian Act. The Federal Government, via the Department of Indian Affairs (DIAND), is responsible for the administration of the Indian Act.

1.Cf. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) *People to People, Nation to Nation*, Ottawa; Minister of Supply and Services. The Royal Commission has estimated that 55% of the total 'Aboriginal population' (i.e. including the Inuit) lived in more than 2,000 rural communities in 1996 (page 117). This population was estimated at 811,400 (2% of the total Canadian population) (page 11).

2.Montagnais was the name they were given by the French in the 16th century. It refers to the French word 'montagnard'. Innu, for its part, means 'human being'.



## LETTER FROM A PARENT

Letter from a parent who is totally dissatisfied with UASHKAIKAN and who wants to have her child transferred to a provincial school.

BETSIAMITES, le 24 août 1995

Madame

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

**Objet: Demande d'aide financière**

Madame,

Par la présente, je désire vous informer que ma fille, \_\_\_\_\_, fréquentera l'École Jean-Paul II de Baie-Comeau pour l'année scolaire 95-96.

Les raisons m'ont amenées à prendre cette décision depuis la rencontre avec le Directeur de l'école secondaire Uashkaikan concernant les résultats scolaire ma fille avant la fin d'année 94-95.

La première est que depuis trois ans, elle était inscrite dans un programme dont les résultats se sont avérés médiocres. Je trouve décevant et désolant de voir que mon enfant fréquente une institution non valorisante. Pour ma part, il n'y avait aucun suivi et surtout aucun encadrement venant des professeurs ou le responsable de ce programme. La seconde, elle a fréquenté cette école qui n'a donné aucun résultat d'avancement et surtout les quelques matières qui n'étaient pas approuvées par le Ministère de l'éducation.

Donc, je me permets de vous solliciter une aide financière pour l'inscription et tout autres pour l'éducation de ma fille.

En attente d'une réponse favorable à ma demande, je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, mes salutations les meilleurs.

Source: UASHKAIKAN records

**The following appendices have been removed DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR  
OTHER LEGAL ISSUES**

- APPENDIX THREE: Map (Subarctic Indian bands) 466**
- APPENDIX FOUR: Map (Ice age routes) 467**
- APPENDIX FIVE: Maps (ancient maps) 468**
- APPENDIX SIX: French tourists in Wendake 470**
- APPENDIX SEVEN: Map (Québec North Shore) 471**
- APPENDIX EIGHT: Tourists at Tadoussac, Qc 472**
- APPENDIX NINE: Enrolment trends 473**
- APPENDIX TEN: House building in Betsiamites 474**
- APPENDIX ELEVEN: Caricatures (A & B) 475**
- APPENDIX TWELVE: Student retention in Québec 477**
- APPENDIX THIRTEEN: Organization chart 478**
- APPENDIX FOURTEEN: Teaching licence 479**
- APPENDIX FIFTEEN: Support centre for Amerindian students 480**
- APPENDIX SIXTEEN: Note written by a teacher 481**
- APPENDIX SEVENTEEN: Drawing made by teacher 482**
- APPENDIX EIGHTEEN: Questionnaire on school/parents relations 483**
- APPENDIX NINETEEN: Examination schedule (MEQ) 488**
- APPENDIX TWENTY: Inventory of school motivation (ISM) 489**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-ONE: Graph on absenteeism 495**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-TWO: Graph on absenteeism and tardiness 496**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-THREE: Drawing by Misirili 497**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-FOUR: Statistics on local economy 498**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-FIVE: Welfare recipients 499**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-SIX: Drawings by students (A,B,C) 500**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-SEVEN: Survey on at-risk factors 503**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-EIGHT: Taxonomy of social problems 505**
- APPENDIX TWENTY-NINE: Prevention programmes (A,B,C) 506**