

**BACK FROM THE BRINK:  
DECOLONIZING THROUGH THE RESTORATION OF  
SECWEPEMC LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY**

**by  
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## Abstract

This qualitative study reports the development of an education/training model based on Secwepemc language, culture, values, beliefs, and way of life. The model includes a decolonization agenda. A critical theory framework and Indigenous research method are used to examine three basic questions. What were traditional Secwepemc epistemology and pedagogy? What disrupted these processes? What are the remedies?

I introduce the context with a brief outline of our pre-contact way of life. Historical documents and Elders' voices provide evidence of how this way of life was disrupted and impacted by the arrival of European settlers and ensuing colonization. The Elders describe their lived experiences of colonization, in particular, how their attendance at the Kamloops Indian Residential School contributed to the loss of Secwepemc language, culture, and way of life: this institution contributed to the breakdown of traditional lifestyle, including pedagogy, child rearing, and family structures. The parents in my study describe their personal experiences of colonization and describe how the Secwepemc language, culture, and knowledge were not transmitted to them and their children. The Elders in my study also describe traditional education/training and child-rearing practices.

My analysis of the interview data shows the deep desire and commitment of Elders to maintain our traditional Secwepemc way of life and the parents' desire to learn and practice this way of life. The Elders' knowledge combined with the parents' ideas of how they want their children educated provides the framework for a Secwepemc education

model. This model is based on family learning to ensure language and knowledge is transmitted to future generations. It is a holistic model based on the land.

The central construct of this dissertation is the relationship between the restoration of language, culture, identity and decolonization. It shows how restoration of traditional ways requires processes of decolonization. I present decolonization theory by Indigenous scholars. The parents provide decolonization strategies. The strategies of restoring Secwepemc language, culture, identity, and land combined with decolonization strategies will lead to the healing of individuals, families, and communities and to our eventual restoration of self-determination.

**Keywords:** colonization; decolonization; hegemony; self-determination; indigenous pedagogy

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*Kukstec-kuc, Tqelk Kukpi7, xwexweyt re stext'ex7em, ell re kw'selkten.*

I acknowledge the Creator for all the gifts provided to us.

I acknowledge the ancestors for providing us with a way of life to have and to hold.

They kept our language and culture as sacred bundles to pass on to future generations.

I thank the all the Elders who have shared their teachings to ensure we will regain our language and way of life. Many of these Elders have passed on, but their teachings live on in me and others.

I thank the Elders in my study for having the patience and understanding to teach me so I can share with others through my writing. They give us strength, courage, and hope to regain Secwepemc language and knowledge.

I acknowledge the parents in my study who also provide courage and determination.

They have helped to decolonize me just as much as Indigenous scholars have.

Special thanks to my supervising committee members Michael Manley-Casimir and Makere Stewart-Harawira for their academic support and encouragement throughout the writing and editing of this thesis. I thank Geoff Madoc-Jones for his on-going support especially throughout the course work.

Finally, I would like to thank Joanie Wolfe for her formatting and editing expertise. Her help and support was invaluable to me in completing this dissertation.

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to the *tellqelmucw* (the people yet to come) in hopes that they will gain Secwepemc language and knowledge, and to the children who are now learning our language, values, beliefs, and cultural skills. With this knowledge, they will have a new memory of what it is to be Secwepemc.

I dedicate this work to all the young parents who are determined to ensure our language and way of life carries on within their families and extends to our communities.

I dedicate this work to my sons and their wives—Robin and Ramona, Shawn and Pam, who are raising their children with traditional values and beliefs. To my daughters Christine and Catherine Billy who spent their childhoods learning Secwepemc language and culture and who now are able to transmit this knowledge to their children and to the students they teach.

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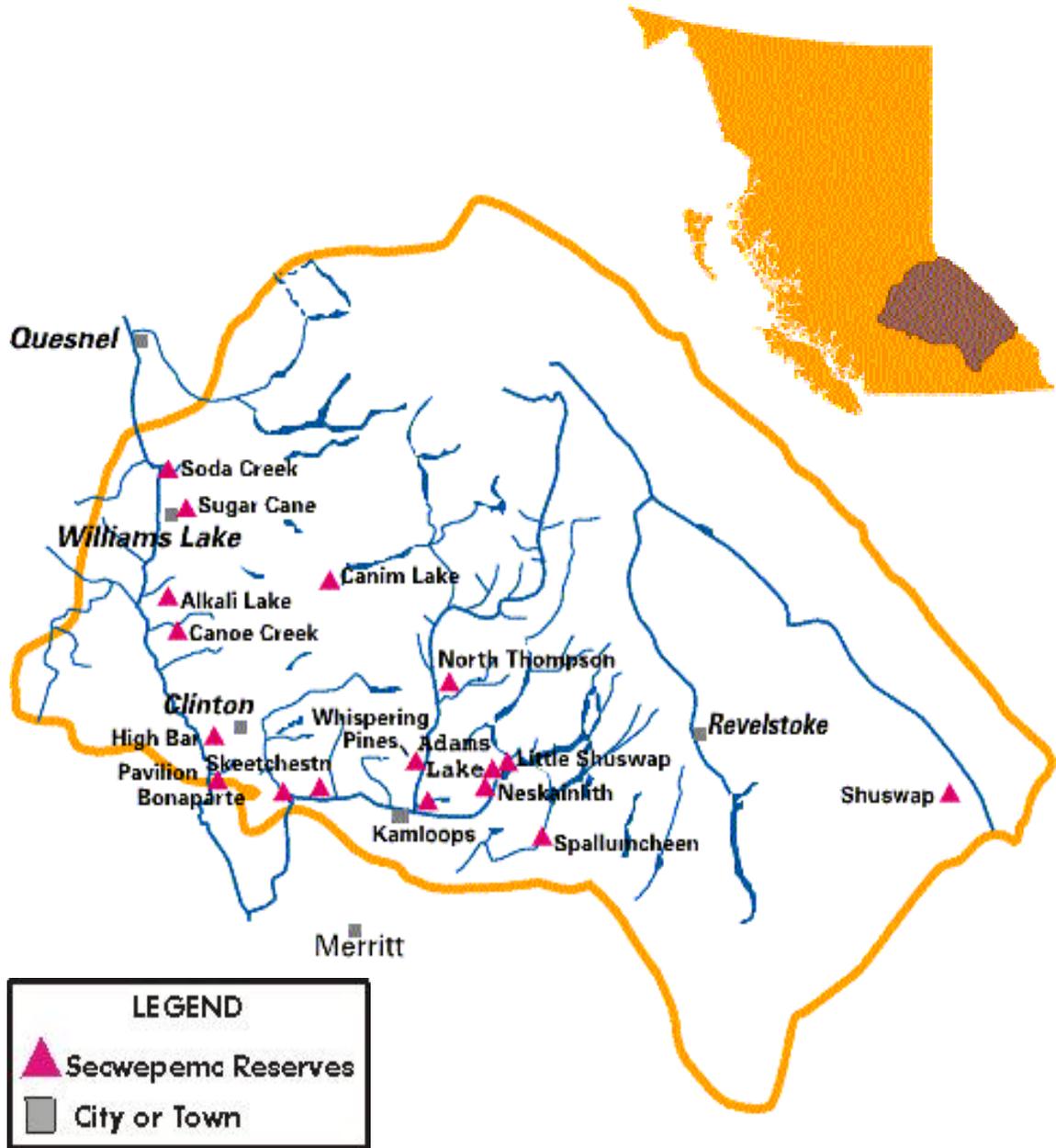
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## Secwepemc Nation Maps



Note. Secwepemc.org (n.d.), used with permission.

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Background and Statement of the Problem**

I would like to take you on a journey. A journey which I and my ancestors have embarked on since our world was created; a journey fraught with hardship, survival, as well as happiness and joy. This journey will give you a glimpse of our Secwepemc way of life before contact with European settlers when we were the only people on our land and when we were a strong and healthy Nation, with strong family and community system, with our culture and language intact. In this journey on which I take you, you will discover the incredible strength and fortitude of my people. We survived the ravages of colonization, oppression, subjugation, domination and their pathological effects. We survived and I am still here to share our story with you.

### **Who Are the Secwepemc?**

I am Secwepemc and I come from Secwepemculecw (Secwepemc Nation). Secwepemc is our name for the people. The late Secwepemc Elder Bill Arnouse, speaking at the National Elders conference in 1993, said that for us living in our area Secwepemc means “following the waters as it gathers more water and flows back down to the Pacific Ocean.” Now, we are referred to as Shuswap, which is an anglicized version of Secwepemc. Our language is Secwepemctsin. Our Nation (the land) is Secwepemculecw. We are the largest Interior Salish speaking Nation in British

Columbia. Ignace and Ignace (2004) describe Secwepemc territory as a vast territory which encompasses approximately:

180,000 square kilometers in the south central area of what is now known as British Columbia, stretching from near the Alberta border west of Jasper to the plateau west of the Fraser River, and southeast to the Arrow Lakes and the Columbia River. (p. 380)

Three large rivers run through the territory—the Fraser, the North and South Thompson. (Teit, 1909, p. 451). The Columbia River also runs through Secwepemc territory. Other informants say our traditional territory was much larger and that there is a map outlining it, although, I do not know its source.

Teit (1909) describes what he called “divisions” of the Secwepemc: the Fraser River Valley from High Bar to Soda Creek, Canon, North Thompson, Kinbasket, Bonaparte, Shuswap Lakes, Kamloops, Arrow Lake, and a Shuswap/Cree/Iroquois mixed division (p. 450). Each division had their extensive territories. Bands comprised of groups of families inhabited the various divisions. Village sites were established within the bands’ divisions.

Our Creation story informs us that Old One and Coyote created the world we now inhabit. They provided instructions of how we must live and responsibilities we must uphold so we would always live in harmony and balance with Mother Earth. Upholding our sacred responsibilities and using the knowledge we gained ensured our survival. We flourished on our lands for thousands of years. Our responsibilities, essential for survival, guaranteed our harmonious relationship with the land and all of Creation.

Secwepemculecw was, traditionally, a rich and varied environment. The rich landscapes included high alpine mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, river valleys, plateaus, meadows, grasslands, and dry deserts. These various landscapes provided a wide diversity of animal and plant foods, medicines, and technological resources. Palmer (1975) interviewed Secwepemc Elders and recorded 135 different plant species within the Lakes Division that were suitable for food, medicine, ceremonial, habitation, and technological use.

Our peoples, traditionally, were hunters, fishers, and gatherers. We followed the seasonal cycle of foods (for a detailed description of subsistence cycle, see Ignace & Ignace, 2004) travelling great distances to procure and preserve food. Enough food had to be preserved for the long, harsh winters. With our intimate knowledge of the environments, we based our subsistence economy on balancing the use of resources with careful management regimes. We made use of foods which were in abundance, but also relied on other sources when primary sources failed.

Cajete (2000) describes a worldview as “a set of assumptions and beliefs that form the basis of a peoples’ comprehension of the world” (p. 62). Like many other Indigenous peoples’, Secwepemc ontology (worldview) is grounded in the right relationship between people and the natural world. Traditional Secwepemc way of life was based on the land. Our practical needs—food, medicine, technology, social and political organization, kinship, and spirituality were interconnected and interdependent. Our worldview necessitated a practical and spiritual respect for the people, land, water, air, animals, plants, celestial bodies, and the spiritual realm. Upholding our responsibilities ensured a balanced and harmonious relationship with people, land, and the spiritual realm and ensured our survival for thousands of years.

Our life on the land equipped us with an enormous repository of traditional knowledge. Ecological, cultural, linguistic, and spiritual knowledge was gained through active participation and through observation of the land. Keen observation of the natural environment guaranteed the acquisition, maintenance, and transmission of knowledge. For example, gathering fir pitch for medicine involved observation of evergreen trees in the forest. When one observed a tree that had been struck by lightning, he knew it would have large amounts of pitch running out. This not only enabled the tree to heal, but our people to gather the pitch for healing themselves. Our hunters, with their intimate knowledge of the ecosystems, observed animals they hunted or trapped so well that they “became the animal” to ensure a successful hunt (William Ignace, personal communication, March 14, 2007).

Cajete (2000) cites ontological principles common to many Indigenous peoples as “being true to all our relationships, keeping true to our responsibilities, compacts, and alliances with the Natural World” (p. 74). This relationship entails maintaining balance and harmony in all relationships. Cajete states, “everything is related and connected in dynamic, interactive and mutually reciprocal relationships” (p. 75). Hence, this mutual reciprocity requires one to give back for what is received or taken.

Indigenous ontology, pedagogy, and epistemology are based on the Natural World. They are interconnected and cannot be separated from one another. Hence, since the Secwepemc are people of the land, they share similar ontological, pedagogical, and epistemological principles with other Indigenous peoples. As I discuss these principles in this dissertation, I make reference to other Indigenous people’s traditions and practices as well as ones common to the Secwepemc.

## The Structure of Knowledge

Secwepemc knowledge, traditionally, was acquired, maintained, and transmitted through symbolic and oral tradition (language, songs, dances, stories, rituals, ceremonies, and practical activities). We relied on our language and traditional knowledge to provide us with a sense of who we are and how we are to live. Language was, and remains, the critical vehicle for the acquisition, maintenance and transmission of Secwepemc knowledge. Our language, Secwepemctsin, was never a written language, but passed down orally through the generations. Daily communication, oral histories, storytelling, and ceremonies and rituals were all conducted in Secwepemctsin. Describing language, Celia Haig-Brown (1989) states:

within Secwepemc society existed all the complexities of a culture: government, religion, science, technology, acknowledgment and celebration of life passages, traditions, and oral history, which included a theory of origin. As with all cultures, language served as an expression of and for the transmission of culture. (p. 23)

The late Secwepemc Elder Bill Arnouse states, “the Creator gave us a land and with that land, gave us a language, that we hold today, for our communication to our people and to the Natural World” (Assembly of First Nations Language Conference, June, 2003). Another eloquent expression of the importance of language is by the late Elder Eli Taylor.

Our Native language embodies a value system about how we ought to live and relate to each other it gives a name to relations among kin, to roles and responsibilities among family members, to ties with the broader clan group. There are no English words for these relationships. Now, if you destroy our language you not only break down these relationships, but you also destroy other aspects of our Indian way of life and culture, especially those that describe man’s connection with nature, the Great Spirit, and the order of things. Without our languages, we will cease to

exist as a separate people. (Assembly of First Nations quoted in Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 49)

Indigenous scholars, Marie Battiste and colleague Youngblood Henderson (2000), reaffirm what the Elders say: “Indigenous languages are the means of communicating the full range of human experiences and are critical to the survival of Indigenous peoples” (p. 48). She also reminds us that language is the critical link between sacred knowledge and the skills required to survive. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson conclude, “indigenous languages provide the deep cognitive bonds that affect all the aspects of Indigenous life—through their shared language, indigenous people create a shared belief in how the world works and what constitutes proper action” (p. 49).

Within the structure of Secwepemc knowledge, the responsibility for teaching and acquiring knowledge was well defined. Deloria, quoted in Swan (1998), eloquently outlines the roles and responsibilities of the family and community in ensuring children acquired knowledge. He states:

the concept of kinship and clan relations is rooted in the idea that every individual is responsible to every other member in the group to ensure that correct behavior is adhered to, thus, the values, norms, and beliefs are perpetuated by everyone. It is up to each and every member to accept responsibility of proper conduct so that the society as a whole functions. (Swan, p. 56)

## **Secwepemc Pedagogy**

Secwepemc pedagogy, traditionally, was based on the land. Our Elders say “the land is your teacher” and you will know what to do based on your knowledge of the land. Fixico (2003), Swan (1998) and Harp (1998) articulate the pedagogy of the land

common to many Indigenous peoples including the Secwepemc. Listening and keen observation skills are essential learning strategies for people in land based cultures such as the Secwepemc. Secwepemc pedagogy fits the description provided by Australian Indigenous scholar, Karen Martin (n.d.). In her unpublished thesis, *Quandomooka Ontology*, she articulates the holistic nature of Indigenous pedagogy. She affirms that Indigenous pedagogy is all-encompassing and that it reflects Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing which understand the connectedness of past, present, and future as parts of the whole universe. She further describes it as being interplay of physical, spiritual, political, geographical, environmental, intellectual, emotional, social, historical, sensory, instinctual, and intuitive elements of experience.

## **Disruption of Knowledge**

The first part of this chapter provides a brief glimpse into Secwepemc pre-contact life. This way of life; however, was transformed drastically with the arrival of the European colonizers. Waves of colonizing forces confronted the Secwepemc. The colonial government agents, explorers, fur traders, miners, missionaries, ranchers, loggers, and settlers wrought destruction on the once strong and healthy Secwepemc Nation. Although the colonial forces were many, the colonial governments and the churches are considered the main perpetrators, working together in a systematic, synchronized way to colonize and oppress our people. Our late Elder Mary Thomas describes the changes.

I can remember my grandmother when I was a growing child. Around that time, the government and the churches made a drastic change in our lifestyle. The freedom that we once had in sharing our Secwepemc land with other families, in gathering for our survival, the children were always part of of what the Elders were doing. It was a slow change happening,

where the government said that we were no longer allowed to share all the Shuswap area. We were put into areas where, as Bands, we call a reservation. And our parents were forced to accept a new lifestyle. (Thomas, 2001, p. 2)

By the early 1900s, the Secwepemc were left struggling to survive from the devastating effects of colonization. In our physically, culturally, and spiritually weakened state, dispossessed of land, language, and culture, we were thrust to the brink of extinction. Among the most devastating losses endured was the disruption of intergenerational transmission of language and culture. We now face the harsh reality of not knowing our language, culture and history as we should. Many of our ancestors passed on without leaving us this precious legacy. We now only know bits and pieces of our traditional way of life. Due to our sheer strength and perseverance however, we have survived and are still here today.

In order to begin the process of rebuilding, we must understand our experience with colonization and oppression and all its devastating effects. Understanding is critical to comprehend the depth of the “problem” caused by colonization—the loss of Secwepemc culture, language, knowledge, and land. An even greater aftermath of colonization is forced imposition of foreign systems and a foreign way of life on our people. Today we are still colonized, subjugated, and oppressed by these foreign institutions and ones administered by our own people. Each day we are becoming increasingly assimilated into EuroCanadian life.

Transformative action is needed to reverse this process. My intention is to reconstruct, as much as possible, traditional Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy. In doing so, we have the opportunity then to replace the imposed systems with traditional Secwepemc ways of knowing, doing, and being. I will attempt to

reconstruct our past, fit together the pieces of the puzzle, to the best of my ability. Our Elders tell us that in order to know who we are, we must know where we came from.

I rely on Elders' memories and written ethnographic descriptions by James Teit and other anthropologists, who came to our territories in the late 1800s and early 1900s, to help in this reconstruction. Teit's manuscripts appear to be the most comprehensive study of pre-contact Secwepemc life. His manuscripts are one of the few, written sources on the Secwepemc. I feel James Teit's writings are a reliable source of the historical information I desperately need.

I rely on assistance from Indigenous scholars such as Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000); Cajete (2000); Ermine (1995); Martin, McMurphy-Pilkington, Tamati, Martin, and Dale (2003), and Brant-Castellano (2002) who have articulated Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy. Since it is widely recognized that Indigenous cultures throughout the world share similar cultures, much of what these scholars write is consistent with Secwepemc traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Dr. Leanne Simpson (2004), a leading Indigenous researcher, writer, educator, and activist and citizen of the Nishnaabeg Nation, powerfully summarizes not only our plight, but the plight of all Indigenous Nations. She writes:

When Indigenous Nations were an obstacle toward establishing European sovereignty over Indigenous lands, the foundation of Indigenous Knowledge was attacked by the invading culture as a mechanism to annihilate Indigenous Nations and assimilate Indigenous Peoples. Indeed, the colonial powers attacked virtually every aspect of our knowledge systems during the most violent periods of the past five centuries by rendering our spirituality and ceremonial life illegal, attempting to assimilate our children and destroy our languages through the residential school system, outlawing traditional governance, and destroying the lands and water to which we are intrinsically tied. Our knowledge comes from the land, and the destruction of the environment

is a colonial manifestation and a direct attack on Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous nationhood. (p. 4)

## **Introduction to the Problem**

With some exceptions, Indigenous peoples worldwide have been minoritized and marginalized in their homelands, they share with other minoritized people a diasporic history characterized by invasion, colonization, displacement, enslavement, and genocide. (Deyhle, Swisher, Stevens, & Galvan, 2008, p. 1)

Indeed, the systematic assaults on Secwepemc culture, language, land, spirituality, family structures, communal way of living, and all other aspects of our way of life were deliberate and calculated resulting in the ultimate loss—loss of self-determination. Colonial actions were designed to remove and alienate us from our traditional territories and resources where Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy emanate. Calculated strategies, such as the eradication of Secwepemc culture and language by forced attendance at the Kamloops Indian Residential School have been well documented in research by Haig-Brown (1989), George Manuel (1974), and Jack (2000), were employed with the ultimate goals of extermination of the Secwepemc and theft of our lands.

The problems we now face are multi-faceted and interconnected. We no longer practice, maintain, and transmit our language and Secwepemc way of life to the extent that we must to future generations. The forces of colonization and oppression have rendered Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy to the point of near extinction. Parents, grandparents, extended family, children, and community members no longer uphold their responsibilities or fulfill their roles according to our Secwepemc way of life because much knowledge fell into disuse and was lost.

We have largely adopted governance, education, economic, health systems and family structures based on EuroCanadian models. Our use of the English language is a prime example of the adoption of a foreign lifestyle. We remain colonized, oppressed by colonial institutions as well as our own. Our traditional territories are being destroyed by industrial, residential, and recreational development and we are losing access to them at an alarming rate. We are not acting like a self-determined Secwepemc Nation; instead, we contribute to almost every social pathology and critical health issue imaginable.

## **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to research and describe Secwepemc ontology, pedagogy, and epistemology; to explain how this knowledge was disrupted by colonization; to conduct research with parents to determine the type of education (training) desired for themselves and their children; and to use the knowledge provided by Elders and parents to propose a model of Secwepemc education/training.

This study is needed to reveal the urgency of re-learning and re-establishing Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy, so Secwepemc language, culture, identity and other aspects of our lives destroyed by colonization and by adoption of EuroCanadian ways of life can be restored, maintained, and transmitted to future generations. It is needed to critically examine the forces which perpetuate colonization and oppression by colonizing agents including our own; to undergo the process of decolonization and empower Secwepemc to achieve the ultimate goal of a self-determined Secwepemc Nation.

This study is timely because of the urgency surrounding the state of Secwepemc ontology, epistemology (including Secwepemc language and knowledge) and pedagogy and the diminishing land base whence all knowledge emanates. Elders, the only ones who know the language, culture, and history, are passing away at an alarming rate. Very few Secwepemc of the younger generation are actively re-learning and transmitting language and other aspects of our way of life to their children and grandchildren. These issues have not been fully addressed within the Secwepemc Nation, or within any of our neighbouring Nations. There are no models of education/training based on restoring Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy, which contain a decolonization agenda.

We know our situation has reached the crisis stage as we become more assimilated and continue to be colonized by EuroCanadian institutions. We want to know how to halt the degeneration and loss of our Secwepemc way of life and to increase the use of our language and culture and all its aspects to the fullest extent possible. We want to decolonize and empower ourselves so we can be in control of our own destiny. We must live up to our sacred responsibilities as stated in our Okanagan/Shuswap Declaration (see Appendix A). The restoration and daily practice of our Secwepemc way of life is essential to our very survival as Secwepemc and to the maintenance, preservation, and protection of land and biodiversity.

## **Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative research approach since the topic and concepts of my research are not suitable to quantitative and positivist approaches. Denzin (2005) observes, "indigenists resist the positivist methodologies of Western science because

non-Indigenous scholars too frequently use these foundations to validate colonizing knowledge about Indigenous peoples” (p. 943) and “indigenous peoples deploy, instead, interpretive strategies and skills that fit the needs, languages, and traditions of their respective communities” (p. 943). The methodological assumption of a qualitative approach, according to Creswell (1998), dictates that the researcher works inductively, studies the topic within context, and uses an emerging design. Creswell (1998) states, “the researcher starts with general questions and refines them as the study proceeds and includes a discussion of the context of the subject or case being studied” (p. 78). This is important in my study because interactions with participants did determine the research. I proposed key questions which, however, may change depending on the participants’ responses.

A qualitative approach recognizes the need to study specific, unexplored topics. A theory or model of Secwepemc education based on traditional ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy that encompass a decolonization agenda has not yet been developed. Creswell (2003) informs us that in qualitative approaches, theory is not established beforehand. He describes qualitative research as an emerging design and those meanings and data are negotiated with human data sources because it is the subjects’ realities that the researcher attempts to reconstruct. He contends that reality is subjective and that there are multiple realities. Therefore, it is critical that, I as the researcher rely on the voices and interpretations of the informants so they can construct their reality and I can interpret it for the purposes of this dissertation.

The naturalistic and interpretive characteristics of qualitative research are consistent with Secwepemc thinking and ways of being. Creswell (2003) cites elements of this approach which make it compatible with Secwepemc values. They include: the

research occurs in natural settings where human behaviour and events occur; the focus is on the participants' perceptions and experiences and the ways they make sense of their lives; and it relies on the use of tacit knowledge (intuitive and felt knowledge). The use of narrative is another important feature of qualitative research. As Creswell (1998) describes, "we tell the stories" and "we let the voices of our informants speak and carry the story" (p.20). This characteristic is congruent with the storytelling traditions of Indigenous Peoples. Respect, an important value in Secwepemc culture, is embodied in qualitative research methods. Respect is bestowed upon the participants when the researcher employs the role of "an active listener who can tell the story from the participants' view rather than as an 'expert' who passes judgement on the participants" (Creswell, 1998, p. 18).

The methods of obtaining results from qualitative research are just as important as data collection. Data emerging from these studies are descriptive and reported in words rather than numbers. Creswell (2003) notes that data is interpreted in regards to the particulars of a case, rather than generalizations. In addition, he asserts, "criteria for judging a qualitative study differs from quantitative research" in that "the researcher seeks believability, based on coherence, insight, and instrumental utility, and trustworthiness through a process of verification rather than through traditional validity and reliability" (p. 199).

## **Phenomenology**

I will use elements of a phenomenological approach; however, my study will not be a pure form of phenomenology. In my study there is just one experience and one phenomenon to be studied; and bracketing my personal experiences (to understand the

phenomena through voices of the informants) is not possible, since my experiences with the phenomena are similar to those of the participants. Despite these limitations, a phenomenological approach appears most conducive to describing and documenting the lived experiences and expressing the feelings of my participants (Elders and young parents) about the phenomena. In my study, the lived experience is the loss of Secwepemc language, most aspects of culture, loss of land, and self-determination. The phenomena are colonization, domination, and oppression.

Some aspects of a phenomenological approach are evident in my research processes. My research questions explore the meaning of participants' experiences and ask them to describe their everyday lived experience. I collected data from individuals who have experienced the phenomena under study. I present what was experienced and how it was experienced. I conduct an analysis of specific statements and themes and then search for possible meanings. The end result is a better understanding of the experience. Although phenomenology recognizes a single unifying experience, in my study experiences are multi-dimensional. My goal is for the readers of my study to say, "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Creswell, 1998, p. 55).

## **Limitations of My Study**

Although this is an ambitious research project and I hope to accomplish what I set out to do, there are limitations to consider. One of the most serious ones is the dearth of Elders who possess Secwepemc knowledge held prior to contact. In my community, there are only two Elders over the age of 80 who still hold traditional knowledge. There are a few Elders under the age of eighty who hold some knowledge, but by and large, most of the Elders attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School

and did not participate in cultural activities on the land or spirituality when they returned from the school, and therefore, do not hold this traditional knowledge. The Elders in my study are of the age group whose parents and grandparents spoke the language as their first language and participated in traditional activities so I will rely on their recollections of this way of life.

Another limitation will be locating authentic historical archival information. Archived research on the Secwepemc is limited to a few early ethnographers; namely James Teit and George Dawson who recorded information in the early 1900s. At this time, the Secwepemc had already experienced contact with the settlers. Further to this limitation is verifying Teit and Dawson's research with Elders who still know the traditional culture and history.

Another limitation is locating information on other indigenous education programs that restore indigenous culture and language and empower the people to work on self-determination. There are examples of such programs in Hawaii and New Zealand; however, I hope to find other examples of indigenous peoples who are undergoing decolonization and achieving self-determination and sovereignty.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### ***Colonization***

Colonization, narrowly defined, is the practice of domination and subjugation of one group by another. It is based on the doctrine of cultural hierarchy and supremacy. Kortright (2004) describes its process. Colonization establishes its dominance by physical force, expropriation of labour and resources, imprisonment (in our case, the

imprisonment of people practicing culture), objective murders (the spread of epidemics), and enslavement of Indigenous peoples and their lands. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1998) add that colonization maintains a rigid hierarchy of difference between the colonizer and the colonized and, thus, is deeply resistant to fair and equitable exchanges. The colonizer establishes institutions that perpetuate political, economic, legal, cultural, and social power over the colonized and render them dependent. Bahri (2006) cites Memmi as stating that racism and terror are the colonizer's main tools, which are ingrained in every institution and established the sub-humanity of the colonized. Another major tool of colonization is the deliberate destruction of culture, language, and way of life of the "other". Hence, colonization, in our case, results in loss of land, self-determination, language, culture, spirituality, and identity. The process of colonization and its effects on the Secwepemc will be discussed in Chapter 2.

## ***Decolonization***

The most succinct description of decolonization I found is in Wikipedia (*Indigenous decolonization*, n.d.), which describes decolonization as:

a process that Indigenous people(s) whose communities were grossly affected by colonial expansion, genocide and cultural assimilation may go through in understanding the history of their colonization and rediscovering their ancestral traditions and cultural values. (¶1)

Wilson (2005) suggests that one of the first steps toward decolonization is to question the legitimacy of colonization. She states that once we know the truth of the injustice, we can think about ways to resist and challenge colonial institutions and ideologies. Hence, two of the critical steps in resisting and challenging these institutions are revitalization and practice of cultures dismantled by colonization. We must restore and

practice our political, cultural, social, economic, spiritual, health and educational systems and adapt them to a modern setting. I fully endorse the decolonization strategies outlined in Wikipedia that state:

Indigenous decolonization must incorporate physical, psychological, and emotional and spiritual strategies since the body, mind and the soul are affected directly by colonialism. True decolonization can only be achieved when all of these components have been addressed or met in some way. (*Indigenous decolonization*, ¶1)

Restoring these aspects of life to our identity is key to the decolonization process.

According to Alfred (1999), one of the steps in decolonization is to remove ourselves from direct state control.

### ***Hegemony***

Hegemony is generally understood to mean domination by consent. That is, if one group is dominated by group, domination is by consent. Ashcroft et al. (1998) elaborate Gramsci's concept of hegemony as the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all. They further state that domination is exerted by a subtle and inclusive power over the economy and over state apparatuses such as education and the media, by which the ruling class's interests are presented as the common interest and thus come to be taken for granted. In our case, Euro-Canadian hegemony is a contributing factor to the on-going colonization of our people.

### ***Self-determination***

The most accurate definitions of Indigenous self-determination I found are provided by Tom Mexsis Happynook (n.d.) of the Nuu-chal-nulth Tribal Council and

Taiaiake Alfred (1999). Both describe Indigenous self-determination as a way of life—living the “good life”. To Mexsis Happynook, self-determination is to:

secure our right to live; create a safe environment to live in; revive our identities; restore our languages; assert our right to our customary foods; return to our belief systems; utilize our accumulated ancient wisdom; rebuild our local economies; revitalize our natural resources and restructure our traditional governments to be effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.  
(¶1)

He adds we must restore the principles of respect, order, protocols, spoken word, ownership, responsibility, accountability, discipline, and preparation. Indigenous self-determination entails the social, cultural, linguistic, spiritual, physical, emotional, and psychological survival of the people. It encompasses duties, responsibilities, philosophies, jurisdictions, and authorities (unwritten Indigenous laws); the most essential of these responsibilities are those that integrate people with their environment and maintain their relationship with nature, the environment and the ecosystems of our people, Indigenous governance, and cultural practices are all integral parts. Both Happynook and Alfred propose the development of traditional governance structures and belief systems as strategies to achieve self-determination. In promoting self-determination, Alfred (1999) states we must, “take action to restore pride in our traditions, achieve economic self-sufficiency, develop independence and display courage in the defence of our lands and rights” (p. xii).

## **Organization of Dissertation**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to my dissertation. It includes an introduction to the Secwepemc and how traditional life was disrupted as a result of colonization. This provides readers with the context from which the research problem arose. This chapter

introduces the research problem, the purpose of the study; a brief description of the research method; limitations of the research; explanations of key terms; and organization of the dissertation. Chapter 2 describes pre-contact Secwepemc way of life including ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy. The second part provides a brief examination of the colonizing agents and forces which contributed to the destruction of the Secwepemc way of life. Chapter 3 investigates the process and impacts of colonization. It describes how Secwepemc economic, political, cultural, linguistic, spiritual, and social positioning was affected by colonization. It undertakes a critical analysis of the historical events which contributed to colonization, oppression, displacement, domination, and exploitation of our people and lands and examines the ensuing pathologies to help understand “the problems”. Chapter 4 presents a review of several examples of literature within the themes of my research, namely the work of Indigenous scholars who have written on the struggle for reclamation of culture, language, and identity. Chapter 5 describes the research method employed in this study. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the study and proposes a remedy to restore, maintain, and transmit Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy among our people. The Elders provide traditional Secwepemc knowledge in regards to learning/teaching. The parents present their ideas of the knowledge, values, qualities, and ways of life they want to learn for themselves and their children. A Secwepemc model of education/training is presented based on contributions of Elders and parents. Chapter 7 discusses the effects of colonization from the Elders and parents perspectives. It proposes decolonization strategies identified by the parents and includes the conclusion to my dissertation.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Pre-contact Secwepemc Life and the Impact of Colonizing Agents**

In Part 1 of this chapter, I present our Secwepemc creation story. Since our culture was oral and much of our original knowledge is not recorded, we now rely on written sources such as those compiled by ethnographer, James Teit, who came to Secwepemculecw in the early 1900s. Our creation story provides insights into Secwepemc philosophy and worldview. I also describe Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy. Indigenous cultures throughout Canada and United States, and in many parts of the world, including the Secwepemc, share similar epistemologies and pedagogies.

In Part 2, I discuss the colonizing forces which severely impacted the Secwepemc. In order to reverse the process of culture and language loss, assimilation, oppression, and colonization, we must be aware of the historical events that affected our lives in the past and continue to affect us in the present. Waves of colonizers swept into Secwepemculewc—explorers, fur traders, missionaries, gold miners, colonial governments, and settlers—each leaving their devastating impacts. Of all the colonizers, the Catholic Church, with the establishment of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, wielded the greatest devastation. Because of this institution,

Secwepemc knowledge, language, culture, and way of life were repressed and, now, are in a grave and precarious state.

## **Part 1.**

### **Traditional Teachings**

#### ***Our Creation Story***

James Teit (1909) documented much information from Secwepemc Elders in the Northern and Southern Secwepemc Territory. At the time of his research, the people were still practicing aspects of their traditional way of life and still retained knowledge passed down from their ancestors. These Elders described, to Teit, the Secwepemc creation story, which I recount here.

We believe we lived on our lands since the creation of the new world which Old One and Coyote worked together to create. Prior to this era, during the mythological age, the people who inhabited the earth had both human and animal characteristics. They were called *speta'kul*; some were cannibals. Many other mythological beings existed. During this time, the earth was troubled by great winds, fires, and floods. Many animals, birds, fishes, trees, plants, and berries did not exist.

Old One sent Coyote to travel over the world, including Secwepemculecw, to put things right for the people. Coyote was gifted with magical powers beyond that of other mythological beings. He had great knowledge and was cunning. He is known in our stories as The Trickster. Oftentimes, he was selfish, lazy, vain, and played many foolish tricks on others. Many times he died, and came back to life.

We are indebted to Coyote for the great deal of work he accomplished in making our land a better place. Coyote created many wonderful things for the people as he traveled around Secwepemculecw. One of his greatest works was introducing salmon into the rivers and the making of fishing places. Among Coyote's accomplishments was the creation of the seasons and of day and night.

Coyote taught many lessons on how to behave properly using himself as an example. In fact, today you can see the markers left by Coyote that remind us of proper behaviour. On the shore of the South Thompson River at Neskonlith, there is a big rock and a small rock that are Coyote and his son. They were transformed into rock because of their wicked thoughts. When we see the rocks, we are reminded of Coyote's actions and what happened to him when he behaved inappropriately.

It is said, when the time came for him to leave, he disappeared and no one knows where he went. It is certain he did not die; and it is expected that he will return some day and do wonders on earth again. It is said that one day when the people really need him, he will return to offer his help.

Other transformers inhabited the land at this time who taught the people various arts. Some helped rid the world of many evil beings that preyed on people. Tlii7sa and his brothers were transformers who slew dangerous animals and monsters.

Another important figure in Secwepemc history, was Old One; Chief of the Ancient World. He traveled in the form of an old man, but at times, changed his appearance. After Coyote left, he finished the work that was undone, leaving the earth as we see it today. Teit (1909) describes him as:

all-powerful in magic and always able to do what he took in hand. He never acted the fool, like Coyote. Whenever he played any tricks, they resulted in good. When he appeared, no one knew who he was, and he traveled rapidly over the country, performing much more work than Coyote, in much less time. (p. 596)

Old One completed much work to make the world better for the people. Teit explains:

He made transformations whenever he thought they were required. He flattened the land in some places, and raised it in other places. Where it was too dry, he made lakes and where there was too much water, he made it dry. He put the sun and moon in their proper positions, and made rain and snow to fall at the proper seasons. Some say there was no rain in the world until he caused it to come. He also regulated the winds, telling them the proper directions from which to blow, and when to be calm. (1909, p. 596)

Like Coyote, Old One introduced salmon and trout into the lakes, streams, and rivers. He created new kinds of trees, bushes, and plants to grow. Old One also introduced many kinds of animals, such as, deer, elk, bear, and hare. Before this, the animals were living in their own underground world. Old One taught the people to be respectful of the animals, use them properly, and never make them angry.

The people, at this time, were poor and selfish and had to be taught what foods to eat, how to procure, preserve, and prepare them. Old One gave lessons on how to make certain tools, weapons, baskets, snowshoes, and canoes. He introduced the sweat-lodge to the people.

Old One led the tribes into areas which they now inhabit and gave them languages to speak. He transformed the remaining bad people into animals, birds, and fishes. Ignace and Ignace (2004) further explain the work of Old One, he “provided humans with the arts and customs that distinguish them from animals by giving them diverse languages .” (p. 380). The present day tribes are descendants of the good

people of the mythological period; but they were not equally good, therefore, we find some people better than others at the present day.

When Old One completed his work, he left; no one knows where. Some say he went to the sky, where he now watches the earth and makes rain and snow. Others say he became Chief of the Dead and lives in the Spirit-Land, whence he sometimes sends messages. Like Coyote, he is expected to return one day and make the world even better than it is. Coyote may precede or accompany him.

### ***Secwepemc Ontology***

The old stories explain our philosophy and beliefs and set out how we must live. We can learn a lot from information from our ancestors, described and documented, by Teit. Although today we have few Elders who know the old stories, we do have access to some written documents by Secwepemc Elders such as Mary Thomas and research provided by Ignace and Ignace (2004). With Teit's research and our own written sources, we have enough knowledge of our traditional way of life to begin the reconstruction process. In her written documents, our late Elder Mary Thomas (2001) shared Secwepemc philosophy and knowledge. Describing Secwepemc spirituality, she says:

It's kind of a rewarding way of doing it, because I know that our spirituality was connected to Mother Earth. I can remember my grandmother taking us out in the wilderness. My grandmother would never touch any herb, or any tree, or any food, whatever she was looking for. She wouldn't touch it without acknowledging it first. She'd go, and she would be chanting, and she'd go up and if it was a tree she wants the bark from, she'd acknowledge the tree: 'Creator, put your ear to help me, and I come for help from you. I need this much medicine. Help me heal'. Or if it's somebody else, they'd say 'I'm taking it home for my son or daughter' or whatever. And they always left a gift, something in return to acknowledge the plant. (p. 23)

As Secwepemc, we must never offend the plants, animals, and everything in Creation because we believe, as Cajete (2000) states, “everything is viewed as having energy” (p. 21) and, therefore, considered to be alive or animate and imbued with spirit or energy.

The interconnection of land, culture, people, and spirituality embodies the Secwepemc way of life. Our knowledge system provided us with a clear understanding of the social, ecological, and spiritual consequences of our actions. Hence, we uphold our responsibility to care for the land in a careful and systematic manner. One example is the practice of intensive land management regimes which ensured resources were available for present and future generations. Elders recall burning certain landscapes to ensure plentiful crops of huckleberries for the following years. Harvesting techniques, such as replanting the corms of the Avalanche lily, also ensured plentiful food supplies. Natural and supernatural consequences may result from not maintaining balance and harmony. Ignace and Ignace (2004) provide the following example.

Nellie Taylor often told of how she and her partner, Cecilia Peters, went to Hi-Hum Lake to fish trout. Two young men had set up camp and were roasting the fish they had caught without offering any to the Elders. ‘After that, the fish just quit running for them. They never caught any more’, she remarked wryly. (p. 386)

By violating the norm of sharing (especially with Elders) state Ignace and Ignace, they had acted inappropriately and had brought about supernatural sanctions of their behaviour in that the fish stopped running for them.

Accordingly, Secwepemc values, beliefs, and morals were obtained from the relationship and interaction with the land. Values, such as gratitude and sharing, ensured the success of the people. These values, beliefs, morals, and teachings were expressed through our language. Secwepemctsin ensured the acquisition, maintenance,

and transmission of cultural, ecological, and spiritual values. An Elder spiritual healer from Alberta, speaking at the Assembly of First Nations Elders Conference, describes this relationship:

our greatest asset is our language. It connects us. The Creator gave us our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual connectedness. We cannot protect our culture and ceremonies if we do not have our languages. We are not whole people if we are disconnected from the Creator. (Goodstriker, 1993)

## ***Epistemology***

Epistemology, narrowly defined in Stanford Dictionary, is the study of knowledge and justified belief (*Epistemology*, 2005). Where the study of knowledge is concerned, the following questions are asked.

1. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge?
2. What are its sources?
3. What is its structure?
4. What are its limits?

As I attempt to describe Indigenous and, hence, Secwepemc epistemology, I will make use of some questions, adapt others, and add some of my own. I will endeavour to answer the following questions.

1. What is knowledge?
2. What are the forms of knowledge?
3. How is knowledge acquired, maintained, and transmitted?
4. What are the sources of knowledge?
5. What is its structure?

6. Who is responsible for ensuring knowledge is gained?
7. Who acquired what knowledge?

Indigenous scholars, such as Willie Ermine (1995), have elucidated aspects of aboriginal epistemology which are strikingly similar to Secwepemc epistemology.

Ermine, a Cree scholar, explains the distinctiveness of aboriginal epistemology:

those people who seek knowledge on the physical plane objectively find their answers through exploration of the outer space, solely on the corporeal level. Those who seek to understand the reality of existence and harmony with the environment by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm that might be termed "Aboriginal epistemology". (p. 102)

Ermine (1995) goes on to explain aboriginal epistemology as comprised of one's personal set of kinship, experiences, relationships, knowledge of community, practices, spirituality, and history. Vizina (2006) also acknowledges that, "aboriginal epistemology requires an acceptance that knowledge exists in many forms, including the tangible and intangible" (p. 3). Battiste (2002) describes its source, "aboriginal epistemology is found in theories, philosophies, histories, ceremonies, and stories as ways of knowing" (p. 18).

Although practiced by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, it is only recently that Indigenous scholars have conducted and published research on Indigenous epistemology. Cajete (2000), Battiste and Henderson (2000), Fixico (2003), and Brant-Castellano (2002) use various terms when discussing Aboriginal epistemology and pedagogy. Some of the terms include Indigenous knowledge, traditional knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge, eco-philosophy, Native science, and traditional environmental knowledge. From my research, I have ascertained that these terms

contain similar notions of how knowledge was acquired, maintained, and transmitted within traditional Secwepemc society.

Battiste and colleague Henderson use the term “Indigenous knowledge”. They explain the impossibility of using Eurocentric scientific paradigms to define it, and maintain that the oral nature, intangible aspects and holistic views of Indigenous knowledge does not fit into foreign paradigms. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) contend that Eurocentric scientific paradigms search for tangible evidence, definitions, and non-contradictory qualities, and without these qualities, Eurocentric scientific paradigms cannot accept or process other kinds of information. Furthermore, they advocate understanding Indigenous knowledge requires the use of Indigenous paradigms that respect the intangible, intuitive and shifting nature of Indigenous knowledge systems.

Indigenous knowledge systems, including Secwepemc ones, are holistic and not separate from other aspects of life. Within Indigenous societies, states Cajete (2000) there is no word for “education”. In Secwepemc way of life, one was not “educated” as in the sense we use the word today—through formal schooling. In Secwepemc life, learning, knowing, and understanding were life long processes, and a life long responsibility, beginning even before birth and continuing until death. Cajete (2000) explains, “coming to know” and “a coming to understanding” metaphorically entails a journey, a process, a quest for knowledge and understanding.

In Secwepemctsin, we use the term “clleq’melt” which translates as “to advise”. This term was used in the teaching of daily and practical activities whereas, the term “etsce7”, has deeper meaning. It is used to explain the process used in coming of age

training and ceremonies and knowledge gained from *etsxe*. Rather than 'education', adolescent boys and girls underwent rigorous *etsxe* training, at puberty, which enabled them to acquire the practical skills, values, attitudes, and spiritual beliefs to fulfill their roles and responsibilities within Secwepemc society and as Brant-Castellano (2002) explains, to make the "transition to adult roles and responsibilities" (p. 24). An important aspect of *etsxe* training was vision quest. Cajete (2000) describes it as, "one of the ways in which a person gains knowledge about one's purpose and one's soul, as well as the forces of nature and the surrounding environment" (p. 43). One participating in a vision quest would go to a high mountain area and spend four days and nights fasting in isolation. Training times varied depending on the purpose. One training as a *t'ekwilc* (medicine person) would spend years in isolation as part of his training. Meditation and fasting, important aspects of the vision quest, facilitated the acquisition of spiritual knowledge.

Traditionally, pubescent Secwepemc girls would undergo rigorous training as well. The women Elders in my study did not recount any stories of this practice; however, Teit (1909) describes the training of girls. He reports that girls upon their first menses fasted away from the people for 4 days. During this time, they practiced the various skills they would need in the future such as making baskets. Young girls would bathe in running water, washing themselves with fir boughs and praying to Day Dawn. Teit reports that young girls also practiced running, climbing, carrying burdens, and digging trenches. This training enabled them to practice skills they would need to carry out required tasks. A girl may spend as long as 1 year training herself after her first initial training with her attendants.

## Sources of Knowledge

Traditionally, our knowledge existed in many forms and was derived from many sources as Brant-Castellano (2002) describes in *Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge*. She discusses three sources of knowledge: traditional knowledge, empirical knowledge, and revealed knowledge. She notes, “These categories overlap and interact with each other, but they are useful for examining the contours of aboriginal knowledge” (p. 23).

Brant-Castellano (2002) explains traditional knowledge as the knowledge handed down more or less intact from previous generations. She adds:

with variations from nation to nation, it tells of the creation of the world and the origin of clans in encounters between ancestors’ spirits in the form of animals, it records genealogical and ancestral rights to territory; and it memorializes battles, boundaries, and treaties and instils attributes of wariness or trust towards neighbouring nations. Through heroic and cautionary tales, it reinforces values and beliefs; these in turn, provide the substructure for civil society .In some of its forms, it passes on technologies refined over generations. (p. 23)

From Teit’s accounts of early, pre-contact history and from the memories of our Elders, we can discern aspects of our traditional knowledge.

Secwepemc, being people of the land, relied on empirical knowledge which, declares Brant-Castellano (2002), is gained through careful observation with ecosystems by many people over extended periods of time (p. 23). This knowledge was facilitated by Indigenous peoples’ intimate connection with the land and spiritual realm. Hence, the traditional territories of the people are integral to knowledge and they cannot be separated from one another. Knowledge obtained from the land, Brant-Castellano, maintains, depended on nourishing relationships with the eco-system. Since knowledge

takes place on the land, we say the land and all it encompasses make up the essential “classroom”. We learn from everything on the land and water, including animals, birds, insects, and plants. We know that when wild strawberry is in bloom, the trout will be running. Ignace and Ignace (2004) provide an illustration of how the Secwepemc and Stat'imx learned from the grizzly bear and how they were inspired to develop processing techniques for *scwicw* (avalanche lily root).

As the stories go, hunters observed grizzlies digging swicw. Instead of immediately eating them, they left them exposed to the sun for some days, then returned to eat them. Chemical analysis reveals that freshly harvested bulbs contain an indigestible starch. Sun curing converts the inedible starch into fructose and edible starches. Further human intervention through pit cooking produces a balanced combination of edible starch to satisfy hunger and fructose to satisfy the palate. Similar chemical conversions through the combination of sun drying and pit cooking (as opposed to boiling or roasting) exists for roots that contain the starch inulin, such as balsam root and wild onion. (p. 387)

### **Revealed Knowledge**

The spiritual realm is an important source of Secwepemc knowledge. Brant-Castellano (2002) terms this “revealed knowledge”. She describes this as knowledge acquired through dreams, visions, and intuitions that are understood to be spiritual in origin. Knowledge was obtained from one’s guardian spirits which were obtained from the vision quest. These guardian spirits were available for help throughout one’s life. They were considered very powerful and could be either helpful or harmful. Teit reports, which our Elders confirm, that guardian spirits provided messages in dreams, for example, hunters were told what parts of the deer to eat, and if they obeyed, they would have good luck in hunting. Guardian spirits also offered advice, songs, prayers, and other cultural teachings. The songs sung at the Secwepemc winter dance were said to have come from the spirit world. Messages and songs were obtained from other natural

forces such as plants, water, or animals. Secwepemc medicine people relied on animal and spirit helpers

Secwepemc Elder Flora Sampson recounts a story of how her mother's *sne7e* (animal spirit) was called upon in a healing ceremony to cure her. Knowledge, then, revealed to us was obtained in ceremonies through dances, songs, and prayers and transmitted through medicine people.

Teit (1909) recounts a story of a Secwepemc woman who died, went to the land of the souls, and returned to earth. While she was there, she was taught many songs and dances to show the people so that they could become like the people of the spirit land. Brant-Castellano (2002) cites Hugh Brody who gives an example of how knowledge gained through spiritual means can serve economic as well as psychological needs. Brody describes how Beaver hunters of North-western British Columbia located their prey in dreams, found their trails, and made dream-kills. He describes how they would then go out and collect their kill (Brant-Castellano, p. 24).

Our Elders recount that when the people faced problems too great for the physical mind to solve, medicine men were sent to the mountains where they fasted, prayed, and conducted ceremonies to receive knowledge to solve the problem. My Elder informants did not recount any stories of women conducting ceremonies to receive knowledge. Likely, such ceremonies occurred well before contact and the Elders did not recall such practices. I do, however, provide the example of how women acted as powerful healers (see p. 32 of this thesis).

## Forms of Knowledge

Within Indigenous and Secwepemc epistemologies, different forms of knowledge—practical, moral, ecological, and spiritual are interrelated and interconnected. To be knowledge-able in traditional Secwepemc society, one had to acquire these forms of knowledge. Deer hunting, for example, involved much more than just hunting the deer. A tremendous amount of knowledge was involved. Before the men underwent the hunt, there were many preparations—both practical and spiritual—to follow. Traditionally, the men would go to remote mountaintops which were considered sacred places where they would fast for four days prior to the hunting season. During the fast, they would also participate in sweat-lodge ceremonies. These ceremonies consisted of physical cleansing as well as spiritual cleaning and thanksgiving rituals. The hunters had to thoroughly clean inside (mind and spirit) and outside (physical body). A vomiting stick was used to cleanse the body. Weapons were cleaned with rose bushes to purge them of bad spirits and to ensure good luck. After the many preparations, the hunter would go out on the land for the hunt. The hunters knew the land, deer habitat, and deer habits intimately. Before any kill could be made, the hunter offered prayers and thanks to the deer for providing itself for food. Once the deer was harvested, it was brought back to the village and shared among the people. The best parts were given to Elders. A hunter could never keep the meat for himself because he knew of the ensuing consequences. All the meat, and all parts of the deer were used—the bones and antlers used for tools and implements—the intestines used for storage bags—the hides for clothing, moccasins, and drums. Nothing was wasted. The meat was preserved by drying. The hunter had to know how to make tools from the deer and tools to hunt the deer. The hunter knew and performed deer dances and songs which

honoured and showed respect to the deer so it would continue to provide itself to the people.

Ceremonies, positive thoughts, gratitude, and sharing as well as practical and ecological knowledge possessed by the hunter ensured the success of the hunt and ensured the people's survival. Cajete (2000), in his book *Native Science*, acknowledges that "what we think and believe and how we act in the world impacts on literally everything" (p. 73) and "we bring to our reality into being by our thoughts, actions, and intentions" (2000, p. 73). If we fail to follow and uphold our responsibilities through prayer, ceremony, and cleansing, we risk "bad luck" and supernatural consequences and this, in traditional times, would have meant starvation. As Cajete informs us, "Native practices and ceremonies help to help people act on their responsibilities to the Natural World and help perpetuate harmony of the Universe" (p. 74).

## ***Pedagogy***

We say the land and the culture are inseparable. We often express our views by way of our confidence in what the land provides to us. This confidence in the land is reciprocated and maintained by being active on the land and showing respectful relations to all life. Environmental health is expressed through the health of the each person, each family, and each community and region. (Villebrun, 2006, p. 15)

Secwepemc pedagogy began at birth; in fact, it began even before birth.

Secwepemc Elders Mary Thomas and Mona Jules, articulate Secwepemc pedagogy which is discussed in Chapter 6. Mary Thomas describes the teachings which pregnant women went through to ensure babies were born healthy. Mona Jules describes Secwepemc teachings that babies went through beginning at birth. In order to restore Secwepemc knowledge systems for use today, we have to go back and begin the

teachings even before birth and we have to ensure children “are raised properly according to our practices.” When we understand this process, we can incorporate Secwepemc pedagogical practices into all aspects of education/training since the early years of a child’s life provides the base for all further learning/training.

Other Indigenous scholars provide valuable information on Indigenous pedagogical strategies which are manifested in child-rearing practices. Swan (1998) elaborates further on the importance of the child’s early learning. She writes, “The task of the cultural group was to provide every child with the opportunity to glean as much experiences as necessary to develop the child into a contributing member of the community” (p. 52). In *Traditional Parenting*, Jane Harp (1998) states, historically, the laws of First Nations were clear about the welfare of their children because they knew that the futures of their Nations were directly related to the well-being of their children. She asserts that well-defined customs, values, and practices, handed down from generation to generation, ensured the raising of healthy, well-adjusted children.

Harp (1998) describes how Cree children internalized their cultural values and beliefs during the first five or six years of their lives. She reports, “the child learned the Cree language, internalized traditional cognitive patterns of thought, norms, and expectations for his or her age” (p. 69). Secwepemc children, like the Cree, undertook training by a long process of apprenticeship under parents, grandparents, and other members of the extended family. Secwepemc parents, Elders, and community members worked together to ensure our customs, beliefs, and values regarding the raising of children were practiced and firmly established.

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (2001) in Portland, Oregon developed a training manual, *Positive Indian Parenting: Honoring Our Children by Honoring Our Traditions*, to assist parents in regaining traditional parenting skills. This manual recognizes that there are some universal values, attitudes, and customs among Indigenous tribes regarding child-rearing practices and provides much valuable information. The training manual outlines some of the universal Indigenous principles of learning. Some of which include:

- Much responsibility for learning is placed on the child
- Children learn with minimum help from others
- Children learn good observation and listening skills
- Children learn good non-verbal communication skills

As in other Indigenous cultures, paramount to Secwepemc child-rearing practices was the constant and consistent attention to the child's moral development. Morals, beliefs, and attitudes that promote and maintain harmony, respect, and non-interference were instilled at a young age. The late Secwepemc Elder Mary Thomas explains that the lessons little children learned were from little legends, and she recalls her grandmother telling her, at the end of the legend, what would happen to her if she behaved a certain way (personal communication, March 11, 2007). When describing how Secwepemc children were raised, in loving, nurturing environments, Mary uses herself as an example of how she was raised. Traditional Secwepemc childrearing, hence, was characterized by patience, kindness, love, and respect.

Swan (1998) reports it was considered very important for (Native) children to observe and adhere to the rules of conduct. Children were taught early that showing disrespect could bring discontent to the land and create undue hardships. She writes:

it was very important for children to observe and adhere to the rules of conduct and behaviour. They learned that all things were affected by nature, especially humans, and they had a moral and spiritual responsibility to follow the patterns of conduct and behaviour for the social good. (p. 54)

Children's' behaviour, then, rather than being controlled through discipline, was controlled through the supernatural forces. Spirits were also depended upon to watch over children

Recognition, respect, and honour for child's growth and development ensured the sense of identity, self-esteem, and belonging to his cultural group. Rites of passage ceremonies were held for the child at various stages. The birthing ceremony Secwepemc Elder Mona Jules describes in Chapter 6 was the first ceremony the child experienced. Other Secwepemc ceremonies were—naming ceremonies, first kill, first menses for young girls, and *etsxe* (coming of age).

### **Pedagogy of the Land**

Indigenous pedagogies are characterized by the important role of the land. As Villebrun (2006), in *Indigenous Education and Empowerment: International Perspectives*, eloquently states, "Our Elders are many things; they are our historians. The land is our university. All of the references I make are 'our citations' and speak to the relationship of the land and my people" (p. 15). Indeed, Secwepemc pedagogical principles, practices, and methods are rooted in Elders' teachings and in the land. Elders, in traditional times, were primarily responsible for the acquisition, maintenance, and transmission of knowledge. They acted as facilitators, gently guiding the children through their required teachings. Besides the Elders as teachers and caregivers, Mary Thomas states that there were the moms, dads, big brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles,

and cousins in the family circle and every one of them had an obligation to the little ones (personal communication, March 11, 2007).

Indigenous pedagogy, Battiste (2002) affirms, values a person's ability to learn independently by observing, listening, and participating with a minimum of intervention or instruction. As Cajete (2000) explains intervention in a natural process of learning was taken only with great care and after much consideration. Observation, participation, experience, modelling, and practice are among the practices and methods employed by Secwepemc pedagogy. Through these processes, the children acquired the skills, attitudes, values, norms, and beliefs essential to their survival in Secwepemc life. As well, imitation of older people, siblings, parents, the grandparents was a learning strategy employed.

Fixico (2003) contends (indigenous people) learn first by waiting and watching the signs and that humans learn more from the natural order than the order man has established. He reiterates the importance of observation and patience. One must be patient, he says, and be ready to gain the lessons that are received. After receiving the knowledge, which may not be understood at first, a person reacts by imitating the Elder who has taught or by reacting to the instruction from nature.

Swan (1998) reiterates:

the learnings of the natural world are possible when individuals become totally aware of their immediate surroundings, to see, hear, feel, and absorb all the movements and patterns in nature. Indeed, the individual must become part of the totality of the world. (p. 53)

Harp (1998) explains how important lessons were learned from Nature, such as how to cope with hardships, how to find strength, and how to develop patience. Fixico (2003)

states that true learning comes from experiencing nature and one's natural surroundings aid the Indian thinker as thoughts are based on understanding the relationships within the environment.

Secwepemc pedagogy included learning from the animals. Ignace and Ignace (2004) describe how the Secwepemc and Stat'imx learned *scicw* processing techniques from the grizzly bear. Fixico (2003) explains, "generations of survival among animals have instilled keen instinct and certain qualities that evolved in them that are helpful to humans" (p. 7). As well as learning basic survival skills, such as food gathering, Fixico (2003) explains that Indigenous people instinctively were aware of and knew unusual acts of nature, and could tell what is not right about a course of events that is supposed to ensue according to regularity.

Ceremonies bestowed much knowledge. Cajete (2000) explains the role of ceremonies and compacts in acquiring knowledge. He describes compacts as ones "made between sources of life, the land, their place, and with the natural entities there" (p. 81). He writes, "Ceremonies and ritual choreograph situations to bring people into contract with those compacts; the entities involved in relationships. The ceremonies themselves become ways of coming to know" (p. 81). Battiste (2002) affirms that much learning emerged from introspection, reflection, meditation, prayer and other types of self-directed learning. Such knowledge was accessed through rituals and ceremonies. Battiste (2002) adds, "Traditional ceremonies and daily observation were all integrated parts of the learning process; they are spirit-connecting processes that enable gift, vision, and spirit to emerge in each person" (p. 15). Fixico (2003) confirms that dreams, daydreaming, imagining and vision are pertinent to "Indian thinking". They provide clues of knowledge and provide revelation about what people seek to understand. The

Secwepemc *etsxe* ceremony with its long periods spent alone in the mountains allowed for inner learning and teachings from the Spirit world.

Storytelling, traditionally, was a main tenet of Indigenous, and hence, Secwepemc pedagogy. Cajete (2000) stresses the important role of storytelling. He writes:

the ability to use language through storytelling oratory and song was highly regarded by all tribes as a primary tool for teaching and learning. This was because the spoken or sung word expressed the spirit and breath of life of the speaker and thus was considered sacred. (p. 33)

Storytelling teaches about proper relationships with other people and the environment by example. Stories remind us that there are consequences, both natural and spiritual, for people who do not follow the right way. Elder Mary Thomas relayed many traditional stories told by her grandmother which were used to teach and reinforce proper behaviour in children. She tells the story of when trees were created and trembling aspen would not bow down and recognize Mother Nature, its creator. As a result, trembling aspen was made to tremble and shake its leaves continuously which it still does today. This story taught children to respect their parents and the Creator. The late Secwepemc Elder George Manuel informs us:

Story-telling was not only for moral teaching, but for practical instruction, to help you remember the details of a craft or skill, and for theoretical instruction, whether about political organization or the location of the stars. One advantage of telling a story is that the listener is free to make his own interpretation. If it varies a little from yours, that is all right. Perhaps the distance between two interpretations is the distance between two human lives bound by the same basic laws of nature illustrated by the outline of the story. (quoted in Grant, 1996, p. 38)

## Part 2.

### Colonizing Forces

Dislocated from their origins as indigenous peoples, many families and communities became dislocated also from their own knowledge and histories, the recovery of which has been a critical tool in the renewal and resurgence of indigenous families and communities, and in the reclaiming of their identity as peoples. (Stewart-Harawira cited in Martin et al., 2003, p. 5)

Until the early 1800s, the Secwepemc were the only inhabitants of their traditional territory. They lived in relative peace and harmony with their neighbouring Nations. In their report, *The First One Hundred Years of Contact*, Coffey, Goldstrom, Gottfriedson, Matthew, and Walton (1990) provide a detailed account of the historical events which occurred within Secwepemc territory. The first contact with white people began in 1793 when Alexander Mackenzie explored the northern Secwepemc territory. The explorers' main objectives were to satisfy their desire for land to create new colonies; exploit the rich resources offered in Secwepemc territory; and to seek labour (Secwepemc, Land of the Shuswap, n.d.). As it became apparent that the Secwepemc were obstacles to the acquisition of land and resources, systematic plans to eradicate the Secwepemc began in earnest.

Coffey et al. (1990) report the fur traders were the first white people to arrive in Secwepemc territory. David Stuart of the Pacific Fur Company arrived in 1811 and in 1812 and a trading fort was established in Kamloops, B.C. According to these researchers, the relationship between the Secwepemc and fur traders was initially mutually beneficial and peaceful. The fur trade benefited both Secwepemc and white people, with little noticeable change to their respective cultures. This relationship, however, later changed

due to the near extinction of the beaver as a result of over-trapping. The Secwepemc gained trade items and secured an equal place in the fur trade economy. As the fur trade progressed, major changes began to occur to Secwepemc way of life. Coffey et al. outline some of these changes: depletion of fur-bearing animals; disappearance of big game animals; creation of rigid boundaries between neighbouring Nations due to the competitive nature of the fur trade; changes in social structures (mixing of cultures affected beliefs, customs, and values of Secwepemc society); and changes in the family structure as Secwepemc men spent long periods of time away from their families engaged in trapping and spent less time on traditional hunting and fishing activities.

The Secwepemc economic system consisted of hunting, fishing, and trapping for food sources and other material needs. The fur trade significantly changed the traditional Secwepemc economic system as the Secwepemc began to trade salmon as the beaver neared extinction. Heavily dependent upon game and salmon, they were reduced to starvation due to low salmon stocks and time spent trapping rather than hunting for food. Reports show that the Secwepemc underwent periods of starvation in 1829, 1850-1852, 1855, and 1859. As the fur trade era ended, so began the deterioration of the traditional Secwepemc way of life. The previous peaceful relationship between the Secwepemc and fur traders turned to conflict. Conflict stemmed from the fur traders (Hudson's Bay Company) imposing European law onto the Secwepemc. The "one-sided justice" was foreign and racist. Coffey et al. explain:

Hudson's Bay policy required that Indians who injured traders, or their property, be tried under European law. Penalties were often severe. However, this policy did not apply in cases of an Indian injuring another Indian. Nor did it apply if a trader injured an Indian. (p. 16)

Needless to say, the relationship between the traders and Secwepemc turned to open hostility. The relationship between the Secwepemc and fur traders described by Coffey et al. referred to a later period of the fur trade because Thompson and Ignace (2005) in their analysis of the relationship between the Salishan tribes and fur traders contend that the Native people exerted power and control of land, resources, and Salishan law during the early part of the fur trade.

The combined events of massive epidemics, the arrival of missionaries, and the gold rush proved to be further catastrophic for the Secwepemc way of life. Coffey et al. (1990) report on the epidemics which struck the Secwepemc. The first epidemic reported (whooping cough) broke in 1827 which killed a number of children. Diphtheria epidemics occurred in 1842-1843. In June, 1862, the most devastating epidemic, smallpox, hit the Secwepemc Nation. Out of 30 Secwepemc bands (communities) only 17 survived, the rest succumbing to extinction. Other diseases brought by the Europeans—measles, influenza, whooping cough, and tuberculosis further reduced the Secwepemc population. Coffey et al. report “in just generations, the Shuswap population declined by nearly 70 percent—from approximately 7,200 people in 1850 to 2,185 in 1903” (p. 37). Describing the devastation, he writes:

The smallpox epidemic devastated the Shuswap culture and society. Their numbers greatly reduced, the once strong and healthy Shuswap people became a vulnerable minority in their own land. Their bands, their beliefs, and their lifestyle were all under attack. With the deaths of so many elders, the Shuswap lost many centuries of accumulated oral history, skills, and knowledge. With the loss of so many great leaders, the Shuswap were less able to defend their lands and their culture from permanent change at the hands of missionaries, settlers, and government officials. With the death of their young, the very survival of the Shuswap people was threatened. (Coffey, p. 37)

The spread of epidemics was a major contributing factor to the near extinction of Secwepemc. Coffey et al. present a powerful effect of the epidemics on the Secwepemc. The write:

These heavy losses weakened B.C. Indian tribes at the very time they were under the greatest pressure to surrender their traditions and beliefs. Some bands did not survive. Others were deprived of leadership, as a generation of chiefs and elders was lost. For most bands, the greatest losses were among the young, who were the hope for the future. (p. 29)

The arrival of missionaries in Secwepemculecw proved just as, if not more, devastating on Secwepemc way of life.<sup>1</sup> The first missionaries arrived in the B.C. Interior in the mid-1800s. Most were Oblates Catholic priests who came directly from France. Father P.J. DeSmet was the first missionary thought to arrive in Secwepemculecw. In 1842, Father Demers arrived in Kamloops, B.C. Their goal was to Christianize the Secwepemc as they ministered in the various Secwepemc communities throughout the territory. In 1867, the first Catholic Church, St. Joseph's, was built in Kamloops, B.C. Coffey et al. (1990) report that after 30 years of contact with the Secwepemc, the Catholic Church collaborated with the government in its policy of assimilating the Secwepemc into the white society. This assimilation policy, it was discovered, could easily and inexpensively be implemented by turning the education of Indian children over to the religious organizations. Coffey et.al. report that St. Joseph's Mission established

<sup>1</sup> Although the Catholic Church is credited with much destruction of Secwepemc spirituality, Ignace (2008), in his doctoral thesis *Our Oral Histories Are Our Iron Posts: Secwepemc Stories and Historical Consciousness*, argues the Secwepemc accommodated the Christian teachings of the missionaries into Secwepemc terms without necessarily surrendering their own spirituality. He contends that many of the Secwepemc words that entered the Catholic prayers reflected the Secwepemc values of spiritual and social relationships working together and pre-existing spiritual connections. Ignace provides the following example. The word for "sin" in Secwepemc is *k'estentsut* which, he states, maintains the flavour of our fundamental belief in the social responsibilities we have to one another. It, therefore, "entails the issue of social reciprocity, and the concept that by harming others, in the end you 'do it to yourself' and lose face, as the community loses faith in you" (p. 284). Ignace further argues that Catholic prayers translated into Secwepemc, maintained the connection with Secwepemc way of thinking and spiritual and social laws.

a day school in Secwepemculecw; however, upon discovering that day schools were not “successful” in their goals because the students’ parents still had too much influence over them and the students still practiced their traditional ways, two Indian residential schools were established in Secwepemculecw—one in Kamloops and one in Williams Lake.

After the passage of the federal *Indian Act* in 1876, the government sent N.F. Davin to the United States to study their system of Indian education. He recommended residential schools be established where the children would be separated from their parents, be forced to adopt the English language and lifestyle, and be taught a trade.

Haig-Brown (1988), in her extensive study of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, reports that farming skills were taught so the people would settle into an agrarian lifestyle. The federal government saw schools as essential in educating Indians into an agrarian lifestyle and for their assimilation into Euro-Canadian society. Oblates, she writes, “recognized the advantages of working with children in isolation from the influence of parents and community” (p. 25) and “the role of daily religious participation and instruction in moulding young minds” (p. 25). Haig-Brown (1988) cites a report published by the Province of Canada 1847 based on the ideas of Egerton Ryerson which formed the basis for future direction in policy for Indian education and which, with Confederation, strongly influenced the development of schooling for Native people in B.C. This report expresses the superiority of European culture and the *ever increasing pressure to take control of land out of Indian hands*.

Research conducted on the Secwepemc by Coffey et al. (1990), Haig-Brown (1989), Wickwire (1998), and Manuel (1974) validate my opinion that taking the control

of Secwepemc land was always the ultimate intention of colonizers and the church was complicit in it. As well as the theft of the land, the church committed cultural genocide by imposing its form of education on Secwepemc children. “Their education must consist of not merely of the training of the mind, but a weaning from the habits and feelings of their ancestors, and the acquirements of the language, arts, and customs, of civilized life” (Haig-Brown, 1989, p. 25).

The two industrial schools established in Secwepemc territory, one in Williams Lake in 1891 and one in Kamloops in 1890, both set out to intentionally destroy Secwepemc culture and language. Children, some as young as four years old, were taken from their parents and placed in these schools year round only visiting family at holidays, if at all. Some children stayed at these schools for as long as 12 years. Much physical, emotional, and sexual abuse took place at these schools. Children were severely punished for speaking Secwepemtsin. Our Elders’ stories, as well as ones contained in *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Jack, 2000), describe common practices at the school, which included but were not limited to withholding of food, serving sub-standard food, public whippings, shaving of heads, public shaming, and severe discipline. Intensive religious instruction prevailed over English skills of reading and writing.

The church and industrial school (later to become the Kamloops Residential School) not only wrought havoc on Secwepemc culture, language, and family and social structure, but were complicit in drastically transforming the Secwepemc political structure. The church undermined and displaced the hereditary leaders by imposing what was known as the “Durieu system” named for its proponent Bishop Paul Durieu. Palmer (2005) and Furniss (1995) describe this system as a hierarchical village

administration established to strictly enforce the adherence to Catholic morality and values. The church typically appointed the hereditary chief as the church chief and so his role became the local representative of the church rather than his traditional role as representative of the people. This role gave him supreme authority for social control within the community.

As well as the church chief, sub-chiefs, watchmen, policeman, catechists, chanters, and bell-ringers were appointed by the church. Secwepemc Elder Irene Billy recalls her father, Nels Leon, being the *wetsme7* (policeman) on the Adams Lake reserve in the mid-1900s. He had the power to arrest people and lock them in “jail cells” on the reserve. She also remembers the chief, at Sunday church services, looking over the crowd and if he observed someone missing from church, would go directly to the person’s house and demand to know why he was missing church. Thus, Secwepemc leadership based on traditional values and culture was transformed to one based on European concepts of governance and power.

The gold rush was another event which furthered the colonizing process. Coffey et al. (1990) recount the early 1850s as the beginning of the gold rush in Secwepemculecw. Again, with the coming of the gold rush, the Secwepemc were faced with the negative pressures of invaders on their lands. Coffey et al. (1990) write:

the gold miners trespassed on Indian lands and competed for food resources. They had little respect or tolerance for the Indians whom they viewed as obstacles. Clashes over access to gold deposits and ownership of the gold often resulted in death for both Indians and miners. (p. 19)

Coffey et al. further reports on the havoc created by the gold rush. By the early summer of 1858, Secwepemculecw was overrun by miners, over 30,000, descended upon the

Fraser and Thompson Rivers searching for gold. A violent relationship between the miners and the Secwepemc erupted as the groups clashed over gold and food supplies such as salmon and game. After much destruction to the Secwepemc and their way of life, the miners left the Fraser River and Secwepemc territories during the winter of 1959.

Colonial government action and policies further eroded traditional Secwepemc life. Despite the fact that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 stated any lands obtained from Indians must be obtained through treaty or through purchase, the colonial governments of Canada and British Columbia continued to assert ownership of Secwepemc land. Our Elders remind us that we have never signed treaties to relinquish our lands, nor sold or ceded it in anyway. Rather than deal honourably with the Secwepemc, the colonial governments established legislation and policies directly aimed at obtaining Secwepemc land.

Research conducted by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (2005) entitled *Stolen Lands, Broken Promises: Researching the Indian Land Question in British Columbia* states that the colonial government began their assertion of what is now called British Columbia with the land policies of James Douglas. During this time, he was Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company and Governor of the British Colony of Vancouver Island. His work began in Vancouver Island where he made 14 treaties from 1850 to 1854. Coffey et al. (1990) point out that in 1851 when the British Crown cancelled the Hudson's Bay Company Charter to the mainland of B.C., Douglas became Governor of B.C. and he was forced to give up his position as Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. After that, Indians in B.C. no longer received compensation for their lands and reserves were made without treaties.

Gold commissioners were then appointed to set out Indian reserves in the Interior. William Cox, one of the Gold Commissioners, in 1852 set out a huge reserve approximately one million square miles for our people, known as the Lakes Secwepemc. According to oral history, and confirmed by Harris (2002), Cox worked with Chief Neskonlith to stake out the desired reserve. Chief Neskonlith was to put out the stakes to mark it. Cox apparently arranged for surveyors to create a map of this reserve. The original map still exists today in the possession of the Neskonlith Indian Band. The Neskonlith/Douglas reserve, as it is known, was intended to allocate enough land for our people to carry on traditional activities. Chief Neskonlith knew the importance of land in providing sustenance to our way of life.

Land issues, acrimonious with the Secwepemc since the arrival of the colonizers, took an even more hostile turn in 1864 when Governor Douglas, who had been somewhat sympathetic to land issues of the Secwepemc, resigned and Governor Seymour was appointed. Many complaints from settlers were lodged against the size of the Douglas reserves, including the Neskonlith one. Harris (2002) reports the reserves were “unnecessarily large” (p. 56) and were “seriously interfering with the development of agricultural resources of the Colony” (p. 56).

In 1866, Joseph Trutch, chief commissioner of lands and works, made arrangements to reduce the size of the reserves and to open the land for pre-emption by settlers. The original Neskonlith Douglas reserve was reduced from over one million acres to three reserves: Halaut (Neskonlith reserve) 3,112 acres; Little Shuswap Lake 1,900 acres; and Shahhaltkum (Adams Lake) 1,000 acres and a second parcel of 1.5 acres. So the Lakes Secwepemc, who had previously been one, cohesive band, became three separate bands. The reduced reserves could not support the traditional

lifestyle of the people. To compound matters, the Secwepemc became trespassers on their own lands.

In an attempt to achieve certainty in their goal of assimilation and extinguishment and to continue the theft of the land, the federal government created *The Act for the Gradual Civilization of Indian Peoples* in 1868. Palmer (2005) reports, "this act was passed by the Canadian Parliament to create reserves, set up band councils, and define who was legally considered Indian" (p. 45). This later became the *Indian Act* in 1876 reducing the Secwepemc to wards of the state. Under this Act, the government assumed responsibility for Indian people and lands reserved for Indians. Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006) report that the federal government developed legislation which was the legal framework they used to develop "Indian policy" which included education. They state the *Indian Act* delegated the churches' educational authority over Indian children. The paternalistic policies of Department of Indian Affairs effectively took power and authority from the traditional leadership and placed it in the hands of band councils who were, in turn, under the control of DIA. In 1894, the *Indian Act* was amended to include compulsory schooling for Native children. Failure to comply could lead to fines and imprisonment for the parents.

Coffey et al. (1990) report that when B.C. became a province in 1871 and under the Terms of Union joined Canada, the unceded Secwepemc land issue still had not been settled. To this day, the province continues to assume jurisdiction and ownership over Secwepemculecw even though the Secwepemc have not signed a treaty, surrendered, nor sold the land to the province. The Secwepemc were relegated to their tiny reserves while the rest of Secwepemculecw continues to be usurped and destroyed.

## **Chapter 3.**

# **Research Method**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the method I use in conducting my research. I provide the theoretical framework for my research, its appropriateness as well as its limitations. I provide an explanation of Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous research methods. I also include research ethics, the role of the researcher, and the research design.

My research is a qualitative study using a form of phenomenology as the strategy of inquiry. This study uses adaptations of critical theory as the theoretical perspective. Within the critical theory perspective, many alternative approaches are emerging such as: indigenous heuristic action research, indigenous methodologies, Kaupaupa Maori research, participatory action research, and radicalized critical theory. These ideological perspectives were ones deemed most conducive to researching my topic. I subscribe to Denzin's (2005) criteria of a research model which "implements collaborative, participatory, performative inquiry" (p. 952). This model "directs scholars to take up the moral projects that respect and reclaim indigenous cultural practices" (p. 953) and which work toward implementing the decolonization process within indigenous Nations. Both require political action which I set out in order to realize my research goals: to advance an active agenda for transformative praxis (reclamation of Secwepemc knowledge) and

to raise the consciousness of the people (Secwepemc) through the decolonization process. Both of these are critical to cultural survival of the Secwepemc.

My research was not intended to be an objective, neutral account. As Secwepemc, the issues at hand are deeply personal. I, my family, community, and the students I teach are negatively impacted by the loss of culture and language and live with the effects of colonization on a daily basis. Being Secwepemc and a “Native intellectual”, I must uphold my responsibility to educate my people on these critical issues and assist in the development of a critical consciousness which will inspire and motivate us to take collective action. Smith (1997) refers to Franz Fanon who argued that Native intellectuals have an important role to play in developing transformative action and in the critical activity of decolonization. Native intellectuals because of their position have access to intellectual and material resources to aid in the struggle.

## **Knowledge Claim**

An advocacy/participatory knowledge perspective supports my research. It, according to Creswell (2003), promotes the addressing of critical issues—empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. Other critical issues which needed to be addressed included: colonization, racism, hegemony, loss of identity). Creswell (2003) outlines key features of advocacy/participatory research:

1. recursive or dialectical and is focused on bringing change in practices (living) (researchers advance an action agenda for change) with the people
2. focused on helping individuals free themselves from constraints found in the media, language, work procedures, and in the relationships of power in educational setting (for us in governance, band council, etc.) and the need for empowerment (self-determination)

3. is emancipatory
  - helps unshackle people from the constraints of irrational (DIA) or unjust (band office) structures that limit self-determination or self-development
  - creates a political debate and discussion so that change occurs
4. is practical and collaborative
  - completed with others rather than on or to others
  - participants are active collaborators in their inquiries.

## Theoretical Perspective:

### Critical Theory

Activist research unearths, interrupts, and opens new frames for intellectual political theory and practice .[A] move to activism occurs when research fractures the very ideologies that justify power inequalities. (Fine quoted in Hermes, 1998, p. 164)

Indeed, activist research is needed to unearth, interrupt, and open new frames to decolonize and regain our knowledge and seek freedom from domination and oppression. To that end, I used adaptations of critical theory and indigenous research developed by indigenous scholars as the ideological perspective in my research. Indigenous scholars such as Graham Smith (1997) propose localized critical theory and other emerging methodologies as potential perspectives in researching indigenous issues.

Critical theory, with its goal to “seek ‘human emancipation’ in circumstances of domination and oppression” (*Critical theory*, ¶12) is favoured by activist and indigenous scholars who seek this goal. Critical theorists intend to work toward social transformation in order to improve the current reality. They attempt to gain a thorough understanding of the issues in order to achieve their goal of emancipation.

Critical theory, then, focuses on institutional inequalities and exposes the dominant group's role, both historic and in the present, in creating the problem. Creswell (2003) adds that it helps individuals examine the conditions of their existence. As well as researching and analyzing problems and situations, critical theory and indigenous research methods must go further in order to be meaningful and useful. It must not just examine social realities, but work to change them.

Grant and Giddings (2002) are correct when they say that the research goal must be overtly political to emancipate people from unjust or oppressive social structures through rational transformation. Thus, individuals must be empowered to engage in transformative action. Like Smith (1997), Grant and Giddings (2002) propose a changed consciousness cycle consisting of collaborative planning—action—critical reflection. They maintain that change must begin at the roots (for us—self and family) and that people must engage in collective action. An important prerequisite is that they have to see the injustice.

Since one of the goals of my research was to seek out injustices and inequalities, which are configured along lines of colonization and oppression, I had the responsibility to address these issues and take action. Some of these responsibilities outlined by Grant and Giddings (2002) who describe the “radically positioned researcher” include: share power with the participants, illuminate social structures and oppressive effects in order to raise (my) and the participants' consciousness of them as a basis for collective action and struggle, and close the link between theory and practice.

In this thesis, I examine the following critical issues:

- why are the Secwepemc colonized and oppressed?
- what and who contributes to colonization and oppression?
- why do we continue to accept our situations
- what are the ways and means to develop transformative pathways

I agree with Grant (2003) that it is both possible and desirable to create the conditions for the oppressed to empower themselves through conscientising themselves as well as engaging in collective action to change their situation.

## **Limitations of Critical Theory**

Although critical theory appears the appropriate theoretical perspective to use in my research, there are cautions and limitations I must consider. Denzin (2005) suggests a “caution” with regards to critical theory. He asserts that critical and critical race theory will not work within Indigenous settings without modification. Denzin provides an example, “critical theory’s criteria for self-determination and empowerment perpetuate neo-colonial sentiments while turning the Indigenous person into an essentialized “other” who is spoken for “(p. 93). Denzin advises that “categories of race, gender, and racialized identities cannot be turned into frozen, essential terms, nor is racial identity a free-floating signifier” (p. 935). Furthermore, critical theory, he states, “must be localized and grounded in specific meanings, traditions, and customs and community relations that operate in each Indigenous setting” (p. 939).

Smith (1997), Grande (2004), and other Indigenous scholars have also cited limitations of critical theory as recognizing class over gender and other oppressions (such as colonization, domination, and oppression). These scholars have adapted

critical theory to analyze and include these forms of oppression. I agree with Denzin (2005) who advocates scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, develop culturally responsive research processes that locate power in Indigenous communities so that the community will determine and define what constitutes acceptable research. In doing so, critical issues of domination and oppression will be appropriately addressed.

As well as researching and analyzing problems and situations, critical theory and Indigenous research methods must go further in order to be meaningful and useful. Grande (2000) promotes, along with other Indigenous scholars, “a critical Indigenous theory of liberation” (p. 355). In addition to promoting theories to explore these issues, Indigenous scholars have advocated what Smith (2003) refers to as “transformative pathways.”

## **Indigenous Methodologies**

Indigenous peoples’ interests, knowledge and experiences must be at the center of research methodologies and construction of knowledge about Indigenous peoples. (Rigney quoted in Porsanger, 2004, p. 105)

Indigenous methodologies are emerging to meet the needs and requirements of research on/with indigenous peoples. We, as Indigenous peoples, must make decisions about the research agenda and methodologies for ourselves, and in the process, reclaim control over indigenous ways of knowing and being. Some indigenous scholars even suggest that the researcher have a thorough knowledge of indigenous traditions and languages. While admirable such a requirement is, this is somewhat problematic due to the extreme loss of culture and languages within Indigenous nations due to the forces of colonization.

Indigenous methodologies can draw from critical/interpretive perspectives and contain a mix of existing methodological approaches and ideological practices. Indigenous methodology shares assumptions with critical perspectives. Brown (2005) suggest an important shared assumption is that “those who live their lives in marginal places of society (Indian reserves) experience silencing and injustice” (p. 21). Although she focuses on “silencing” as it relates to the academy, we can relate it to the many levels of oppression our people face in most, if not all, of the institutions that are part of their lives.

Porsanger (2004) defines the indigenous approach as “an ethically correct and culturally appropriate, indigenous manner of taking steps towards the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about indigenous peoples” (p. 109). She cites Yuppiaq scholars, Kanaqluk and Kawagley, who have shown that the researcher should start from indigenous ethical protocols, rather than a theoretical point, in order to develop methods that will suit the local culture.

Kovach (2005) describes Indigenous methodologies in the following way. They:

1. incorporate an Indigenous theoretical framework, flow from and encompass Indigenous ways of knowing (epistemology),
2. incorporate Indigenous theoretical perspectives, are founded on collectivist research principles that respect inherent ethics and protocols
3. respect and use authentic and organic techniques such as qualitative research and storytelling.

Wilson (2001) states, “After we develop or articulate the beliefs behind an Indigenous research paradigm, we can look at the use of specific methods that fit with our methodology” (p. 3).

Indigenous methodology embodies distinct principles. Wilson (2003) suggests these: “theories developed or proposed are based upon and supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology” (p. 11) and “Indigenous scholars who wish to participate in the creation of knowledge within our (their) own way of being must begin with an active and scholarly recognition of who our philosophers and prophets are in our own communities” (p. 11). These people, namely the Elders, are the keepers of Indigenous knowledge and are responsible for the transmission and dissemination of it. Hence, their knowledge must be acknowledged, honoured, and respected.

Denzin (2005) and Porsanger (2004) cite some commitments of an Indigenous methodology which include:

- self-determination
- empowerment
- moral praxis
- love
- healing
- community solidarity
- respect for the Earth
- respect for Elders
- spirituality
- recovery of Indigenous knowledge
- mobilization
- decolonization
- transformative agenda

In order to uphold these commitments, researchers need to ask themselves critical questions: What is the purpose of the research? Will the people be willing to

cooperate? Is the research beneficial to the community? Is the methodology respectful?

I am confident that I have addressed these questions in my study.

Other commitments of the indigenous perspective, cited by Denzin (2005) include: comprises an indigenous outlook and assigns highest priority to the rights of indigenous peoples, traditions, bodies of knowledge, and values that have evolved over thousands of years. A good example of a research perspective which encompasses indigenous ontology and epistemology is one developed by Kahakalau (2004), an indigenous Hawaiian doctoral student, which she calls “indigenous heuristic action research” (p. 21). This approach is based entirely on native perspectives and is congruent with Native values and tradition therefore reflecting indigenous contexts and worldviews. Kahakalau asserts that heuristics aligns itself best with native ways of learning and knowing. In addition:

the heuristic process is a way of being informed, a way of knowing which involves the researcher on a personal level is a disciplined and devoted way to deepen the researcher’s understanding of a phenomenon being studied. (p. 21)

Heuristic research, Kahakalau, states requires the investigator have, “a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated and [be] present throughout the process” (p.22). With me being Secwepemc and actually living and working within the community, I am actively involved in many of the same activities and projects as my informants. I, then, am capable of understanding and comprehending the depth of the phenomenon under investigation.

Indigenous epistemologies are an integral part of an indigenous research methodology. Secwepemc epistemologies share many elements with Indigenous

Nations throughout the world. My research demonstrates other elements not covered by Kovach (2005). However some of the elements of Indigenous epistemology cited by Kovach that are similar to or in common with Secwepemc beliefs include that it:

- is fluid, non-linear, relational
- is experiential
- derives from teachings transmitted from generations by oral tradition (storytelling)
- emerges from traditional languages
- involves knowing within the subconscious (gained through dreams, visions, etc.)
- both intuitive and quiet
- arises from interrelationships with the human and spirit world, inanimate entities of the ecosystem
- born of the land and locality of the people
- purposeful and practical—born of necessity to feed, clothe, and transmit values

Indigenous methodologies call for highly ethical standards. One of its goals, states Porsanger (2004) is to “ensure research on Indigenous issues can be carried out in a more respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful, and beneficial fashion” (p. 108). Hence, the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge must be included in this ethical construct. .

Since Indigenous ontology differs from Western ontology in many significant ways, there are crucial considerations, one of which is the “ownership” of knowledge. Wilson (2001) informs us that Western research believes knowledge can be owned by an individual; however, in the indigenous perspective, knowledge is relational and is shared among all creation. Knowledge is collective and shared. Knowledge is gained as a result of being transmitted orally through the generations dating back thousands of

years. Another important distinction is that indigenous peoples, including the Secwepemc, gain knowledge from many sources other than human (dreams, visions, and land-markers).

An important aspect of research conducted in Indigenous communities, including my own, is the method and research questions. The research questions should center on an indigenous plight and/or problem and attempt to bring about positive change for the people (in my study, the plight is colonization, oppression, and loss of Secwepemc knowledge, language, culture, and way of life). Wilson (2003) and Porsanger (2004) outline major elements of the research process to be considered within an indigenous methodology which I will follow. They include:

- aboriginal peoples themselves must approve of the research and research methods
- research must be conducted in the community for the benefit of the community
- benefits to the community must be outlined
- people must be active partners in the co-creation of contemporary indigenous knowledge
- research should include a practical application of theory via an on-going social action project that directly benefits an indigenous community and includes a quantitative (may not always be necessary) and qualitative analysis of the action research
- research should include ways of relating and acting within the community with an understanding of the principles of reciprocity and responsibility (to self, participants, community)
- development of trust and deep sense of responsibility are essential
- research participants must feel safe and be safe, including issues of confidentiality
- research should include non-obtrusive observation
- research should incorporate deep listening and hearing with more than the ears
- the research process uses indigenous data collection methods

Accountability to the participants and to the community and the culture is important. Porsanger (2004) proposes the following issues regarding the regulation of research:

- consultation and/or collaboration with the participants
- clarification of the role of the studied people/community
- the impact of the research (on participants, community, institutions)
- the design of the study to ensure that the intellectual property rights of indigenous Peoples will be observed
- protection of indigenous knowledge from appropriation
- the provision of credit to the true owners of knowledge

Porsanger states that Smith provides another important aspect of accountability in that research must be thoroughly considered in respect of indigenous peoples' interests and needs and not just as a contribution to the body of knowledge.

Critical to an indigenous methodology are the research results. Porsanger (2004) reminds us that the research findings should contain appropriate language and form in order to communicate the results back to the people and community. I must ensure that, as she suggests, the findings are presented in a format that is understood and preferred by the indigenous community involved and as a format accepted by academia. The results must be communicated back to the owners "in order to support them in their desire to be subject rather than objects of research" and "to decide about their present and future, and to determine their place in the world" (Porsanger, 2004, p. 117).

Indigenous research must have a positive impact on the community and initiate social action through practical applications. I agree with Porsanger (2004) that research should enable us to preserve, maintain, and restore indigenous traditions, language, and

cultural practices which will be manifested in the revitalization of physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health to the people; and ultimately enable us to create education, economic, social, and governing systems based on indigenous values; and to develop sovereignty and Nationhood.

Indigenous research must contain a decolonization agenda. It must incorporate Indigenous approaches and perspectives. Porsanger (2004) suggests that indigenous scholars be encouraged to decolonize theories, develop indigenous methodologies, use indigenous epistemologies, and in this way free themselves from the framework of Western research methodologies. Linda Smith, leading indigenous researcher and Maori scholar, advocates using research methods which encompass the process of decolonization. She asserts that “structures that privilege Western knowledge systems and their epistemologies must be deconstructed and decolonized” (Smith quoted in Denzin, 2005, p. 936).

Fundamental to this approach is that the topic of research be grounded around community needs as perceived by the community. Within Secwepemc communities, one of the critical needs is decolonization. I agree with Menzies (2001) who contends the purpose of research is to play a useful and progressive role in the process of decolonization. Historically, according to Linda Smith (1999), research has been used as a tool of colonization of Indigenous peoples and their territories. Decolonizing research Porsanger (n.d.) contends, “requires new, critically evaluated methodologies and new, ethically and culturally accepted approaches to the study of Indigenous peoples (p. 107).

Decolonizing research methodologies, advocated by Linda Smith, is “about centering our concepts and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (Porsanger, 2004, p. 107). This means practicing and believing in Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate way of knowing. Wilson (2001) refers to relational accountability, which implies that one is accountable to all his/her relations including non-human and inanimate ones. Indigenous ways of knowing are based in these relationships. Values, beliefs, and principles, such as taking only what you need, giving back, offering thanks and respect, sharing, and reciprocity are embedded in relationships. So, suggests Wilson (2001) the researcher is fulfilling relationships with the world around him, rather than answering questions of validity, reliability, or making judgements for better or worse.

Indigenous methodologies, thus, are both decolonizing and empowering. They draw from critical/interpretive perspectives and contain a mix of existing methodological approaches and ideological practices.

## **Indigenous Research Methods**

Indigenous projects utilize a combination of research methods. Contemporary research methods as well as those which honour alternative ways of knowing and those which respect the assertion that indigenous people can gain knowledge from many sources all have a place in indigenous projects. Methods which allow indigenous peoples to tell their stories in their own voices are critical to any project. In my research, I used a variety of methods; some of which are outlined by Porsanger (2004), Kahakalau (2004), and Brown (2005). These include:

- Open-ended interviews with knowledgeable Elders
- Talking circles
- Conversations with many individuals and groups of people e.g., Students, parents, teachers, community members
- Oral histories
- Storytelling
- Personal narratives

Other methods in my research included: holding meetings with parent participants on a regular basis to discuss research project; analyzing historical documents; observing similar education programs (Hawaiian model); and reviewing case studies of similar projects. Time honoured ways of knowing such as dreams, visions, revelations from solitude, messages obtained through ceremonies, rituals, the land, and the Creator were acknowledged. It is especially important to acknowledge and use these ways of knowing to ensure their survival. Kahakalau (2004) cites traditional Hawaiian ways of knowing: talk story; discovery and experiential learning; trial and error learning; collective and participatory learning; indirect learning; and memory as alternatives to contemporary non-Indigenous ways.

## **Research Ethics**

The ethics of indigenous research deserve much attention as they can determine whether or not a project is successful. Smith in Porsanger (2004) contends, “cultural and ethical protocols, values, and behaviours must be built into research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, and to be declared openly as part of the research project” (p. 116) and “to be discussed as part of the final results and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language they can understand” (p. 116). Morals and spirituality are an integral component of indigenous research. In

Secwepemc culture, for example, one must display moral character at all times in order to be viewed a person with integrity and trust (which is important in the research process). I agree with O'Reilly-Scanlon, Crowe, and Weenie (2004) who maintain "indigenous research cannot be divorced from ceremony, and ceremony is an important consideration in Indigenous epistemology" (p. 5). Like many indigenous peoples, the Secwepemc rely on prayer and ceremony before meetings, gatherings, and events to ensure all goes well, direction is obtained from the ancestors, and no one is harmed in any way.

Kaupapa Maori, an indigenous research perspective, poses eight questions in relation to ethics. Denzin (2005) outlines them as:

1. Whose research is this?
2. Who owns it?
3. Whose interests does it serve?
4. Who will benefit from it?
5. Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?
6. Who will carry it out?
7. Who will write it up?
8. How will the results be disseminated?

I add the following:

9. Will the results be useful and applicable?
10. Will the results be practical?

While there are many positive elements of indigenous methodologies, there are limitations to consider when conducting research. Brown (2005) points out epistemological predicaments resulting from parallel ways of knowing, for example, the danger of using another language (English—especially in the case of Elder research) to

construct knowledge; traditional philosophies are inconsistent with dominant ones; and the written language adds complexity in transmitting indigenous knowledge. Another concern she cites is that various methodologies place different values on process and product (written versus oral reports).

Furthermore, there are divergent opinions on who should define research, control research, and own research. Within the Secwepemc communities, there are many examples of researchers conducting research on indigenous knowledge and not reporting back or returning the knowledge to the people. Many non-Indigenous academics have researched indigenous knowledge to obtain their doctorate degrees and not returned anything to the community. Another consideration is that Indigenous methodologies not work alone, but as Kovach (2005) suggests making alliances with “non-Indigenous ‘methodologies from the margins’ that do not hide from but embrace the political nature of research” (p. 33).

Despite these limitations, the rationale remains strong for the use of indigenous methodologies. Using Native ways of inquiry gives voice to the people and legitimizes their knowledge. As well, they can advance Native knowledge, for example, projects which research and help to recover Native languages which are on the verge of extinction. Cultural survival is dependent upon research and as Brown (2005) states, “if knowledge is fundamental to understanding, interpreting, and establishing values within a society, then control over its production becomes an integral component of cultural survival” (p. 23).

Indigenous research, when initiated, controlled, and defined by the people themselves enables and permits indigenous researchers to create new knowledge and

transformative systems (decolonized education and governance and the reclamation of indigenous knowledge). The voices of the participants are heard as their consciousness is raised and they initiate an agenda for change to improve their lives. Research such as this encourages empowerment and self-determination. Indigenous emancipatory research and its end product are political because they advocate the restructuring of power and control of institutions which govern indigenous lives. Porsanger (2004) maintains that it also works “to strengthen the identity of indigenous peoples, which will in turn, support indigenous peoples efforts to be independent—not only legally, politically, or economically, but intellectually” (p. 117).

In our struggle for anything, it is the struggle for sovereignty, and if sovereignty is anything, it is a way of life. That way of life is not a matter of defining a political ideology or having a detached discussion about unifying structures and essences of American Indian traditions. It is a decision—a decision we make in our minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies- to be sovereign and to find out what that means in the process. (Warrior quoted in Hermes, 1998, p. 132)

## **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher is critical in Indigenous research projects. I agree with Denzin (2005) who advocates Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars develop culturally responsive processes that locate power in Indigenous communities so that the community will determine and define what constitutes acceptable research. Grant and Giddings (2002) advocate that the researcher focus the study on the experiences, descriptions of experiences, actions, and views of the people. Equally important is to relate to and interact with the participants in an effort to understand their experiences and the meaning they ascribe to it. Wilson (2003) reminds us of the importance of honouring sources of knowledge. He states:

Indigenous scholarship reflects inherited indigenous epistemologies and it is the responsibility of indigenous researchers with a university to maintain and continuously renew the connection with our ancestors and our communities through embodiment, adherence and practices of these. (p. 110)

Thus, the role and position of the researcher is critical in conducting culturally safe, respectful, and ethical research.

Secwepemc cultural values and my personal values (honesty, integrity, respect, and empathy) influenced how the project proceeded, developed, and finished. Grant and Giddings (2002) stipulate that the researcher must make a sincere and authentic investment in the community. Since the research is taking place within my community, I ensured my intentions and actions were sincere and authentic. I took responsibility in ensuring Secwepemc values, ethics, and protocols are imbedded in my research. For example, hospitality is an important Secwepemc cultural value. Whenever one pays a visit, one must always bring something to share. One must always give back for what one receives. So whenever I meet with my participants, I always brought something to share (food, gift, knowledge, etc.). I must not only give back to individuals, but my responsibility extends to the community. The communal nature of our culture dictates that my research proceeded in a collaborative, cooperative, and collective manner. Power must be shared with participants and community members. Thus, I consulted with them on decisions of how research will proceed (data collection, analysis of results, and implementation of results). The community I refer to at this time, is the Elders and parents who are actively engaged in my research topics.

Sharing is another important cultural value. All knowledge gained from research must be shared among individuals and community members. The sharing of cultural

and linguistic information is crucial because many of our people do not have access to this valuable information. Many of our people do not have grandparents; for others, their grandparents do not possess much cultural knowledge; or they do not have access to Elders from whom they could learn. Parents, wanting to learn traditional knowledge and values, must have access to this information.

Secwepemc cultural and community protocols were followed. The protection of knowledge is a protocol that must be considered. Sacred knowledge must not be divulged randomly. The keepers of traditional Secwepemc knowledge must give their permission for it to be shared with outsiders. One should always acknowledge the source of knowledge even though knowledge is collective. Since there are very few traditional knowledge keepers left, we must hold them and the knowledge in high regard and protect it from abuse. I, as a researcher, have the responsibility to predict and prevent possible negative consequences that may arise and be willing to halt, terminate, or alter the project. This responsibility is critically important in my study because of its nature. Our people are still grieving many painful events and situations such as internment in residential school.

Grant and Giddings (2002) point out a critical role of the researcher in emancipatory research is to expose the social structures and their oppressive effects in order to raise the consciousness of the participants, as well as his/her own which is the basis for collective action and struggle; hence, the necessity of personal qualities such as courage, motivation, and leadership. Motivation is needed to fully involve participants in emancipatory research. By helping them to develop awareness of their circumstances (colonization) and providing knowledge, the researcher assists the participants in raising their consciousness and may facilitate their desire to engage in collective action and

struggle. In this way, the researcher can play a role in empowering them to take transformative action. For transformative action to be truly effective the people themselves must determine the course of action. Thus, a changed consciousness from one of dependency to responsibility is the foundation. Grant and Giddings (2002) explain, "Empowerment is the outcome of changed consciousness produced by the process of praxis, involving cycles of collaborative planning, acting, and critical reflection."

It is my responsibility therefore, to take a leadership role in ensuring my research results are implemented. Much valuable research has been conducted on the Secwepemc and other Indigenous peoples which just sit on shelves gathering dust. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) is a good example of research gathering dust.

## **Research Design**

A phenomenological approach appears appropriate in describing the lived experiences of several individuals about a concept or phenomenon. In this inquiry, according to Creswell (1998):

researchers search for the essential, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experience contains both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning. (p.52)

A phenomenological approach provides much needed insight into expressions of feelings and personal experiences of people who have directly experienced colonization and oppression and its effects as well as loss of language, culture, and identity. By

sharing our experiences, feelings, desires, and hopes, together, we can continue healing our painful past and work toward a brighter present and future.

Phenomenological data analysis says Creswell (1998) analyzes specific statements and themes and searches for all evident meaning. The goal of phenomenology is to better understand what it is like for individuals (groups) to experience the phenomenon being studied. To that end, I conduct interviews with Elders and use taped information from Elders who have passed on. I conduct interviews with parents (all mothers) of young children.

Traditional Secwepemc teaching, child-rearing, learning methods and practices are explored through interviews with Elders. Since there are few Elders who hold traditional Secwepemc knowledge, I also use taped interviews with Elders who have been interviewed in the past. The cultural and linguistic knowledge provided by the Elders as well as ideas, suggestions, and desires gleaned from the parent interviews are used in the development of an ideal “model” of what Secwepemc education/training could be.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

### ***Elder Participants***

The Elder participants in my study are from the Secwepemc Nation. All are over the age of 70 years. One Elder has since passed away. All possess much traditional Secwepemc knowledge. All were raised in Secwepemculecw, in their respective communities. During their childhood years, their parents and other community members still practiced some aspects of traditional Secwepemc culture, although they had largely

moved to an agricultural lifestyle. The parents of these Elders were fluent speakers of Secwepemctsin. They maintained the language despite attendance at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

### ***Elder Profiles***

The late Dr. Mary Thomas was from the Neskonlith community. She lived to be 89 years old. Mary was one of the few Elders who knew a great deal of traditional Secwepemc knowledge. She was a fluent speaker of Secwepemctsin and knew many terms and concepts that other Elders do not know. Although Mary attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School, and missed many of the cultural teachings, she took it upon herself to educate herself. She dedicated her life to learning as much as she could from her mother who lived to about 106 years old. Mary was recognized throughout British Columbia, throughout Canada, and the United States as an expert on Secwepemc knowledge and environmental issues. She gave numerous cultural presentations to schools, universities, government, and her own people. Mary received many awards for her work including the Aboriginal Achievement Award in the environment category. Much of her work has been published with Nancy Turner, ethno botanist and Distinguished Professor in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria. Mary received three honorary doctorate degrees from the University of Victoria, Thompson Rivers University and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Mona Jules is from Simpcw, but was born and raised in her community of Skeetsechen. Mona possesses a great deal of Secwepemc knowledge and language. She was raised by grandparents who passed on many teachings to her. Mona has

worked for many years researching, teaching, and reviving Secwepemctsin. Mona has worked on many Secwepemctsin curriculum projects. These projects involved developing language materials and researching Secwepemctsin from knowledgeable Elders. Mona has also worked as mentor to people learning Secwepemctsin. She teaches linguistics classes (Secwepemctsin) at Simon Fraser University in Kamloops, B.C.

Irene Billy is from Sexqeltqin. Irene is a fluent speaker of Secwepemctsin. She remembers some Secwepemc cultural teachings as she was raised with many Elders. She spent nine years at the Kamloops Indian Residential School which prevented her from being fully involved in cultural activities that her parents and others were engaged in. At her age, she is continually learning Secwepemc cultural knowledge that she missed as a child. Irene is actively involved in teaching Secwepemctsin on an informal basis. She is actively involved in Secwepemc land, title, and rights issues. She has traveled to Switzerland, Japan, and New Zealand to speak on these issues. Irene is a role model for many Secwepemc youth.

William Ignace is from Sexqeltqin. He possesses a great deal of Secwepemc knowledge and language. He was one of the last men in our community who trained under Elders who still lived our traditional way of life. He spent a great deal of time learning traditional knowledge and language on the land. William is one of the few Elders who know traditional skills and language associated with the activities. William teaches young people, on an informal basis, traditional Secwepemc skills and language. He has been involved in Secwepemc land, title, and rights issues for many years. He has traveled to Chiapas, China, and throughout Canada and the United States speaking on these issues.

Flora Sampson is from Sexqeltqin. She was raised by her parents and grandparents and therefore, holds much traditional Secwepemc knowledge. She is a fluent speaker of Secwepemctsin. Flora teaches the Secwepemc language to children at Chief Atahm Secwepemcc Immersion School. She is actively involved in many cultural activities—food and medicine harvesting, traditional singing and drumming, ceremonies and the sweat-lodge. Flora volunteers in many community activities in the surrounding communities.

I interviewed the Elders separately over a 6-month period. To begin the interview process, I undertook the following steps. First, I visited the Elder and brought a gift (usually traditional food) and gave an explanation of my research project. Each Elder and I agreed on a time convenient for him/her. When the time came for the interview, I arrived with recording equipment and the questionnaire. I explained that I would be recording them and received their permission. An important consideration when interviewing Elders is to just let them speak. Many times, they provided more information than the question asked. I did not adhere to the questions but allowed them to speak freely and eventually they did provide a response to the question. After the interview was conducted, I transcribed the recordings using a form I developed. I then grouped their responses into common themes.

### ***Research Questions for Elders***

Interviews with Elders were guided by two major research questions and included sub-set questions (see Appendix B). The sub-set questions were adapted and modified as interactions with the participants proceeded.

1. What did traditional Secwepemc education/training/learning encompass?
2. What contributed to the loss of Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and language (questions will be worded in order for Elders to understand and they may be translated into Secwepemctsin)?
3. What are the common core values and beliefs we should all possess and practice?

### ***Parent Participants***

Parent participants were selected by the researcher. The participants were chosen because of their known interest and desire in learning Secwepemc culture and language. All are actively involved in Secwepemc cultural activities and ceremonies and actively seek out Elders who can teach them. All are politically active in land title and rights issues. All have knowledge about colonization, oppression, and decolonization. All are aware of how colonization has affected them and their children. Most have traveled extensively to meet with other Indigenous Peoples working on these issues.

All are third generation residential school survivors. All of their grandparents attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Some of their parents had attended residential school and some attended public schools. All of the parents interviewed attended public school programs up to secondary school. At the time of the interviews, all parents, except one, did not have their children registered in any school programs. Two parents had children under school age. Two parents have since registered their children in Chief Atahm Immersion School and one has registered her child in a public school.

I undertook the following steps conducting interviews with the parents. I contacted the parents to explain my research, its purpose, and to set up a focus group

meeting with them. I gave them written notice about the meeting one week in advance; at the same time, I gave them copies of the questions so they would have time to think about them. I told them they could write down their responses/thoughts on the questionnaire or just wait and provide responses at the focus group meeting. I invited eight parents most of whom had primary age children. All except one live on the Neskonlith reserve in Chase, B.C.

The development of the research questions was informed by my experience of working with the parents on various community projects and activities. Four major research questions were developed for parent participants (see Appendix C for sub-set questions).

1. What is wrong with the present education system for you as Secwepemc?
2. What does it mean (for you) to be Secwepemc?
3. What would an ideal Secwepemc education/training be?
4. How can such a program be developed, implemented, and practiced?

I arranged the focus group workshop on Neskonlith reserve where the majority of the parents live so transportation would not be a problem. Everyone could walk to the location. The meeting was held in one of the participant's residence which provided an informal atmosphere. I prepared a traditional food lunch for the focus group session. I arranged for child care in another location.

At the first focus group meeting, we went through the questions. The questions were loosely grouped into categories. I wrote the questions on chart paper so the parents could do a group brainstorming as they responded to each question. As we went through the questions, I wrote the responses on chart paper. The parents often

added more information than just a single responses to the question. So I wrote down whatever they said even though it may not have been directly related to the question. My familiarity with the parents may have led to more intimate sharing of ideas and information. The sessions were tape recorded. At the first group session, there was not enough time to go through all the questions so another date was set.

## **Data Analysis**

I generally followed the data analysis spiral process outlined in Creswell (1998). After the first focus group meeting with parents, I sorted their responses and organized the data into files. I then converted the files into appropriate text units (categories). I read through the transcripts in their entirety to get a sense of the whole rather than individual parts. I listened to the recorded sessions to check if I had recorded all their comments to check if I missed any. I then compiled and wrote each section (for example, what values should children and parents acquire?) When I had written all the sections, I presented it to the parents (individually) to examine before the next group meeting.

At the second focus group meeting with parents, the responses to the first set of questions were reviewed and the parents provided feedback. Parents were asked to clarify and confirm accuracy of their statements. They were asked to add more information or delete information as necessary. Some questions were re-designed and some questions were added according to parents input. We then went through the second set of questions. I then repeated the same process as described above. Throughout the focus group meetings, the parents discussed each concept (question) at

length and generally agreed with each other thereby reaching consensus. So when transcribing, I was able to record many of their responses as collective ones.

The phenomenological data analysis procedure described by Creswell (1998) appears appropriate in analyzing and representing the data in my study. After interviewing the parents and Elders about how they experienced the phenomenon (loss of culture, language, identity, way of life, and colonization), I grouped their statements into “meaning units”. The units were integrated into a textual description of “what happened” including verbatim examples.

During the data analysis process and procedure, I did not “step back” or become an impartial observer. Being Secwepemc, I experienced the same phenomenon in much the way as my participants. I was able to relate to their experiences and empathize with them as I had undergone many of the same experiences the parents had.

The responses provided by Elder and parent participants provide the information needed to develop an ideal Secwepemc education/training model, the details of which are included in Chapter 6. In upholding my responsibility as the researcher, I will present my completed research project to the Elders and parents when I have completed the writing of the dissertation. I also plan to present it to interested members of my community and others within the Secwepemc Nation.

## Chapter 4.

### The Process/Impact of Colonization

#### Introduction

There was a time when it was still possible for Indian people to believe that the government and the church could teach us new ways that would make us strong. Not too many people worried about losing their culture. Our culture was naturally a part of us; we could learn the white man's ways and still retain our own ways. These people were not wrong. They were betrayed. If the government had allowed the people of that time to explore the different paths of life, Indian societies would have found ways to retain the best of our own culture while at the same time adopting the best that European culture had to offer. That moment of discovery was never allowed to happen. It was absorbed by the medicine of the new regime. (Manuel quoted in Grant, 1996, p. 44)

Numerous studies have been conducted on the process of colonization—its rationale, its justifications, and its pathological effects on Indigenous Peoples. It is clear that we are now facing multiple forms of domination and oppression in multiple sites—social, cultural, spiritual, linguistic, educational, legal, political, and economic.

We can learn a great deal from research others have undertaken on these topics; however, we, as Secwepemc, must take responsibility for our own learning. We must listen to the voices of those directly impacted by colonization and oppression. When we hear these voices—these real life stories—we develop a critical understanding and motivation to act. In this chapter I present the stories of two Secwepemc Elders who have lived through and survived the destruction wielded by the colonizing forces. Irene

Billy and George Manuel both attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Their stories convey their experiences of colonization, domination, and oppression stemming from the residential school and the Catholic Church. All colonizing agents negatively impacted Secwepemc way of life; however, Manuel (1974) attributes these two forces as exerting the greatest destructive impact.

Accounts of young Secwepemc parents who have direct experience of colonization, oppression, and loss of culture and language are also included. These parents know how they were affected by colonization and know they are living with its effects on a daily basis. They also know that if they don't take action to reverse this situation, it will be passed on to their children.

In this chapter I also draw on Indigenous scholars and non-Secwepemc scholars who have learned from our peoples ways to support and validate the stories told by Secwepemc voices. I demonstrate how colonization and oppression has contributed to the deteriorating knowledge of Secwepemctsin (Secwepemc language) and culture. Since Secwepemctsin and culture are inextricably linked to the land, I will provide a brief account of the effects of colonization on our traditional territories.

In the final section, I turn my attention to the contemporary governance structures that have been imposed on our people by the colonizing state. This section heavily underscores the need for decolonization which is the focus of this dissertation. Here I describe how colonization and oppression are perpetuated within our educational (band schools) and political institutions (band governance) and how they hinder the restoration of Secwepemc language, culture, and land.

Empire builders needed territories to conquer and missionaries needed souls to convert. Indians were perceived as needing to reject their pagan ways—for this they required the teachings of the Bible and a Christian education. Together the church and state used every means to discredit and destroy First Nations and their cultures. (Grant, 1996, p. 46)

## **Kamloops Indian Residential School**

The late Secwepemc leader, George Manuel (1974) emphasizes the colonizing function of the education system provided by the state when he states:

nothing else contributed so much to the destruction of the Indian people as a nation as the school system run by the churches and supported by the government. It was a perfect instrument for changing both our values and economic base. (p. 66)

Manuel describes the changes to our values and economic base and, because our values and economies were based on the land and interconnected with all other aspects of life, the effects of the residential school were cumulative and far-reaching.

Much has been written about the devastating results of children being interned in residential schools. Haig-Brown (1988), Furniss (n.d.), and the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society (2000) have specifically researched and written about the Secwepemc experiences at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. All poignantly express stories of individual loss and grief. Others such as Chrisjohn (1997) have written about various residential schools throughout Canada. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP; 1996) researched and compiled a huge volume on this topic. The RCAP interviewed attendees of residential schools throughout Canada and their responses were compiled in the final report. Their accounts expose the legacy of physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse perpetuated at these schools.

It is critical to know and understand the effects that these schools had on our people in order to move beyond the multi-generational trauma and dysfunction. It is important to understand how much impact the church and school had on contributing to the “problem” of my research. To that end, I will focus my research on the Catholic Church and the Kamloops Residential School, although all colonizing agents were destructive to our way of life. In my community of Neskonlith and in the surrounding communities of Little Shuswap and Adams Lake, the people are still reeling from the effects of residential school. In fact, those who attended the school and organizations working on these issues use the term “residential school survivors” and someone who attended the school will state “I am residential school survivor” or may state, “I am a product of the residential school”. The “residential school syndrome” has affected me and my family personally. I did not attend a residential school, but my mother attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School for eight years.

It is safe to say that every family within our communities is living with:

- Loss of language
- Loss of culture
- Loss of traditional knowledge
- Loss of traditional Secwepemc spirituality
- Loss of traditional values and beliefs
- Loss of traditional governance
- Loss of economic systems
- Loss and alienation of traditional territories
- Loss of identity
- Loss of self-esteem, confidence, and pride

These pathologies contribute to:

- Assimilation
- Oppression
- Adoption of EuroCanadian hegemony
- Breakdown of family and community structures
- High levels of alcohol and drug abuse
- Poor living conditions
- High levels of poverty
- High levels of unemployment,

The pathologies, within our communities, are not limited to this list. The losses were great and cumulated into the biggest loss of all—sovereignty and control over our lives.

In order to put faces to and personalize the subject at hand, I will present stories from two Secwepemc Elders who attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School—Irene Billy and George Manuel. Their voices provide a historical perspective. I will present Irene Billy's story using her own words while George Manuel's story will be drawn from his memoirs in *The Fourth World*. Their stories are representative of their generation and will explain how the "problem of my research" originated. They give voice to all our people by expressing how they and their families were affected by the church and residential school. Unless we hear personal stories, we can never really know the magnitude of what happened and the life long problems that resulted.

### ***Irene Billy's Story***

Irene Billy is a Secwepemc Elder residing on the Adams Lake Reserve in Chase, B.C. Irene is 82 years old. She was born on April 6, 1928. Irene was born in Skeetchestn (a Secwepemc community west of Kamloops, B.C.), but lived most of her life in the Chase area. Her mother was from Skeetchestn and her father was from Adams Lake.

I first went to the Kamloops Residential School in 1936 when I was eight years old. Before that, I lived on the Adams Lake reserve with my mother, father, brothers, and sisters. I remember a happy childhood at home, I was surrounded by my large extended family—grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other Elders from the community. By this time, our people were living a mixed lifestyle. All of the families had farms where they grew huge crops of fruits and vegetable. Most families had livestock—cows, horses, and chickens. Our people still ate much traditional food; they still hunted, fished, picked berries and gathered roots from the traditional territories.

I remember as child always being with my mother, grandmother, or some relative because as children we were never left alone. We went with them when they were working in the gardens, picking berries, or whatever they were doing. We learned by watching and doing what they were doing. We learned by practice and then doing the work by ourselves. They made the work fun and there was lots of laughter and humor.

There was lots of singing while they worked. All learning was related to real life. I and the other children all learned how to put away dried food—food from the garden and food from the land. The boys learned farm-work—plowing, how to handle horses, and how to work in the bush (logging). They also learned traditional skills such as hunting and fishing. During this time, my mother, father, and all other people spoke Secwepemctsin all the time so this was my first language. When I went to the residential school, I did not know how to speak English.

Our parents and grandparents and other Elders were very strict about behaviour. They were stern and the children believed their words and learned how to behave. Most of our learning was from daily practice, such as learning to share food with others and making sure we always shared. I remember the people camping for about a week, picking and drying berries. When they were ready, they were shared among the people. Our people also had collective ownership of some things (tools) that they had to share. We learned how to work hard, help, and cooperate with each other. This was really important because there was always so much work to do.

We also learned behaviour by the stories we were told. I remember my grandfather, Leon Kenoras, telling Secwepemc stories about the animals and how they behaved and misbehaved. From the stories and from how we were treated, we learned self-control and how not to be shy. When we misbehaved at home, we were never punished by being hit or whipped. We were always spoken to softly. If someone did something wrong, like stealing, he would have to go before the Chief. His punishment might be to scrub the church

floors. The Chief would then examine their work. When someone did something minor, he had to do extra work at home.

My father was a Native constable for the reserve. He was a constable and held the position from when he was 18 years old until he died. There was a courthouse that had a jail in it. The chief was the judge. If people did like things like stealing—that was a big offence. If they were caught drinking, they were treated like a criminal.<sup>2</sup> I remember a lady once was drunk and she was tied to pole in the middle of the reserve so that in the morning everyone would see her there.

I remember hearing about some, but not all, of our traditional teachings. I know that how newborn babies were treated was really important. The baby was in the womb for nine months and so when it was born it had to be wrapped tightly or it would feel lost. The baby was put in a birch-bark basket or swing to feel secure. The baby was taken everywhere. They were never left with babysitters. The older children helped look after the younger ones. Children were really well looked after. I never heard of any sex abuse or anything else against children.

The Elders were the ones who taught the children. There was an Elder we called "Old Christine". She didn't have any of her own children and many of the children were sent to go and help her. I remember going with her to pick wild plants and she would be naming the plants. I used to help her when she was tanning deer hides. The children learned many survival skills from Old Christine. She and the other Elders taught by example. They were strong, independent, and hard working.

We learned some of the Secwepemc teachings. We knew some of the land markers and what they meant. We learned about some signs of nature. The Elders knew the behaviour of animals by watching and by watching them, they knew what was going to happen. They knew the sky language. They knew how to watch for signs on the water and what they meant. The boys were told hunting stories so they would learn about hunting. I never took to that kind of learning.

I did not practice Secwepemc spirituality when I was growing up. I knew that children had a *sne7e* (a guardian spirit who protected them). As a child, I didn't go on fasts or *etsce7* (puberty training/coming-of-age). I remember watching people go in the sweat-lodge. Women would have sweats to pray for the hunters. They also prayed for good things to happen. We were told

<sup>2</sup> These practices stem from the imposition of the Durieu system by the Catholic Church.

to pick a tree and pray under it. Prayers were an important part of our life. Later on, children learned to pray the Catholic way.

At this time, the people practiced both traditional and *seme7* (white) ways. They went to church and still had sweats and fasts. The men would fast for three days before they played a baseball game.

When I was a child, everyone spoke Secwepemctsin. My parents and other parents of my generation did not go to the residential school for very long, so they still knew the language. Their parents did not go the school. People my age were the second generation to go the Kamloops Residential School.

I remember all the people working together. They all helped each other. The Chief made sure all the people were well fed and that no one was short of food. My father had a big orchard so he always had lots of apples to share with the people. Other people had potatoes, onions, or other vegetables to share.

I went to the Kamloops Residential School when I was 8 years old and I stayed there for nine years. We went to the school in September and came back in June. I stayed there all year and just came home for two months in the summer. I remember riding in the back of the cattle truck to the residential school. We had to stand up in the back of the truck all the way from Chase to Kamloops. Children were picked up along the way. I missed my parents, grandparents, and all my relatives when I was there. I didn't get to see my brothers much while we were at the school because the boys and girls were separated. Much of the time we were hungry so I was real happy when my mother and father would come and bring us good food to eat. When I was at the school we were taught our ways were savage, to hate our Indian ways, our spirituality was savage, and that we worshipped "False Gods". The priests and nuns said they were "knocking out the savagery" in us.

We were hit by foreign people (nuns) for speaking Secwepemctsin. Once I even had my mouth washed out with soap for speaking my language. Another time I was strapped so hard that both my hands were swollen. When I was at home, I was never hit or beaten. At home we were spoken to softly and at the schools the nuns always shouted at us.

At the school, I learned to read and write in English and do arithmetic. We learned how to cook, preserve food, sew, and clean. Boys learned how to do farm work. We learned Catholic prayers and hymns, even in Latin.

When I was growing up, I didn't learn all the traditional ways of our people because I was at the residential school when they were doing those things.

I didn't go through the puberty training or get a name in Secwepemctsin. I never attended any Secwepemc ceremonies, just Catholic ones, like when babies were being baptized, when someone made First Holy Communion or funerals.

The church was important on our reserve. There was church every Sunday—priest or no priest. Everyone had to be in church. If someone was missing, the Chief would go to his house to see why he wasn't in church. Our people took turns being the "Sunday man". The Sunday man took turns ringing the church-bell to call people to church. We knew that the 3<sup>rd</sup> ring meant we all had to be in church. When the priest didn't come, our people took turns leading the church service. The services were in Secwepemctsin because at this time most of the people still spoke the language. When the boys came from residential school, they were altar boys at the church. If the chief told them to be an altar boy, they had to do it. When I came back from the residential school, I took over leading the prayers and hymns in English. I was about 13 or 14. The people liked me leading the prayers in English. That helped the people to learn English. They remembered learning the hymns in English when they were at the residential school.

The gatherings for our people were at times like Christmas and Easter. People from our reserve went to the Passion Play at the Kamloops Indian reserve at Easter. It was a big gathering with lots of people there. I remember going there when I was at the residential school and singing all Latin hymns. I never heard of any spiritual ceremonies being held at home. I remember the people having la hal (stick games). These games were usually played after funerals. People from all over came when one was held. It went on for days and nights.

When I went home for the summers, I taught my mother things I learned at the school like canning. I learned lots of things the *seme7* (white) way. I didn't learn much of our Secwepemc culture. I didn't learn how to make a birch bark basket, moccasins, what medicines to collect, how to tan a hide and lots of other things because I was at the residential school. When I left the school after Grade 8, I didn't go back home to live.

When I left the residential school, I went to work in a restaurant. I kept working until I got married and moved to Lillooet. Me and my husband had 10 children—two died as babies. I looked after my children and did some jobs to help out. We would go to the United States and get work picking berries and apples. It was hard raising eight children and always making sure they had enough food and clothes. When I split up with husband, I decided to put all my children, except my two oldest sons, in the Kamloops Residential School. My two oldest sons went to live with my mother in Chase, B.C.

My children, my grandchild, and my great grandchildren can't speak the language, either Stat'imc (their father's language) or Secwepemctsin (my language) because we never taught them. I could always speak the language and knew most of it. I don't know many words that are used in cultural activities, such as words used in tanning a hide because I didn't do that. My children are now adults and are learning how to do cultural activities like making dried salmon our old way. I still practice the Catholic religion but still like our traditional singing and drumming. I go to the sweat-lodge sometime.

As grandmother and great-grandmother, I can pass on my language but not much of our culture. I am learning about our medicines and other things I didn't learn when I was young.

### ***George Manuel's Story***

The late George Manuel was a member of the Neskonlith Band in Chase, B.C. I will retell his story of his residential school experience by drawing upon his book, *The Fourth World*. George speaks of his early life on the reserve and describes the changes he witnessed in his people as colonization descended on them. Manuel eloquently describes the effects of the Catholic Church and the Kamloops Residential School and provides clear insights into how they contributed to the on-going colonization and oppression of our people. He poignantly describes the effects of the Kamloops Indian Residential School:

Nothing else contributed so much to the destruction of the Indian people as a nation as the school system run by the churches and supported by the government. It was the perfect instrument for undermining both our values and our economic base. The residential school was the perfect system for instilling a strong sense of inferiority. When we came back for summer holidays, or when we simply left school, we were equally unfit to live in an Indian world or a European world. We had lost time learning our own skills. The agricultural skills we were being taught were already obsolete. Our values were as confused and warped as our skills. (Manuel, 1974, p. 66)

George began school when he neared his 10th birthday. His most vivid memory of being at the school was the intense hunger he and the other students constantly felt. Being hungry everyday, he says, the students smelled of hunger. The meals consisted of one ladleful of mulligan and a piece of bread, the same at lunchtime, and porridge and bread at breakfast. There were no second helpings despite how hungry the children were. The children learned to be thieves. Many resorted to stealing food from wherever they could get it. They even stole and ate raw fish from the fishery. They learned to pick locks to steal carrots and potatoes from the cellar. The children, he says, would even steal from their brothers. They developed a debt system to get food where they would trade bread for something else. He recalls one boy who owed "500 bread". The children resorted to eating raw food that was not part of their traditional diet, such as leaves from trees and dandelion roots. Occasionally family members would bring traditional foods for him. "Hunger numbs your mind" (p. 66), he said, and "it was not my grandfather coming, it was meat, dried fruit, and roots" (p. 66).

Besides the hunger, George recalls the shame inflicted upon him. He was called a heathen because of his grandfather who was a Secwepemc medicine man. In fact, the children whose families practiced traditional Secwepemc ways were similarly targeted by the priests and nuns. Children were ridiculed for having Secwepemc names.

Education (English reading and writing) was minimal. Half of each day consisted of industrial training. The students worked on manual labour and farm work such as weeding the garden and packing green cordwood. If they stopped working, they were whipped. They were not allowed use of equipment. He tells of the young boys hoisting tons of hay while the horses grazed in the fields and the farm truck was parked in the shed. The students were trained to be the labourers in the colonial work force. George

says that after leaving the residential school, they were unfit to live in the Indian world. They had lost time learning their own skills and the agricultural skills they learned at the school were obsolete.

He speaks of the changes in values, "Our values were as confused and warped as our skills" (p. 67) and about the changes in family and community relationships. Due to the constant whipping and punishment at the school, when the children returned home, they would not move unless threatened with a whip. This behaviour was in sharp contrast to traditional family relationships because children had never been struck by their relatives. So the families failed to represent themselves as a threat and threats were the only thing the children had been taught to understand at school. George says the children perceived their people as speaking an uncivilized and savage language and being filled with superstitions. He recounts that even the people who they loved came to look ugly.

Before attending the school, the children knew their roles and responsibilities. When they came back, they were lazy and insolent, "When we came back from school, we would not lift a finger, even in our own homes when we were asked" (p. 67).

George asserts that the children coming home from the school brought the generation gap. An example he gives is the shift from the traditional economies of hunting and fishing to a shift to the adoption of casual paid labour. He says the colonial system required such an Indian for the labour force. He writes, "The residential schools were the laboratory and production line of the colonial system" (p. 63). George states:

What was most nearly destroyed was the value of a person's labour as a contribution to the life and well-being of the community. It made sense to take the challenge of hard work, whether it was hunting or fishing or

farming, when the work would bring food to the tables of many homes, strength to the community, and glory and honour to the person who did it. (p. 68)

When the children returned home from the residential schools, much of their work ethic they should have had was gone.

George laments how even strong, traditional people like his grandfather, who was a medicine man, eventually succumbed to the effects of colonization. Upon his deathbed his grandfather told him, “Things are going to be different from here on in. I don’t think it is wise for me to teach you to go into the mountains. I think it will be a detriment rather than an asset for you” (p. 68). George speaks of others of his generation who regretted their abandonment of their Secwepemc way of life. People told George “My father told me to be white. When he was on his deathbed, forty years later, he said, ‘My son, I made a mistake. You raise your children and your grandchildren as Indians’” (p. 68).

George Manuel, clearly understood the process of colonization and its effects (hegemony). He explains:

For colonialism to be fully effective it is necessary that the leaders who propagate the myths about those whom they have conquered must not only convince themselves of what they say—it need hardly be said that must convince their followers down to the humblest peasant and foot soldier—they must also convince the conquered. (Manuel, 1974, p. 59)

Manuel explains that the colonizers take control by determining what the ‘common good’ is (for the colonized) and that “people can only become convinced of the common good when their own capacity to imagine ways in which they can govern themselves has been destroyed” (p. 60).

He further explains how the change in the traditional economic system based on abundant supply of resources changed. Manuel (1974) explains:

First, shortage of essential goods had to be created where there had never really been one. Secondly, a new source of supply had to be created, one that was entirely outside the common frame of reference so that it would not be well understood, one that would in no way be as plentiful as the old supply. Thus, only a select few would have their needs satisfied. This, in turn, would create a new set of leaders who were always indebted to the outside source of supply. (p. 60)

These changes were in sharp contrast to the Secwepemc social and economic structures based on collectivity and equal distribution of resources.

## **Colonizing Impacts of Residential Schools**

The stories of Secwepemc Elders Irene Billy and George Manuel validate the research on residential schools as one of the tools of colonization used to destroy Indigenous languages and cultures. Quoted in Haig-Brown (1988), Robin Fisher explains the main purpose of the residential school.

Because the missionaries did not separate Western Christianity and Western civilization, they approached Indian Culture as a whole and demanded a total transformation of the Indian proselyte. Their aim was of complete destruction of the traditional integrated Indian way of life. The missionaries demanded even more far-reaching transformation than the settlers and they pushed it more aggressively than any other group of whites (pp. 144-145)

Haig-Brown (1988) conducted extensive research on the Kamloops Indian residential school. She interviewed 13 people who attended the school from 1907 to 1967.

Her research reaffirms systematic assaults on the Secwepemc language and shows that by prohibiting the language, the very base of culture, the Secwepemc way of

life was attacked. Furthermore, since the children were isolated from the cultural influences and teachings of their parents and other community members, she reports, the daily systematic inculcation of Christian theory and practice became possible.

From the Elders' stories and what researchers have written on the residential school system, I agree with Grande (2004) who says that Indian education was never simply about the desire to "civilize" but from its very inception it was a project designed to colonize Indian minds as a means of gaining access to Indian labour, lands and resources. In our case, the colonial governments assumed jurisdiction over our entire Secwepemc Nation with the exception of federally controlled Indian reserves.

Dr. Agnes Grant (1996), in her book, *No End to Grief*, interviewed hundreds of people who have attended residential schools. She presents a thorough analysis of the effects of these schools on the attendees. Grant (1996) cites language suppression; destruction of personal values, such as self-esteem and pride; disruption of family structures; adoption of non-Native lifestyles (hegemony); and loss of cultural knowledge as cumulative effects of the residential school.

Grant (1996) is one of the few researchers to provide startling insights into the deep psychological effects of language suppression on culture. She asserts that because children were literally forbidden to speak their own language, there was no way for them to communicate until English was learned. Grant (1996) adds that older children were given assistance but the younger ones were segregated according to age so often there was no interaction between older and younger children. This affected the children's' ability to express their emotions because since they couldn't speak (in English or their Native language), couldn't make sense of their experiences through questions

and discussions. Nor, she writes, could they communicate feelings. The children learned to think in a different way, a way, Grant (1996) states, which differed tremendously from their familiar world and no one guided them through the process of acquiring a new worldview. She concludes that because of this, the children suffered extreme psychological damage that was immeasurable and still felt by many residential school survivors. Ing articulates the impact of language suppression. She writes:

Suppressing Native languages under the threat of corporal punishment produced trauma; therefore, it should not astound one if the topic is emotional, because it was a latent way of destroying one's sense of self and ego..The younger the child was, the easier it was to lose or give up this culture through loss of language, and the harder it was on the child's adjustment. (quoted in Grant, 1996, p. 192)

Haig-Brown (1988) points out that although the chances of attendees retaining their language was relatively good because of its use during summer visits home, the biggest effect on language use was secondary. The students' language was not completely eradicated by punishment but, as parents, they did not consciously (or in a natural manner) teach their children the language. They thought that their children might avoid the punishments they endured using the language at school. Other students, she writes, believed the propaganda used to convince them that the Shuswap language was unimportant. Grant (1996) also reports that the children left the residential schools ashamed of their parents and firmly believing the use of Native language was an indication of inferior status.

Grant (1996) is one the few researchers who have written on the effects on language suppression on Indigenous child development. She reports that in normal home situations where children were immersed in their Native language, they would have mastered the use of the language for basic communication and mastered all the

nuances of the language as they learned to use it for many different purposes. When they got to school, they were not allowed to use any of the skills they had acquired. In their own language, they were able to acquire information, ask for things, and perform other language functions; however, these skills were no longer useful in a school setting demanding the use of the English language. Since the children couldn't speak English, there was no way of problem solving. There was no way of talking out disagreements and frustrations so, reports Grant, most problems had to be borne in silence or dealt with in a secretive way. Further, because of children's' fear of staff, they repressed their feelings or took frustrations out on those weaker and more timid than themselves. Grant attributes this confusion to children's' loss of inherent spontaneity and learning to retreat into themselves.

Grant (1996) outlines the stark contrast between learning methods at the school and traditional ways of learning. Learning at the residential school was by rote; there were few experiences to discuss; no exposure to the outside world left little experiences to excite the students; and no reading from the outside world was possible (newspapers, magazines, or library books). Letters were censored. Since the daily routines were so regulated—washing and bed-making in the morning, lining up, waiting quietly before and after a meal, and bedtime routines were performed in silence—the normal conversation among the students was eliminated. Grant cites other research that shows communication between children and adults were almost entirely restricted to directives from adults to children.

One of the ways children were able to retain their languages, reports Grant (1996) was by practicing it after they were in bed. She adds children developed ways to retain their knowledge and memories of their people and culture. For example, she

refers to one informant who methodically described her home community to herself every night after she went to bed, lovingly dwelling on every bush and tree for fear she would forget them before she returned.

Grant (1996) exposes the residential school as being responsible for students' adoption of the non-Native way of life. Although she doesn't use the term "hegemony", we can see the development of Euro-Canadian hegemony originating from the residential school. One of her informants describes the consequences of the school's efforts to assimilate the students and transform their traditional way of life.

Our heritage, our culture also now involves many aspects which are in no way related to our pre-European contact traditional cultures but which are a direct result of experiences with our invaders—institutionalization on reserves and missions—being a prime example. Those experiences have shaped our lives today and will also be a part of our legacy to our children. Because no effort was spared to stamp out every aspect of our traditions, languages, and customs, and to break down the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next through such strategies as the dormitory system, what many of us are now left with is a "mission culture". (Henrietta Fourmile quoted in Grant 1996, p. 194)

Like other Indigenous nations, described by Grant (1996), our people experienced debilitating changes to our way of life as a result of language and culture suppression. We know this from Irene and George's stories and from what we experience today. Our spiritual knowledge and practices were severely affected by the Catholic Church and residential school. Medicine men and women no longer trained and healing ceremonies were no longer held. The last generation to train for power (as medicine people), at Neskonlith, were men born in the late 1890s and early 1900s. In *Shuswap Stories* edited by Bouchard and Kennedy (1979), Isaac Willard reports that he and Alex Dick were the last men from Neskonlith to train for power. Isaac says he did not complete his training. Since then we have no trained medicine people and

Secwepemc healing ceremonies are no longer conducted. This is an almost irreplaceable loss as it will take extreme effort to regain spiritual training.

The traditional *etsxe* (puberty training) has also largely been discontinued. This training initiated children into adult roles and assuming adult responsibilities. The late Secwepemc Elder, Mary Thomas, suggested that since the traditional practice of *etsce* is no longer practiced and our young people are not being initiated into the adult world by traditional methods, they adopt other ways to demonstrate they have entered into adulthood such as drinking alcohol or taking drugs. Such behaviours and loss of strict self-discipline add more problems to our communities already suffering from multiple dysfunction and social ills. The stories of our Elders and the research by Grant (1996) and Haig-Brown (1988) provide credibility to the work of other experts, such as Madame Erica-Irene Daes (2000) Chairperson, Working Group on Indigenous Populations for the United Nations, who have studied colonization and its effects. She speaks eloquently of the devastation of colonialism on the self and family. Daes write, "Colonialism teaches people to think they are someone else—it tries to change their peoples' identities" (p. 3) and "one of the most powerful tools of colonialism is making children ashamed of their parents" (p. 3). Her statements ring true as I remember being a child attending public school in Chase, B.C. coming home one day and hearing my grandparents speaking Secwepemctsin and angrily saying to them "Speak English".

The children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of Irene Billy, George Manuel, and others of their generation are living the effects of colonization and residential schools. Irene and George's grandchildren, and others within this generation, are now young parents raising children without the legacy of Secwepemc culture,

language, identity, and all other aspects of Secwepemc life. Some of their voices will be heard within my research.

## **Colonization and Its Effects on Parents in this Study**

As part of my research, I arranged for a focus group meeting of six young Secwepemc parents to provide opportunities for their responses to my research questions. They expressed how the colonization process and its effects have impacted their lives and the lives of their children. Their responses were remarkably similar to each other which I attribute to the similar childhood environments and educational experiences. All were directly impacted by their parents and grandparents attendance at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and all had attended public schools. One of the greatest impacts the parents reported is intergenerational trauma. One parent commented on the internalized fear (of speaking and learning the culture) that was passed on to her by those punished for speaking the language and practicing the culture. Negative feelings of shame, insecurity, and fear, they believe, are unconsciously passed on to them, which they in turn, pass on to their children. All of the parents were raised hearing and speaking English as their first language and have little or no knowledge of cultural and spiritual practices because it was never practiced in the home. These parents, for example, did not undergo their *etsce7* (coming-of-age ceremony) and nor did their children as they reached puberty age. All of the parents did not receive a Secwepemc name at birth; however, some of them have assured that their children were given Secwepemc names.

Many factors contribute to their lack of knowledge of Secwepemc culture, language, spirituality, and way of life. Since their parents did not acquire the language,

they were unable to transmit it to them. Now, as parents themselves, they are unable to transmit it to their children. The young parents do not have living grandparents who could conceivably teach them the language. Since there are few fluent speakers of Secwepemctsin in the Neskonlith community where the majority of parents live, they have little access to fluent speakers. In fact, within the Neskonlith community of approximately 600 people, there are about 9 fluent speakers.

Some of the parents' children now attend Chief Atahm Immersion Program, where they are becoming fairly fluent speakers of Secwepemctsin. The young parents, then, learn some language from their children and some have taken it upon themselves to learn by other means; however, the amount of language learned is not enough for use as an everyday, natural language. The parents also do not have adequate opportunities to practice speaking the language they do learn within the community. The Elders, who do know the language, often appear reluctant to speak freely and naturally to the younger generation. So there are very little opportunities to hear Secwepemctsin being spoken in a natural setting.

The parents also reported that they possess some Secwepemc cultural and spiritual knowledge. Most have taken the initiative to attend and learn about spiritual ceremonies, such as the Kootenay jump dance or Okanagan Winter Dance. Some participate in sweat-lodge ceremonies within the local community. Some of the parents have sought out Elders in the community or other Secwepemc communities to learn cultural skills, such as tanning a hide or making dried meat. Within the local communities, there are some Elders who possess Secwepemc traditional knowledge, but are not fluent speakers of the language and there are Elders who are fluent speakers of the language, but do not possess traditional knowledge.

The young parents are attempting to learn cultural skills and transmit them to their children. When traditional skills are learned, the parents do practice them on a continuing basis. Most of the parents now take their children and dig roots. One parent has recently learned how to make birch bark baskets and spends a lot of time collecting the materials and making baskets. She is teaching her children how to collect the bark and other materials and to make the baskets. However, as in the past, there is no one learning all the traditional skills our people knew.

Some parents pointed out the lack of Secwepemc identity as being a contributing factor to not learning the language and culture in order to fully transmit it to their children. They also attribute outside forces as being contributing factors in their lack of knowledge of language and culture. Change in lifestyle is a huge contributing factor to not practicing Secwepemc culture and language. Families have become more nuclear; extended families no longer live together. Traditionally, grandparents would have lived in the same household as grandchildren. The practice of going out on the traditional territories, for extended periods, of time was discontinued. Many of the young parents do go out on the land, and take their children with them, to pick berries and roots and gather medicines for extended periods. Families no longer help each other or work together. Traditionally, all the families would go to the root digging areas and all work together to ensure they had a plentiful supply for winter.

The parents voiced what they considered as the problems within the present education system (mainstream education). It is important to note that all six parents do not have their children registered in a public school system. Three parents are doing home schooling; two parents have students registered in Chief Atahm Immersion

Program; and one parent has a child under school age. They see the following as deficiencies within the public school system:

- Parents are not involved in what is taught and how curriculum is taught
- Schools are not family-oriented; one teacher in charge of 20 students
- Schools have different values (other than Secwepemc ones)
- School structure is too rigid. Do not allow for time to go out on the land or participate in extended ceremonies.
- Teachers do not have same values and skills (in interacting with children) as them
- Schools teach EuroCanadian history, culture, values which reflect their society.
- Children are streamed to fit into the “worker society”
- Schools have assimilationist agendas
- Schools have hierarchical structure with the teacher at the top

In speaking of band-administered education programs, they felt there was not enough language (Secwepemctsin) and culture.

The parents cited other factors contributing to their lack of language and cultural skills. They refer to the outside pressure from extended family members to send their children to public school and get a “white” education. They attribute our present social structure (family and community members not willing to work together and help each other like they used to) as being a barrier to restoring language and culture. The parents also cite oppressive government laws and policies, including the band council system, as a contributing factor. The band governance structure promotes EuroCanadian education, health, and governance systems. The British Columbia government, in particular, lays claim to exclusive use and ownership and prohibits access and use of the traditional territory. The reliance on a cash-based economy also contributes to the

problem as there is much pressure for the young parents to get a job and spend the majority of their time working (usually at minimum wage) rather than actively learning the language and culture.

The Elders, researchers, and parents present the legacies of colonization that we will live with every day. The greatest problems we face are the rapidly declining use of Secwepemctsin, practicing our traditional way of life, the loss of our traditional land, and the adoption of foreign education and governance institutions. We need to undertake a critical examination of how each are contributing to the on-going colonization and oppression of our people.

## **The Decline of Language**

The decline, and possibly imminent death of our language, requires a critical examination so steps can be made toward its restoration, maintenance, and transmission to future generations. I begin this section with an examination of the present state of Secwepemctsin; explain how it came about; and describe how the decline of language is perpetuated within our communities. Research by Matthew (1999) shows, and it is generally accepted in our communities that Secwepemctsin is in extreme danger. He provides statistics on Secwepemctsin fluency levels within the Secwepemc Nation. He reports that out of a total of 7,597 members of the nation, there are only 308 fluent speakers of Secwepemctsin. That is 3.9% of the Secwepemc population who speak Secwepemctsin fluently. This study was done in 1999 and no recent statistics have been compiled. It has been nine years since Matthew's report and since then many Elders (who were the fluent speakers) have passed away. In another language assessment, Ignace (1998) reports that in one Secwepemc community, the

language is extinct (there are no fluent speakers of the language). Within our three communities, all of the fluent speakers are over the age of 65 years. If people do not start actively re-learning Secwepemctsin, it could be extinct as a spoken language in 10 to 15 years when the last of the Elders who knows it pass on. In Ignace's assessment, she reports that fluent speakers do not speak the language in the home and almost no children are being raised speaking the language in the home. She notes that to date (with the exception of Chief Atahm Secwepemctsin Immersion Program) school programs have not produced proficiency or fluency in the language and language programs have not resulted in the use of the language, except for a few words, among younger generations of Secwepemc.

Language experts have devised scales of language endangerment. According to *Suggested Interventions Based on Different Stages of Language Endangerment* adapted from Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages in Reyhner (1999), Secwepemctsin rates at Stage 8—the closest to total extinction. Intergenerational transmission of language is critical to its survival. Furthermore, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Ad hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages submitted a report entitled *Language Vitality and Endangerment* to the International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages (2003). This report identifies 9 factors: 6 factors to evaluate a language's vitality and state of endangerment, 2 factors to assess language attitudes, and 1 factor to evaluate the urgency for documentation. The report recommends that, taken together, these 9 factors are especially useful for characterizing a language's overall sociolinguistic situation. The report proposes "no single factor alone can be used to assess a language's vitality or

its need for documentation” (p. 5). Each factor is numbered from 1 to 5 with 5 indicating thriving languages and 1 indicating critically endangered languages. Using these grading factors for evaluating a language’s vitality and state of endangerment, Secwepemctsin (our language) can be graded as outlines in Table 1.

**Table 1. UNESCO’s Language Vitality Factors**

Factor 1.	Intergenerational Language Transmission	1
Factor 2.	Absolute Number of Speakers (real numbers)	<sup>a</sup> NA
Factor 3.	Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population	1
Factor 4.	Trends in Existing Language Domains	1
Factor 5.	Response to New Domains and Media	1
Factor 6.	Materials for Language Education and Literacy	1
Factor 7.	Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use:	1
Factor 8.	Community Members’ Attitudes toward Their Own Language	2
Factor 9.	Amount and Quality of Documentation	2

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> NA= Not applicable (no number).

Adapted from UNESCO’s Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages: For a detailed explanation of these factors, see UNESCO (2003).

Ignace (2005) supplying additional data on the state of Secwepemctsin, reports that linguist Michael Krauss grades language on a scale according to its state. He lists the categories as: flourishing, enduring, declining, endangered, and critical. Using Krauss’ classification, we can safely say that Secwepemctsin is in the endangered category where people of the older generation (elders) know and use the language, but parents of childbearing age by-and-large use a different language (English) with their children. Thus, with Secwepemctsin being an endangered language, intergenerational transmission is effectively disrupted. Although this category includes elders who know and use the language; in our communities, Elders know the language but they rarely, if

ever, use it in their homes (because their children don't know the language) or in public (except when directly requested to speak; e.g., prayer at a meeting)

At this time, I know of no scales which classify language learned and spoken by restorative methods, such as children learning language in an Immersion setting, likely, because so few effective language restoration programs exist.

We know that from these grading instruments and from daily experience, that Secwepemctsin is a severely endangered language. Fishman in Reyhner (1999) declares that a severely endangered language (Stage 8) must be moved to Stage 5 (language is still very much alive and used in the community). This, according to Reyhner (1999), is the minimal prerequisite for keeping the language alive. We must commit a great deal of effort, energy, and time in moving Secwepemctsin to the Stage 5.

We know the critical state of Secwepemctsin. We need to examine why this critical state of language persists today. How did the language reach such a critical state? We know, from the stories of our Elders, that the Kamloops Residential School was one of the colonizing agents largely responsible for the near eradication of Secwepemctsin. The first Kamloops Industrial School was established in 1890. There are no accurate records of how many people from our communities attended the school at this time. Our Elders remember people from our community of Neskonlith attending the school in 1907 and 1912. These people were from my grandmother's generation. She was born in 1900 and attended the school from 1907-1908. During this time, the people did not attend the school for long periods of time—generally from one to four years. Thus, they were able to maintain Secwepemctsin and much of their traditional knowledge because their parents were still largely living the traditional way. Their

children attended the school from approximately 1920-1950. This was my mother's generation. My mother attended the Kamloops Residential School for approximately nine years from 1927 to 1935. Before attending the school, her first language was Secwepemctsin. When she returned home from the school, she still knew and spoke Secwepemctsin. She knew some of the traditional cultural activities but not all.

My mother did not transmit Secwepemctsin to me or my siblings. We grew up largely speaking English, although we were exposed to the language by my mother speaking it with my grandparents and other Elders. My older sisters and I could understand the language because at home our grandparents spoke Secwepemctsin most of the time. Within the community, the language was used extensively. Elders spoke the language with their peers in social situations. Parts of the church services were conducted in Secwepemctsin.

One of the contributing factors to the decline of Secwepemctsin is the residential school students' shame and reluctance to speak Secwepemctsin stemming from the tremendous amount of trauma and humiliation endured at the residential school, which effectively disrupted intergenerational transmission. Within my family, the pattern of natural intergenerational transmission of Secwepemctsin was disrupted. Since my mother did not transmit the language to me, I could not transmit (naturally) to my children, and in turn, they cannot transmit it to their children. As an adult, I, through much diligence and perseverance, was able to re-learn much Secwepemctsin, by attending community and university language classes, self-study, and working with Elders at Chief Atahm School. I cannot, however, be considered a fluent speaker when compared to an Elder for whom Secwepemctsin is their first language. My two daughters, now aged 21 and 19, are fairly proficient in Secwepemctsin because they

attended Chief Atahm Immersion School for seven and eight years. Now that they are out of the school setting, however, they have few opportunities to speak the language as most of their peers do not know the language.

It is difficult to find places in our community where language is honoured and accepted and where people feel good about speaking naturally. Community language events generally consist of staged events such as speech contests in the language or children using the language in performance situations or a prayer by an Elder.

Chief Atahm Secwepemctsin Immersion, established in 1991, is one language restoration program that offers promising strategies to combat language loss in its restoration efforts. Kathy Michel (2005), one of the founders of the program, explains, “In 1988 the first Immersion development began on the Adams Lake reserve” (p. 53). This was a language nest program where babies up to three years of age attended. She adds:

In 1992, the first immersion preschool and kindergarten program was started. Each subsequent year another grade level of immersion was added to Grade 3. From that point onwards the bilingual program was developed for the intermediate and high school grades. (p. 53)

The Chief Atahm Immersion program developed as a result of parents wanting their children to learn the language and culture in an Immersion setting. A small group of parents worked together to develop and implement the program. A group of community Elders were also actively involved in the program; mainly as language instructors and mentors. A unique combination of B. C. certified teachers and Elder worked together as teachers. The certified teachers planned the lessons and the Elders presented them (at this time, the teachers were not fluent speakers of Secwepemctsin). The program, adds

Michel, is guided by the school vision of “a Secwepemc speaking community living in balance with nature” (p. 53).

Chief Atahm is now recognized as the most successful Secwepemctsin revival program within the Secwepemc Nation. Ignace (2005) reports that Chief Atahm School is the only long-standing Aboriginal language immersion program in British Columbia. That being said, it covers only a small portion of Secwepemc students learning the language within the 17 communities of the Secwepemc Nation. The students attending Chief Atahm School do develop a good basic proficiency (comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing Secwepemctsin). The students begin the Immersion program at age four and continue in full immersion until Grade 3. Despite its success in student acquisition of basic proficiency, there are limitations, at this time, in attaining full restoration, maintenance, and transmission of Secwepemctsin. Some of the challenges include: the dominance of English language in the home and community; students not speaking the language outside the school; and not enough classes for parents and community members to learn Secwepemctsin. Other challenges I observed while teaching there for 12 years were: students not going out on the land for extended periods of time to learn cultural activities; parents not learning with their children (culture and language); and students viewing Secwepemctsin as a school only activity; and the language not being extended into the family and community.

Kathy Michel (2005) in her Master of Education thesis, *You Can't Kill Coyote: Stories of Language Healing from Chief Atahm School Secwepemc Language Immersion Program* notes a further challenge of revitalizing the language. She reports that the students, parents, teachers, and Elders in her study are not a typical community. All respondents in her study were actively involved in learning the language as long-

standing students in the Immersion program, as teachers who had worked along side Elders, and as Elders who had worked in the program. This is not a usual situation and not the case in other Secwepemc communities. The students attending Chief Atahm School are mainly from the Adams Lake community with a few students from Neskonlith and Little Shuswap. She contends that the impact (of learning Secwepemctsin) for the entire Secwepemc Nation is marginal due to the low enrolment of students. Michel explains that the Secwepemctsin Immersion program only came about because of the dedication and commitment of the people involved in the program. It may be difficult to duplicate the program in other communities unless support and dedication, demonstrated in the Chief Atahm program, is established and acted upon.

The loss of language is more than just losing words. The Institute for the Preservation of Original Languages website eloquently states:

Loss of language means loss of all accumulated knowledge of culture, spiritual practice, medicinal knowledge, custom, and history: a unique worldview, and expression of whole people. Such loss means loss of diversity, and it is an irreplaceable loss. Complexity of cultural practices, tribal and familial relations, unique and intangible human resources and experiences are all contained in the spoken language, songs, stories, and traditions. (Indigenous Language Institute, 1997, p. 6)

## **The Loss of the Land**

The health of the language is directly related to the health of the land and our unfettered access to it. Noeline Villebrun, in *Indigenous Education and Empowerment: International Perspectives*, expresses the importance of the land to her culture which applies to all Indigenous cultures.

We say the land and the culture are inseparable. We often express our views by way of our confidence in what the land provides to us. This

confidence in the land is reciprocated and maintained by being active on the land and showing respectful relations to all life. Environmental health is expressed through the health of each person, each family, and each community and region. (2006, p. 15)

When we don't have access to the land and when the land is being destroyed, we can no longer practice traditional and spiritual activities that must take place on the land and we can no longer use the language associated with the activity. We lose knowledge, not only about those particular ecosystems, but the cultural skills that are practiced there. We lose the specialized language that can only be used meaningfully on the land, such as place names, medicinal plants, and sacred sites.

Much of traditional territory is either inaccessible to us or being destroyed by large scale industrial and tourism development. Although we now live, to a great extent, a sedentary lifestyle on Indian reserves, we still use some parts of our traditional territory for cultural and spiritual activities. Our traditional lands were, and continue to be, usurped by the colonial government, despite the fact, that we never signed treaties, never sold or surrendered the land. Today the government of British Columbia assumes 100% control and jurisdiction of our unceded lands. Since we do not have control to take care of the land, much of it is being destroyed at an alarming rate by forestry, mining, tourism, ranching, and residential development. Land is also expropriated for provincial parks which, again, restrict our access and use.

Daes (2000) reminds us of our responsibilities in relation to the land. She explains:

the old ceremonies, songs, and names kept people tied to the land, and continually reminded people of their responsibilities. Strip away the ceremonies, symbols and knowledge from the land, or sell them off, and people will no longer feel responsible for the land. (p. 5)

At the same time, she says, if the land is stripped and can no longer provide the indigenous peoples with a livelihood, then the language and all-encompassing aspects are lost and susceptible to disuse and eventual extinction. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) agree:

removing people from the land or preventing them for carrying out traditional subsistence practices breaks the generation to generation cycle of individual experience and empirical study. Once dispossessed of their direct interaction with the eco-system, Indigenous peoples lose the means of transmitting their old knowledge effectively. (p. 267)

The land is also our teacher and our classroom, when these things are not well, when they are sick, whatever form the sickness takes, this is felt by us in terms of not only the physical but also the spiritual, emotional, and personal. In this regard, we have a truly “ecological” perspective on education. We do not separate ourselves from the land; we do not compartmentalize education from all other aspects of life. (Villebrun, 2006, p.15)

Elders from all over Canada, gathered at the First Nations Elders Conference in Manitoulin Island in 1993, discussed critical issues of declining language and culture levels, loss of and alienation of traditional lands, adoption of non-Native culture and values, and the resulting social dysfunctions. From this gathering, they made many recommendations for the restoration of language and culture. It is now 15 years since the gathering; many of these Elders passed away and, sadly, most of their recommendations never materialized into substantial action. Taiaiake Alfred (1999) Mohawk scholar summarizes the “problem”. He writes:

material poverty and social dysfunction are merely the visible surface of a deep pool of internal suffering. The underlying cause of that suffering is alienation—separation from our heritage and from ourselves. Indigenous nations are slowly dissolving with the continuing loss of language, land, and young people. (p. xv)

He states, “our bodies may live without our languages, lands, or freedom, but they will be hollow shells” (p. xv). Our Elders agree and say, “We will be *seme7wilc* ‘become like white people’ and we will be empty and poor.”

## **The Effect of Mainstream Schooling**

As mentioned by the young parents in my study, the present school system contributes to the declining levels of Secwepemctsin and culture. I present a brief examination of how the present school system contributes to the problem. The majority of Secwepemc students in our communities attend the public schools in Chase. They are enrolled in programs from kindergarten to Grade 12. Hanahano (1999), a Native Hawaiian scholar, provides a quote from Longboat which succinctly describes the assimilationist agenda of mainstream schooling for Native students and, hence, loss of language and culture.

the education provided to First Nations .has been an important element in an overall policy of assimilation. It has been a means of replacing Native languages, religions, history, and cultural traditions, values, and worldviews with those of European settler nations and of modifying the values of the Indian nations through their children—those who are the weakest and can offer the least resistance. Education has worked as an agent of colonial subjugation with the long term objective of weakening Indian nations by causing children to lose sight of their identities, history, and spiritual knowledge. (p. 211)

From this quote and many articles written on this subject, we clearly see that mainstream education programs, not based on Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy play a contributing role in the cultural, spiritual, psychological, linguistic genocide of our people as long as we are willing to support these programs.

We cannot simply blame EuroCanadian education institutions for our problems. We must examine our own educational institutions. Are they contributing to the loss of Secwepemc language, culture, and way of life-- and, if so, how? Within the Secwepemc Nation, there are eight schools administered by their respective bands. All provide predominately-English programs with the exception of Chief Atahm Secwepemc Immersion Program located on the Adams Lake reserve in Chase, B.C. All programs, except for Chief Atahm School, are based on a colonized EuroCanadian model of education, following the B.C. Ministry of Education curriculum. The majority of these schools are at the pre-school and elementary level. These schools provide minimum Secwepemc language instruction. Ignace (2005) reports that language instruction is offered as local enrichment with classes ranging from 45 minutes once per week, to 30 to 40 minutes 3- to 5-times per week. Thus, the language programs offer insufficient instruction and exposure to Secwepemctsin. With time allotments of 90 to 120 minutes of language instruction, the program operates more in fostering appreciation and awareness of language rather than producing proficiency. The students, she reports, often learn colours, numbers, names of animals and a few greetings and etiquette. The students do not learn to communicate in Secwepemctsin. From speaking to some of the students from these classes, I observed that they do not possess competent understanding of the language. Furthermore, despite the integral link between language and culture, little or no traditional Secwepemc culture is taught in the classes. If any culture is presented, it is taught in the classroom and not out on the land where relevant learning takes place. Ignace (2005) states that Secwepemc language teachers in these programs agree that they provide extremely low levels of language proficiency. Ignace (2005) cites lack of funding; lack of recognition of the language; lack of adequate

curriculum; lack of instructional resources; and lack of trained teachers as some of the factors contributing to marginalization and inequitable treatment of Secwepemctsin programs. The teachers in public and band school language programs are generally Elders who are fluent in Secwepemctsin or younger people who have learned the language. The Elders teaching in the language programs are already fluent speakers but they do require teaching techniques and strategies. The younger people teaching the language generally possess teaching techniques and strategies but require more language education (to become fluent speakers).

Thus, Secwepemctsin programs within public school and band schools are marginalized and do not succeed in developing fluent speakers of the language. Since students are the only ones learning language, there is no possibility of language being spoken in the home and hence, no intergenerational transmission.

## **The Effect of Community Governance**

The present system of community governance in our communities, an aftermath of colonization, contributes to the problem of declining language, culture, knowledge, and loss of traditional lands. Colonization systematically disrupted our traditional systems of governance and leadership. The Catholic Church, through the Durieu system, and the federal and provincial governments collaboratively enacted laws and social policies to achieve this end. In 1876, the *Indian Act* dismantled traditional governance and amendments were implemented to ensure the process was complete. The Indian Advancement Act of 1884 introduced the annual election system. The Department of Indian Affairs, in 1895, started mandatory elections in some parts of Canada. Since then, we have practiced the elected band council system. Thus,

traditional leadership with its principles of consensus decision-making and community involvement in all aspects of life was disrupted and discontinued. The imposed system of governance now follows principles, policies and procedures set out by DIA.

Hence, the present band council and tribal council governance systems are foreign and imposed. Jann Derrick, a Mohawk therapist, developed a diagram entitled *The Reorganization of Aboriginal Communities and Families* (2007). Table 2 illustrates the replication of the residential school structure (based on hierarchy and patriarchy) in Native communities and organization. Her reorganization chart clearly shows the prevalence of the imposed governance system within our communities.

**Table 2.      *The Reorganization of Aboriginal Communities and Families***

<b>Residential School</b>	<b>Community</b>
Priests and Nuns	Spiritual Leaders
RCMP	RCMP
Indian Agent	Band Administrator
Supervisors and Staff	Council Members
Senior Boys and Girls	Band Office staff
Intermediate and Junior Boys and Girls	Community

*Note.* Adapted from Derrick, 2007.

According to her model, for example, the Indian agent has now being replaced by the band administrator.

Derrick (2007) contrasts this model to the circle system, which functions in Aboriginal societies. She explains:

the circle system is seen as a spiral of life with the understanding that we are all Spirits first. Therefore, the Circle is Spiritually centered. The Circle System is based on the children for they are the closest to the

Creator and newly arrived from the Creator. Around the children are concentric circles in the following order: the Women, the Men, the Old Ones, the Men in Women's Bodies, the Women in Men's Bodies (Two-Spirited Circles), and finally the Warriors. (p. 1)

All these circles are focused on raising the children and creating a strong, balanced family and community. Secwepemc Elder Mary Thomas also describes the importance of circle formation in the development and maintenance of strong family structures. (personal communication, March 11, 2007).

Within my community of Neskonlith, the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the chief and council is in sharp contrast to traditional governance and leadership. The band council is elected under the band election code that contains various sections, such as eligibility of officers. The election code must be approved by the Minister of Indian Affairs (his agents at Indian and Northern Affairs). Using this election format, the people who receive the most votes are elected to the council. In the case of Neskonlith, voter turnout generally runs from 20-25% of all eligible voters. Accordingly, the people elected are not fully representative of the community. In addition, everyone in the community is well aware of the strategies employed during elections, such as promises of employment if elected. The elected council, along with band administration, administer programs and services—with social assistance, housing, and education being the main programs. The majority of funds to administer these services are obtained from Indian and Northern Affairs. The council members are actively involved with administration of programs and services as decision-makers and the majority of them have paid positions with the office. Thus, the council is essentially part of the bureaucratic structure and along with the other band employees, administers the band

affairs. Within this structure, no community involvement regarding deliberation, consultation, collaboration, or decision-making is evident.

The band governance runs as a bureaucratic and hierarchical structure which creates a toxic culture within the office that extends to the community. The characteristics of toxic cultures within bureaucratic organizations described by Deal and Thompson (1999) can be applied to band governance. He cites toxicity characterized by fragmentation, exclusively destructive, spiritually fractured, and no agreement. From personal experience and from discussions with community members, it is evident that some of these characteristics prevail in our present governance system. Other negative consequences result from this toxicity, some of which include:

- Traditional values being replaced by Euro-Canadian ones (individualism rather the cooperation and collectively)
- Secwepemc knowledge, language, and culture being replaced by Euro-Canadian
- Loss of collective voice
- Lack of collective cultural, political, economic, social, vision
- Lack of common core beliefs and values
- Lack of full participation in governance and community planning by a large sector of the community (decision-making by a few)

Leadership within the elected band council system, thus, can be described as “transactional”. Transactional leadership, according to Beairsto (2003), “involves, the use of authority, primarily through rewards and sanctions, to set agendas, ensure compliance, encourage, cajole, and generally make sure that what is required is done and done well” (p. 11).

Consequently, this imposed form of governance, with its primary focus on the administration of DIA programs and services; lack of collective community vision with

common core values; and lack of ethics contributes to disharmony and dysfunction in the community. By continuing to employ such governance, we are allowing ourselves to be assimilated deeper and deeper into EuroCanadian society.

It is clear from examining the forces of colonization that we are facing multiple forms of domination and oppression in multiple sites—social, cultural, spiritual, educational, political, and economic. A critical understanding of the pathology of colonization will assist us in developing multiple strategies for decolonization and for the restoration, maintenance, and transmission of Secwepemc culture, language, and other aspects of way of life.

## **Conclusion**

We have been negatively affected by the waves of colonizers since they first arrived in Secwepemculecw. Although all colonizers wielded tremendous damage to our way of life, language, and land, the Catholic Church with its establishment of the residential schools was the most destructive colonizer. These schools were responsible for the erosion of our whole way of life. The stories of our Elders, such as the late George Manuel and Irene Billy are testament to the destruction of our way of life. We are just now beginning to recover from the devastation. Besides the near extinction of our language, we are alienated from our traditional territories. Colonial institutions maintained by non-Secwepemc and by our own people continue to colonize and assimilate us into Euro-Canadian society. Our people now employ education, governance, economic, health, and family structures based on EuroCanadian models. Understanding colonization and oppression helps in our recovery and restoration.

## Chapter 5.

### **The Struggle for Reclamation of Identity, Culture and Self-determination**

Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural, and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing, and of mobilization as peoples. The processes, approaches and methodologies—while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities—are crucial elements of a strategic research agenda. (Smith, 1999, p. 116)

Indigenous peoples throughout the world are emerging from the ravages of colonialism and oppression. Although, miraculously, we have survived physically, many of our Nations are still suffering from the mental, emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and psychological effects of colonization and oppression. Our worldview, language, traditional knowledge, and spirituality that our identity embodies are in precarious states and our continued existence, as Peoples, are threatened. I am living testimony to this as I struggle each day to keep learning my language and traditional way of life and attempt to transmit teachings to my family and young students. This is especially difficult as we lose Elders, who are the keepers of our knowledge and language, each year. We are in a constant struggle to decolonize ourselves from imposed education, governance, legal, economic, and social structures. We must work to deconstruct EuroCanadian hegemony and stop being complicit in our own oppression. We continually struggle to

protect our traditional territories, which hold our knowledge, language, values, and spirituality from continuous destruction and devastation.

I, however, remain optimistic as I discover indigenous scholars, albeit rare, and non-indigenous scholars who have taken up “the cause”. Indigenous scholars are now writing about topics never before discussed openly. We now read about—colonization, hegemony, decolonization, empowerment, consciousness-raising, emancipation, reclamation of indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and pedagogies, indigenous language revitalization, and self-determination. This literature review describes and evaluates significant work done by Indigenous scholars, albeit, few-and-far-between, and Non-Indigenous scholars on these themes. Alfred (1999), Grande (2004), Smith (2003), Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000), Wilson (2003), Wilson, (2005), and Ermine (1995) are some of the Indigenous scholars, among others, who have taken up the challenge of exposing, often controversial and unequal power relationships between Indigenous peoples, settlers, and settler institutions. Thus, I value, honour, and respect their perspectives.

Indigenous scholars cited are from Canada, United States, Hawaii, New Zealand, and Australia, whose aboriginal people face similar experiences of colonization and oppression. I begin this literature review with an evaluation of the historical research on the Secwepemc. Written sources and oral history pertaining to pre-contact Secwepemc life are extremely limited. Consequently the challenges we face in rebuilding and restoring our identity, language, culture, and other aspects of traditional life are huge, but not insurmountable. Traditionally, we were an oral culture. All forms of knowledge were transmitted in stories, *steptekwle* (legends), songs, dances, ceremonies, and ecological markers and formations. All that we knew was ‘storied’ in our minds. Places were not

recorded on maps; they were held in the minds of the people and remembered by the markers on the land. For example, within the Secwepemc Nation, there are seven Coyote markers to demarcate the boundaries of the Nation. Our people knew the extent of our territory by these markers. Since knowledge was transmitted orally by Elders, when they stopped telling the stories, practicing and teaching the culture, and living our way of life, intergenerational transmission literally came to a halt. We no longer have extensive oral records of our way of life. Elders recall various aspects of our way of life and, from this, we can piece together bits of information in our rebuilding process.

I will examine the ethnographic research on the Secwepemc compiled by George Dawson (1891) and James Teit (1909) who came to the Secwepemc territory in the 1890s and early 1900s. Their research provides valuable knowledge on our traditional way of life. Of the historical data collected, Teit's work is the most comprehensive. It also appears to be the most authentic. Wendy Wickwire's (2006) article on Teit's work with the Interior Tribes of British Columbia gives me confidence to trust his ethnographic accounts of early Secwepemc life. Wickwire (2006) conducted extensive research on Teit's ethnographic and political activities among the Interior Tribes of British Columbia.

James Alexander Teit settled in Nlaka'pumux, which is one of the neighbouring Nations of the Secwepemc, in 1884. Teit lived with the people and was a long-term participant in their daily lives and struggles. He realized that in order to better facilitate his research work, he had to listen and advise or give information (Wickwire, 1998, p. 4). Besides doing his ethnographic work, Teit became actively involved in assisting the tribes with their grievances, such as, ones "concerning their title, reserves, hunting, and fishing rights, policies of Agents and missionaries, dances, potlatches, education, etc. (Wickwire, p. 4).

Teit's credibility as an accurate informant of pre-contact life of the Interior Tribes stems from his close contact with the people, particularly the Nlaka'pumux. He married a Nlaka'pumux woman, Susannah Lucy Antko, and lived with her for 12 years until her death in 1899 (Wickwire, 1998, p. 2). Teit became fluent in many tribal languages.

The Interior Tribes consist of the Nlaka'pumux (Thompson), Stat'imx (Lillooet), Secwepemc, and Okanagan. Wickwire (1998) reports on Teit's qualifications:

the great familiarity with the language of this area which Mr. Teit has acquired during a long period of residence there, and the deep interest which he is taking in the Indians, makes him a valuable assistant in the investigations. (p. 3)

So, the fact that Teit lived with a Nlaka'pumux woman, spoke many Native languages, and became directly involved with peoples' lives and struggles and that he was not viewed as an "outside, impartial observer", gives him credibility as a reliable informant. Wickwire (2006) cites Franz Boas' eulogy of Teit upon his death, "unceasingly, he laboured for their welfare and subordinated all other interests, scientific as well as personal, to this work, which he came to consider the most important task of his life" (p. 315).

Wickwire (1998) reports that by 1900, Teit completed two large pieces of research: *Traditions of the Thompson River Indians*, edited by Franz Boas, and *The Thompson Indians of B.C.* By 1912, Teit published two more ethnographies—*The Lillooet* in 1906 and *The Shuswap (Secwepemc)* in 1909 through the American Museum of Natural History. The volume entitled, *The Shuswap* provides much historical information and insight into the lives of our people prior to contact with European settlers and during the early contact period. This volume which consists of 310 pages in which

Teit (1909) provides information on pre-contact territorial boundaries, divisions of the Secwepemc Nation, material culture including manufactures, house and household, clothing and ornaments, subsistence, travel and transportation, trade, warfare, games and pastimes and ceremonies. Teit also includes a vast section on what he termed “myths”. Teit’s ethnography is extremely valuable considering that our Elders do not know or recollect all of the knowledge he documented.

Dawson’s (1891) research, not as extensive as Teit’s, provides 44 pages of data on Secwepemc material culture, ethnobotany, mythology, history, and place names of the Secwepemc. Dawson admits that his:

*Notes on the Shuswap* makes no pretence to completeness, and that while some matters are referred to at considerable length, other aspects of the life of people, upon which it has happened that nothing of apparent value was obtained, are passed over in silence. (p. 3)

Information on sacred ceremonies, for example, would certainly not have been divulged to strangers and would not be reported in historical accounts. The Secwepemc and their neighbouring Nations, however, seem to have trusted James Teit, probably because of his involvement with their everyday life, with their political activities, and because of his ability to speak the languages of the people. This apparent trust is evident in the significant amounts of information on sacred ceremonies contained in “The Shuswap” (1909), likely obtained from reliable informants.

Dawson (1891) reports that he engaged in geological work, in 1877, 1888, 1889, and 1890, in the southern inland portion of British Columbia. His research, he writes, was presented without comment or attempt at explanation and hoped it would make a useful contribution to the knowledge of the ethnology in the region. Dawson says he

didn't attempt to deal with the language of the people; although he does include five pages of place names in Secwepemctsin. His attempt at writing in Secwepemctsin is difficult to understand due to the unknown writing system he used to transcribe the language.

Dawson (1891) reports that place names were provided by "Indians" with local knowledge. The place names were placed on maps and ground-proofed. He explains the limitations of the maps. Dawson admits that the place names may not, in all cases, be accurate. He writes, "In many instances the Indians themselves do not know what the names mean, and in others it was found difficult to understand the explanations" (p. 4). From this comment, it is unclear if the people really did not know the names, or they refused to inform him, or if explanations could not be translated into English.

The ethnographic research of Teit and Dawson can provide Secwepemc cultural information that we might not otherwise be able to obtain. Despite that, there are certain considerations we must take into account. We have to question the authenticity of the research since it was undertaken after the Secwepemc already had contact with Europeans and were not living a totally traditional lifestyle. We must consider if information obtained from the informants was interpreted and reported accurately?

Another consideration to be taken into account is the notion of what Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) refers to as "cognitive imperialism" or what might be termed as an "imperialistic attitude". Dawson (1891) states:

the writer ventures to hope that this record of observations may be accepted as a useful contribution to the knowledge of the ethnology of the region, or as one which may be of service in future investigations, *though in itself possessed of no high scientific value.* (p. 3, italics added)

His imperialist attitude, I'm certain, would skew his research results. As the researcher, he was the one deciding what was important and what was not. Further, since Teit and Dawson were European, their research was inevitably filtered through European lenses.

Despite limitations of Teit and Dawson's ethnographies, they are useful and along with the recollections of our Elders, we can reconstruct Secwepemc ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy. Even though our reconstruction of traditional Secwepemc life will not be the same as it once was, these sources provide clues to re-create our worldview—our conception of the world.

Other sources of information which may help obtain information on traditional Secwepemc way of life are the early records of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Department of Indian Affairs, and the Catholic Church. Researchers Thomson and Ignace (2005), in their article "They Made Themselves Our Guest" use the early records of the Hudson's Bay Company to describe traditional Secwepemc land tenure laws and traditional Secwepemc judicial systems.

Bouchard and Kennedy (1979) and Palmer (1972) provide valuable information on traditional Secwepemc culture and language. Bouchard and Kennedy's research was conducted with Elders from Neskonlith who retained much of our traditional knowledge and language. Bouchard and Kennedy documented an extensive collection of Secwepemc legends. Much of their research was presented in Secwepemctsin, but translated into English for publication. Many of the legends are published in *Shuswap Stories*. Palmer also conducted research with Elders at Neskonlith. He compiled a resource manual of traditional food plants and medicines used by the Secwepemc. The

Elder informants have since passed away but we can access some of their cultural information through these sources.

The 1910 Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, a historical document created from meetings of Interior chiefs, working with Teit, to create a liaison between the Indian Tribes of B.C. and the Indian Rights Association, is important because it contains the concept of Secwepemc sovereignty during that time. Thomson and Ignace (2005) contend the document describes “Salish (Secwepemc) concepts of sovereignty, resources, and tenure systems, making it clear that the land was ‘the same as life itself’ to them” (p. 33). The words for this document were spoken in Secwepemctsin but recorded in English. It provides insight into the “thinking” of our people at this time. The Memorial shows the strong desire of the Chiefs to protect the land, and hence, protect the culture.

Thomas and Ignace (2005) illustrate how the Aboriginal groups of the interior exerted control and power with respect to their land tenure, resource rights, and traditional judicial system. Their article provides valuable information on how these traditional systems functioned before they were disrupted by colonization. The authors, although they state their examination was limited and based on the fur trade era, conclude that the Salish Nations’ control and exclusive occupation of lands, control of laws, was largely undiminished by fur traders; however, the gold rush significantly changed conditions and circumstances.

Historical documents and articles written by researchers on the Secwepemc are beneficial in our rebuilding process. From these sources, we can learn about material culture, language, social structure, values, beliefs, some aspects of spirituality, and

governance of the Secwepemc. For example, from the 1910 Laurier Memorial we can learn important values held by the Secwepemc. The Memorial outlines how our people were willing to share the land despite all the atrocities committed against them by settlers and the colonial governments. The Chiefs words, "One Mind, One Heart, One Body, One Spirit", demonstrate the peoples' collective consciousness at this time.

## **Critical Theory**

Critical theory, with adaptations, provides a useful theoretical framework for analysis of colonization, decolonization, empowerment, and the restoration, maintenance, and transmission of Secwepemc language and culture. To that end, I examine its beneficial aspects and its limitations. Indigenous and non-indigenous critical theorists, such as Graham Smith (1997), Maori educator, provide valuable insights which contribute to understanding of critical theory and its implications for Indigenous research. Smith's doctoral dissertation, *The Development of Kaupapa Maori: Theory and Practice*, presents an extensive account of practical, on the ground experience of Maori education and schooling. His research is likely the most intensive study on indigenous education which includes a decolonization agenda. I endorse his research and respect his invaluable contribution to indigenous education.

Indigenous educators, such as Smith (1997) provide alternative goals and adaptations of critical theory to meet their unique needs. They have moved critical theory from its original orientation, that is, its preoccupation with the transformation of capitalism into a consensual form of social life (formation of a real democracy) to a position enabling it to address indigenous concerns and become more emancipatory for Indigenous peoples. In using critical theory, we must be mindful of its Western construct

and bias. For example, critical theorist, Horkheimer, contends “a capitalist society could be transformed only by becoming more democratic, to make it such that ‘all conditions of social life are controllable by human beings depend on real consensus’ in a rational society” (*Critical theory*, ¶3). Preoccupations with such goals are clearly contrary to indigenous ones whose governance/social systems were not democracies as defined in European terms. Our preoccupation must be at a far more basic level—the restoring of our Secwepemc knowledge systems, language, and culture which are severely endangered.

Smith (1997) demonstrates how and which aspects of critical theory can be beneficial to indigenous research projects. He provides a historical perspective on critical theory. He informs us that it had its beginnings in the 1920s with the Frankfurt School of philosophers, namely Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. They sought to engage the ideas of Karl Marx and, in particular, his ideas relating to social theory. According to Smith (1997), a criticism other theorists had of Marx’s approach was his “inability to fully explain the existing social conditions and to transform them” (p. 135). An emerging theme, then, was to move Marx’s ideas from being simply ‘theoretical’ to being ‘practical’. (p. 135).

Critical theory, in its broadest sense, according to Horkheimer’s definition, (*Critical theory*) is adequate if it meets three criteria. It must be explanatory, practical, and normative. In its explanatory role, critical theory seeks to explain what is wrong with the current social reality by examining, identifying, and overcoming all circumstances that limit human freedom. It uses an interdisciplinary approach to explain social realities which encompass the psychological, cultural, and social dimensions. In my study, because of the holistic nature of Secwepemc life, I must go further and examine the

intellectual, spiritual, political, economic, and legal dimensions and to examine how our freedom is limited and how we continue to be colonized and oppressed, which in turn, contribute to the problem of loss of knowledge, language, and culture.

I endorse critical theory's criteria of practical goals for social transformation. Grande (2004) contends it provides the potential to ignite social transformation and support cultural revolution. The practical aspect of restoring Secwepemc language and culture is critical considering the tremendous amounts of research conducted with no visible results. Two that come to mind are the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and *Towards a New Beginning: A Foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit, and Metis Languages and Cultures* (2005). Both reports included numerous recommendations to restore culture and language; however, no substantial results materialized. Both reports continue to collect dust on government and Indigenous administration shelves. Smith (1997) warns of the "politics of distraction" whereby there is lots of talk but no action on the issues discussed.

Smith refers to Horkheimer, who proposes that critical theory in itself is not a single unified theory, but consists of a number of theories. Smith cites common aims and themes shared by several key theorists. He cites Rex Gibson who outlines three common features shared by critical theorists of education:

1. a concern to map out the inequalities and injustices of the education system
2. a claim to trace these injustices and inequalities to their source, showing the educational processes and structures by which they are maintained
3. an intention to seek or propose remedies to those injustices

In my study, I trace injustices, inequalities, oppression, and domination experienced by the Secwepemc within the education system as well as other colonial institutions. Our own institutions are not immune to these conditions and must be examined as well. We know these conditions are multi-dimensional and direct consequences of colonization. Hence the effects are felt, not just in the education system, but in all areas of our lives. I will also propose remedies to the problems and to the continuing erosion of our language, and Nationhood.

Therefore, critical theory's principle of unifying theory with practice is a critical element of my research. Smith (1997) outlines key principles that unify critical theory with practice. Useful principles in my study include: theory and practice must inform each other, the need to uncover and disclose hidden interests of individuals and groups, and its emancipatory aim (individuals and groups are assisted to gain power to control their own lives). The principle of uncovering the hidden interests of individuals and groups is critical in my study. Starratt (1991) agrees that critical theory sees social life as intrinsically problematic because it exhibits the struggle between competing interests and wants among various groups and individuals in society. Hidden interests are a variable contributing to competing interests we see in Secwepemc communities and outside agencies. We see the struggle between moderates versus traditionalists; English versus Secwepemctsin; public education versus traditional education; economic development versus sustainable land use and so on. Critical theory has the ability to be transforming and liberating in seeking to rectify these competing interests.

Critical theory, despite its usefulness, has limitations. Denzin (2005) points out that indigenous scholars' criticism of critical theory is that its "criteria for self-determination and empowerment perpetuate neo-colonial sentiments while turning the

indigenous person into an essentialized 'other' who is spoken for" (p. 935). Grande (2004) adds to this discourse with her contention that revolutionary (critical) theorists fail to consider their own enmeshment with Western paradigms, for example, natural democracy which is rooted in Western concepts of property, and identity which is rooted in Western notions of citizenship. Western paradigms such as these are in opposition to Secwepemc concepts of collective and a communal lifestyle. Thus, I agree with Denzin (2005) who recognizes the need for critical theory to be "localized, grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting" (p. 936).

Denzin (2005) cautions us on the discrepancies between colonizing research practices and indigenous communities, and that critical theorists must be aware of these discrepancies. Denzin reveals these as the commodification of knowledge, competing epistemological and ethical frameworks, institutional regulations (human subject research), conformation with Western standards of truth and validity, and beneficiaries and ownership of research. Denzin concludes these disagreements can be overcome by scholars developing "culturally responsive practices that locate power within indigenous communities, so that these communities determine and define what constitutes acceptable research" (p. 936). I feel, being Secwepemc, I am cognizant of these issues and will uphold my responsibility to conduct ethical research.

Denzin (2005), thus, relates to the need for scholars to decolonize and deconstruct structures that privilege Western knowledge systems and their epistemologies. Miq maq scholar Marie Battiste and colleague Youngblood Henderson (2000) reveal that, within EuroCanadian institutions, indigenous knowledge systems are neither acknowledged nor respected which they term 'cognitive imperialism'. Denzin

(2005) correctly states that indigenous knowledge is too frequently made into an object of study. We know Secwepemc knowledge is wholistic and, traditionally, was integrated into all aspects of life.

Concerns and criticisms of critical theory result from the positioning of the researcher, according to Smith (1997). He contends critical theorists place themselves on the 'outside' as arbiters of an 'enlightened' perspective. Denzin (2005) reiterates this concern as he cites Linda Smith's warning about 'outside researchers'—"they came, they saw, they named, they claimed" (p. 935). Indigenous peoples are well aware of Western scientists (researchers) who "discovered extracted, appropriated, commodified, and distributed knowledge about the indigenous other" (p. 935). In Denzin (2005), Linda Smith warns us that indigenous peoples must not be denied their voice and identity as is often the case when they are misrepresented and essentialized by Western research.

Critical theorists propose emancipatory goals; and again, we must consider their limitations. Critical theory promotes the following tenets—"to seek 'human emancipation' in circumstances of domination and oppression" (*Critical theory*, ¶2) and "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer as quoted in *Critical theory*, ¶1). Horkheimer, in Smith (1997), reiterates the concern for the development of a critical theory which "revises and builds upon Marx's original ideas with an emphasis on transformative pathways for the oppressed and exploited groups; and which ultimately are able to lead to their full emancipation" (p. 138). Smith's (1997) analysis of this position, however, is that this idea is overly pessimistic according to Habermas because it offers little hope for transformation beyond the ultimate overthrow of capitalism. In the case of indigenous peoples, although the overthrow of capitalism may be one of the goals of decolonization and emancipation, there are many other

critical concerns unique to them and that must be addressed concurrently such as the restoration of language, culture, and identity and freedom from oppression and domination by institutions directly involved with us. Despite the criticisms of the 'utopian idealism', Habermas argues, critical theory performs an important function in that it can mobilize and focus people around an emancipatory vision. Once the people realize the extent of their oppression and colonization and decide to take action, they will need to develop a vision to help realize emancipation.

Critical theorists, Freire and Fanon, cited in Smith (1997) suggest strategies in the emancipation process: "emancipation is to be won within the act of the struggle itself" (p. 140) and "that emancipation of the individual consciousness is an important part of the struggle" (p. 140). Smith (1997) proposes an intervention cycle of "conscientisation, resistance, and transformative praxis" applied by the Maori in New Zealand. He notes that all these parts of the cycle need to be held simultaneously and that all stand in equal relation to each other; rather than the linear progression proposed by Western thinking. Smith (1997) describes how this intervention cycle was implemented in Maori education and schooling.

The emancipation process Habermas proposes, according to Smith (1997), "can occur in myriad smaller sites on the way to developing much larger and more extensive social change" (p. 140). Smith explains how the Maori recognized that intervention strategies are complex and respond simultaneously to multiple forms of oppression and exploitation. Thus, he advocates that multiple resistance strategies be developed as a response to multiple forms of oppression. The intervention and resistance strategies employed by Maori are useful in our struggle to overcome domination and oppression.

Smith (2003) provides critical perspectives which were useful in my research since our experiences of colonization and oppression are strikingly similar. Smith contends there must be a greater emphasis on structural concerns (economic and ideological power structures) and an examination of unequal power relations as central issues. He presents three notions: the notion of unequal power relations, the notion of a specific context or site, and the notion of struggle to be considered in developing a radical sociological approach to Maori education. All warrant critical examination in the Secwepemc context.

I agree with Smith's (1997) argument that macro issues, namely the political, social, cultural, and economic contexts, influence education. Hence, he stresses, "meaningful social change for the Maori cannot be sustained at the level of schooling and education alone; it must address change at the surface and deep strata" (p. 142). Our desire for social change (restoration of Secwepemc traditional culture and language) cannot just happen at the "school" level, deep structural change must permeate all our institutions.

## **Indigenous Theory**

Indigenous peoples have to speak their own truth without seeking permission to narrate from those who would continue to oppress them. Not only must voices of Indigenous agents be sounded, but also they must be granted opportunity to be heard without their voices being bent into the decibels most harmonious to Western ears, by imperializing systems of regulation and the gross postulates of colonial attitude. In creating the "new agent" of socialism, the preferred option is to listen to the voices that are sounded from the standpoint of the oppressed. (McLaren quoted in Grande, 2004, p. 50)

There is a need to further develop critical theory to embrace indigenous perspectives. Karen Martin (n.d.), an Australian aboriginal scholar, reminds us that theory was historically drawn upon frameworks, processes, and practices of colonial Western worldviews and inherent knowledge, methods, morals, and beliefs. Hence, non-Western theories are marginalized in the colonial context justifying the need for Indigenous theories. Sinclair (2004) maintains “indigenous theories not only challenge the language of colonialism but challenge western theoretical hegemony and provide space for important critiques of colonial relations of power, domination, and exploitation” (p. 54). He contends that any theory must address colonization, neo-colonialism, and internalized colonialism. Not only must it do this, he states, but the methodology must integrate methods based on Indigenous epistemology. Sinclair, like other Indigenous scholars, promotes the commitment to decolonizing pedagogy to redress the effects of colonization and neo-colonialism.

## **Colonization**

Indigenous scholars from all over the world are now emerging to contribute to the discourse on colonization, oppression, domination, as well as decolonization, empowerment, and self-determination. Previous to this, pathologies faced by indigenous peoples were blamed on social, emotional, and personal problems, such as low self-esteem, poverty and so on. Granted these contribute to the on-going colonization of our people, but now the larger issues, such as control of land, resources, and the institutions’ role are being critically examined

One such scholar, Poka Laenui (2000), a Native Hawaiian, explains colonization as social processes more than political processes and that governance over a people

changes only after the people themselves have sufficiently changed. Laenui refers to the late Virgilio Enrique's, a Native of the Philippines, contribution to the discourse on colonization. Enrique suggests the following steps in the process of colonization: (a) denial and withdrawal, (b) destruction/eradication, (c) denigration/belittlement/insult, (d) surface accommodation/tokenism, and (e) transformation/exploitation. He explains each step in detail. These colonizing processes are manifested in our experience. In Step 1, "Indigenous peoples themselves, especially those who develop a relationship with the newcomers, gradually withdraw from their own cultural practices. Some may even join in the ridicule and the denial of the existence of culture among Native people" (p. 151). This process is clearly evident in the clear lack of support for Secwepemc culture and language programs within the institutions we engage in. Step 3 describes how the new legal instruments will criminalize the traditional practices and fine the practitioners. Sharon Venne, a Native lawyer, in her compilation *Indian Acts and Amendments 1867-1975*, provides an example of such a law.

Any Indian in the province of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, or the Territories who participates in any Indian dance outside the bounds of his own reserve, or who participates in any show, exhibition, performance, stampede, or pageant in aboriginal costume without the consent of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs or his authorized Agent, and any person Who induces or employs any Indian to take part in such a dance, show, exhibition, performance, stampede, or pageant, or induces any Indian to leave his reserve or employs any Indian for such a purpose, whether the dance, show, exhibition, stampede or pageant has taken place or not, shall on summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding twenty five dollars, or to *imprisonment for one month* or to both penalty and imprisonment. [Statutes of Canada (S.C., 1914, c.35 s.8) quoted in Venne, 1981, italics added]

Step 5—transformation and exploitation—explains how the traditional culture is transformed into the culture of the dominating colonial society:

a Christian Church may now use an Indigenous person as a priest, permitting the priest to use the Indigenous language and to incorporate some Indigenous terms and practices within the church's framework of worship. (p. 154)

This process, along with the establishment of the Durieu system in our Nation, effectively subjugated our language, culture, governance and other traditional systems.

Madame Erica-Irene Daes (2000), speaking at a Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs conference on Protecting Knowledge, provides a perfect example of how governance systems were altered by colonization. She states:

in my recent travels among North American First Nations, I have been quite taken by the extent to which land-use administration, environmental protection, human health, education, and cultural activities have evolved into separate institutional domains—separate bureaucratic departments, with inconsistent goals and values. (p. 5)

She warns of the consequences of Indigenous people reproducing the same governments as nation-states. Daes goes on to express her fears that such action will lead to packaging and sale of land and everything sacred connected to the land.

The psychology of colonialism as it relates to us warrants further examination. Albert Memmi and Franz Fanon examined the psychology of the colonizer and the colonized. They describe how the colonized adopts, not only the mind of the colonizer, but other aspects as well: language, dress, etc. Their circumstances and experiences of colonization are similar to ours, so I contend we must examine their arguments critically to determine the extent of the deeply ingrained psychological effects of colonialism on us so they can be addressed.

## Hegemony

As colonized peoples, we must critically examine all conditions which contribute to and perpetuate colonization and oppression within our families, communities, and institutions as well as non-Secwepemc institutions with which we interact. One is the notion of hegemony. Gramsci (*Antonio Gramsci*, n.d.) further developed the notion of hegemony, a concept previously used by Marxists, from its original meaning which used to explain why the socialist revolution predicted by orthodox Marxism had not occurred in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Smith (1997) contends that hegemony was a useful instrument to explain how the Maori became complicit in their own oppression and domination by upholding dominant hegemony. Since we share similar circumstances and experiences of colonization with the Maori, we can examine hegemony as a factor contributing to our situation.

Ashcroft et al. (1998) define hegemony as “the power of ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all” (p. 116). Ashcroft et al. state that Gramsci uses capitalism to explain how hegemony operates. Capitalism, they state, maintained control not only through the use of violence, and political and economic coercion, but ideologically. Thus, through a hegemonic culture, the value of the bourgeoisie became the ‘common sense’ values of all. In our case, we know, the colonial governments used, not only violence and political and economic coercion tactics, but the spread of diseases, racist laws and policies, forcible removal of children to residential schools, theft of lands, and creation of *Indian Act* and Indian reserves and abolition of traditional governance to force Eurocentric values, culture, language and religion upon us. Our cultural values, and especially our language, are no longer

considered “natural” or “normal” to us. By the calculated destruction of all aspects of traditional Secwepemc way of life, the colonial governments were the perpetrators of Eurocentric hegemony, which enabled their control over our land and resources needed for the capitalistic economic system.

Ashcroft et al. (1998) elaborate on the function of hegemony. They write:

domination is exerted, not by force, nor even active persuasion but a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy and other state apparatuses such as education and media, by which the ruling class’s interest is presented as the common interest and thus comes to be taken for granted. (p. 116)

They present the strength of hegemony’s ideological control—“the capacity to influence the thought of the colonized is far the most sustained and potent operation of imperial power in colonized regions” (p. 116). We clearly see how this is the case in our situation. The colonial institutions exerted power and control, ideologically, over our governance, education, political, economic, education, and social systems. The Catholic Church and the residential school were the primary agencies and perpetrators of ideological control by forcing their Eurocentric concepts, values, and practices on us.

Gramsci (*Antonio Gramsci*, n.d.) provides an insightful analysis of Christianity’s role in the development of hegemony. Gramsci reports how impressed he was of the power Roman Catholicism had over men’s minds and the care the church took to prevent an excessive gap between the religion of the learned and that of the less educated. His insight contributes to our understanding of why the church and residential school took extreme measures to ensure our people were Christianized and “civilized”, and to instil the belief that our ways were inferior and savage. Our people who were

Christianized and interned in the residential school validate how much power Christianity held over their minds.

Ashcroft et al. (1998) in Post Colonial Studies further develop the concept of hegemony to include consent of the oppressed. The colonial subject accepting the imperial discourse, so that Eurocentric values, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes are accepted as natural and valuable, achieves consent. Schools, government, and other institutions maintain a hegemonic culture. Instruction in mainstream schools promotes Eurocentric values, beliefs, and cultural assumptions. Our institutions—band governance, education, political, and others—reflect these same values, even though they are in complete contrast to indigenous practices.

Understanding the process of colonization is critical to understanding how hegemony developed among the Secwepemc. We know the federal government holds power and control over governance by the fact that we are wards of the federal government under the *Indian Act*. All funds for programs and services are derived from Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC). INAC, thus, exerts control over all aspects of band governance—elections, by-laws, administrative policies and procedures. The education program, under this system, must follow INAC rules and regulations. Since band councils' by-laws are bound to follow INAC rules, regulations, and policies, we must consider their role in upholding dominant Eurocentric hegemony. The band council's acceptance of and participation in this oppressive system and the peoples' dependency upon it, contribute to upholding Eurocentric hegemony. Our people, however, never consented to be governed under these systems. It is not a matter of choice, but by circumstances, such as poverty and lack of awareness and other conditions, that compel us to remain in this system. We can conclude that, through the band council system, the

federal and provincial governments maintain hegemonic control over most, if not all, aspects of our lives. In this way, they are able to perpetuate power and control our land.

## Counter Hegemony

Gramsci (*Antonio Gramsci*, n.d.) suggests strategies to counter hegemony. Although the remedy he advances concerns the relationship between the working class and the bourgeoisie, it offers valuable considerations. He states the working class needs to develop cultures of their own (in our case, it would be restoring our culture and language) which would overthrow the notion that the bourgeois (EuroCanadian society) represent “natural” or “normal” values for society. This process would attract the oppressed and intellectual classes to the cause of the proletariat. Gramsci recognized the role of culture in the attainment of power. He states it is fundamental to the attainment of power that cultural hegemony was first achieved. Some of Gramsci’s values are contrary to Secwepemc values, for example, he states “any class that wishes to dominate in modern conditions has to move beyond its own narrow ‘economic-corporate’ interests, to exert intellectual and moral leadership .” (*Antonio Gramsci*, n.d., p. 2). While I agree that we need to move beyond participating in institutions based on economic-corporate interests and that we have to develop intelligent and moral leadership, I don’t believe that, as Secwepemc, we have the desire to dominate anyone in the process.

Inspiring examples of counter hegemony are found in the Hawaiian language and cultural revival movement that brought about a consciousness that being Hawaiian was valuable and engendered a sense of pride. The revival began with simultaneous objectives of language and cultural revival and Hawaiian sovereignty. Emily ‘Ioli’I

Hawkins (1999) reports that language revival began in 1985 with pre-school language nests and rapidly evolved to include Hawaiian Immersion schools which now reach the secondary school and university level. Hawkins states, “through the immersion movement, Hawaiians have begun to reverse this linguistic and cultural erosion and to create an educational program more closely based on Hawaiian values” (p. 1) and “this movement has re-energized all aspects of Hawaiian culture and has become one of the cornerstones in a cultural and political resurgence of Hawaiians” (p. 1). This inspiring example from Hawaii provides much hope and optimism for us.

Knowing that the dominant hegemonic culture maintains control ideologically whereby values of the dominant group become the common sense, taken for granted values of all, we must examine institutions affecting us. With knowledge and awareness, we can resist the hegemonic control. Questions we need to consider include:

- Do we believe Eurocentric values are “natural” and “normal” ?
- To what extent are we consenting to Eurocentric hegemony?
- Why do we consent to Eurocentric hegemony/
- Why are Secwepemc cultural and linguistic values no longer “natural”?
- Do we accept Eurocentric hegemony because much of our traditional knowledge was lost?
- How do break free from this hegemonic control?
- Why do we continue to accept EuroCanadian hegemony?
- What is stopping us from restoring our language and culture?

Wilson (2005) warns that some of the greatest resistors to the recovery of Indigenous knowledge are our own Native people who have internalized the racism and now uncritically accept ideologies of the dominant culture (p. 72). This will likely be revealed when tracing the injustices and inequalities of our present education systems.

Wilson (2005) contends that our ways of being, thinking, and acting are political and a challenge to the dominant society. Therefore, she contends, sustained resistance to the status quo requires such energy that fostering a crucial mass of support for decolonization efforts in a community is needed for long-term success at recovering Indigenous life-ways.

## **Development of a Critical Consciousness**

An important counter-hegemonic strategy is the development of a critical consciousness. Smith (1997) emphasizes that critical consciousness is part of transformative praxis. His cycle of conscientization—resistance—transformative action described earlier, is a useful strategy for us. Individuals or groups, he says, may enter the cycle from any position. Conscientization is not the starting point and the elements may occur in any order. He gives the example of a parent who registers his child in Kohanga Reo (Maori Immersion) because it is the only program available and the parent becomes ‘conscientized’ about the politics of language revitalization and a highly active participant in the resistance movement. In our case, young parents became active in political activities regarding the protection of our traditional territories which heightened their desire to learn Secwepemc culture and language because they saw this as a necessary condition of Secwepemc identity.

Paulo Freire (1970) in his classic revolutionary book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, contributes invaluable discourse to the notion of critical consciousness. Freire, while working with peasants in Brazil, evolved a theory for the education of people who are illiterate. He theorized that every human being, no matter how “ignorant” or submerged into the “culture of silence” is capable of looking critically at the world in a

dialogical encounter with others. Freire further postulates that, with the proper tools every person can perceive his personal and social reality (often oppression and domination) and deal critically with it (freedom from oppression). Freire's educational praxis consisted of dialogical action, rather than what he referred to as "banking" concept of education, which empowered individuals to transform their situation. The empowered individual, thus, is no longer a mere object, responding to uncontrollable change. Indeed, the forces of colonization have left us, most of the time, reacting to circumstances and situations we often as view out of our control. He contends that the starting point for political action must be the present, existential, and arising from a concrete situation. For us, this means deciding which situations, of the many we face, are urgent and need immediate action.

In order to reconstruct our lives to be more consistent with our Secwepemc values, we need leaders, such as the "humanist educator" and "authentic revolutionary" that Freire (1970) discusses. He emphasizes that educators and leaders work alongside the people, know the people through dialogue, and respect the view of the world held by the people. Freire's call to respect the aspirations of the people may become a challenge. The aspirations of some of our people may not be consistent with Secwepemc values.

Freire's (1970) concept of dialogical action is an important tool to consider in the reconstruction of Secwepemc education and other institutions. We need to dialogue, discuss, and debate the many issues facing our people. Within our community, there are many hidden and competing interests, and no common core set of values that we all live by. This dialogical action must be one of our on-going strategies.

Sinclair (2004) writing about decolonizing pedagogy in social work, promotes Friere's concept of critical consciousness. Conscientization, states Sinclair, "is a critical approach to liberatory education that incorporates helping the learner move toward a new awareness of relations of power, myths, and oppression" (p. 53). Following Freire, he says, in the development of a critical consciousness learners work towards changing the world. Sinclair promotes accurate reflection of Aboriginal history and epistemology in social work programs. He does not mention colonization specifically and maybe assumes students will develop awareness of colonization and oppression from a critical examination of history and through the study of Indigenous epistemology. Sinclair asserts that critical consciousness provides the structural framework for understanding contemporary social conditions and provides a way to reacquiring the necessary value and ethical practice by drawing upon traditional knowledge.

Another critical component of decolonization and restoring Indigenous knowledge is the need for Indigenous peoples, according to Wilson (2005) to develop a "critical consciousness about the cause(s) of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices" (p. 71). This process, she advises, requires "auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage" (p. 71). I agree with Wilson (2005) that "decolonization is about empowerment—a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our peoples' values and abilities, and a willingness to make change" (p. 71) and "it is about transforming reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities" (p. 71). Indeed, within Secwepemc communities there are no plans, visions, or beliefs about how education can be empowering, transforming, and liberating for us. If some people do possess such beliefs, they are not articulated and put into

practice. Much time and energy is spent reacting to outside forces whose goal is the continuing assimilation and colonization of our people.

## Decolonization Strategies

Indigenous scholars from around the world, such as Alfred (1999), Wilson (2005), Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000), Grande (2004), Smith (2003), and Smith (1999) promote decolonization and the restoration and maintenance of Indigenous languages and knowledge as critical to achieving self-determination. Wilson (2005) writes:

the strength of our cultures rests in our ability to exert our humanity through the decolonization of our minds and the transformation of the world around us while recognizing that our truths stem from the external nature of our languages, ceremonies, worldviews, and values. (p. 84)

Decolonizing strategies, according to Wilson (2005) will be different from non-indigenous struggles. Indigenous peoples, she states, in attempting to transform their world, then, “must emanate from a different assumption” (p. 70) and “one that also considers respect for our non-human relatives” and “a return to the roots of our traditions will help define a new libratory[check spelling in the quotation] framework for the future” (p. 70). She argues that decolonization strategies must be distinctive for us as Indigenous peoples and be developed from guiding principles that allowed us to live a sustainable existence for thousands of years.

Wilson (2005) maintains that Indigenous peoples must critically examine the colonial influences that have “so miserably failed to improve our lives and have subjugated us to despairing levels” (p. 75). Hence, she advocates the decolonization of

our relationships with settlers' governments. For us, this means decolonizing our relationship with political, legal, governance, health, and education institutions; those administered by the federal, provincial, and band governance. In doing, so we must challenge the oppressive laws and policies rampant with these institutions.

Wilson (2005) and Alfred and Corntassel (2005) advocate restoring traditional practices, values, and teachings as decolonization strategies. They include:

- recover traditional diet to improve the health and strength among the people
- be active and hardworking
- re-establish connection and relationship to the land in order to understand the teachings and values of their ancestors and draw strength from these teachings
- restore indigenous languages and ways of knowing
- recover and practice traditional knowledge combined with political actions to ensure protection of the land
- transcend the fear and confront the colonial governments' (and our own governments) use of power to control and oppress

Poka Laenui (2000) suggests five distinct phases of decolonization. These phases include: (a) rediscovery and recovery, (b) mourning, (c) dreaming, (d) commitment, and (e) action. As a colonized Secwepemc woman, I find myself going through these phases simultaneously. As I discover more of our traditional ways of life, I mourn for the past and all that was lost, but at the same time, dream of the possibility of self-determination and I am committed to take action to achieve it.

Wilson (2005) provides a quote by Cree scholar, Winona Wheeler who explains:

A large part of decolonization entails developing a critical consciousness about the cause(s) of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonist ideas and practices. Decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-

reflection, and a rejection of victimage. Decolonization is about empowerment—a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples' values and abilities, and a willingness to make change. It is about transforming negative reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities. (p. 71)

Decolonization must move beyond mere survival and become a means of restoring health and prosperity to the people. Prosperity, for us, could well mean ensuring we have adequate traditional food supplies (wild game, fish, berries, roots, and medicines) and ensuring we have the freedom to practice our spirituality in undisturbed land; among other things. Decolonization is a process we must work at continually and diligently. We must continually ask ourselves, of any actions or strategies, "Is this decolonizing for us?"

## **Restoration of Indigenous Culture and Language**

The restoration and protection of indigenous knowledge is critical to decolonization, empowerment, and emancipation. Wilson (2005), like other Indigenous scholars such as Alfred and Corntassel (2005) and Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000), declare that, as Indigenous peoples, we must "embrace the traditions of our past and advocate a return to those ways, beliefs, and values that formed the basis of our once strong and healthy nations" (p. 70).

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) constantly promote the restoration of Indigenous languages and ways of knowing. They state, "Aboriginal languages are the means of communication for the full range of human experiences, and they are critical to the survival of the culture and political integrity of any people" (p. 198). To stress the criticalness of restoring languages, they assert, "languages are a direct and powerful

means of understanding the legacy of tribal knowledge” (p. 199) and “they provide the deep and lasting cognitive bonds that affect all aspects of Aboriginal life” (p. 199). Battiste and Youngblood Henderson reaffirm Indigenous languages as being the vehicle for cultural survival.

Simpson (2005) also offers compelling arguments for the restoration of Indigenous languages. She states that language is critical to the recovery and continuance of Indigenous worldviews, values, conceptualizations and knowledge, because their structure (language) is designed to articulate all of these things.

Restoring language is more than just speaking. Indigenous language (Secwepemctsin) must be used to restore oral traditions—the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Simpson (2005) contends that the oral tradition required specific skills that need to be fostered amongst children and perfected all through life. Schools, she says, are detrimental to the transmission of knowledge because a Western Eurocentric curriculum taught in a Western-based didactic manner, undermines the skills needed to understand Indigenous Knowledge and greatly reduces the opportunity to learn from traditional knowledge holders. This is certainly the case in educational institutions that Secwepemc students attend. Indigenous knowledge, the little that is learned, is not transmitted because the students are the ones learning, not the parents, who are the ones responsible for transmission of knowledge. Instruction methods generally take place within a classroom so the students have little, if any, opportunity to learn directly on the land and from knowledgeable Elders. We are removed from the traditional territory due to many circumstances: we live on Indian reserves; governments and multi-national corporations are alienating and destroying our traditional territories; and so on. Since Secwepemc knowledge flows from the land, we

are prevented from living our knowledge when we no longer have access to our lands and when the lands are being destroyed. As Simpson (2005) points out, our knowledge, political and spiritual systems and many other aspects of our lives are encoded in our relationship to the land and without ecosystems we cannot nurture these relationships. We need the land to restore our knowledge of what constitutes our health: diet (indigenous plants and animals), medicines, and healing and spiritual practices all of which stem from the land.

## **Political Strategies**

Wilson (2005) rightly concludes that return of knowledge must be coupled with political action to ensure that the positive environmental conditions of Indigenous plants, medicines, and animals, and the rest of our needs are protected. This, she says, will assist in physical and spiritual recovery of our people in a very concrete way. Even though the restoration of Indigenous language may not seem political, Wilson (2005) argues “fighting for language survival and recovery becomes a political challenge to the colonizing forces that worked so methodically and extensively to eradicate our cultural identity in this way” (p. 81). Wilson (2005) maintains that when young people cease to speak a language (Indigenous), the language ceases to change and adapt and the language of imperialism prevails, and rather than making sense of the changing world through Indigenous eyes, the dominant imperial language prevails. Thus, it is to the colonizing forces’ benefit to maintain the status quo: Indigenous peoples’ speaking English and everything it implies.

Indigenous scholars agree the responsibility for the loss of language, knowledge, culture, and land lies with occupying settler governments that perpetrated genocidal laws

and policies upon us. Simpson (2005) rightly lays the blame on the political and legal system of the settlers who removed Indigenous sovereignty and jurisdiction over the land, and thus, the people lost the ability to protect Indigenous knowledge from desecration because they lost the ability to protect the land from environmental destruction. She reminds us that the *Indian Act* criminalized Indigenous knowledge governing structures, which were rendered illegal and destroyed by the colonial system of administration (creation of Indian Affairs). The *Indian Act* was also responsible for the criminalization of ceremonial and spiritual ceremonies which effectively destroyed traditional ceremonies. Isaac Willard, in Bouchard and Kennedy (1979), reports that the last Secwepemc winter dance, the most sacred dance of the Secwepemc, took place around 1929. No winter dances have been held in our community since. The criminalization of ceremonies, thus, effectively destroyed indigenous methods of teaching and transmission.

Simpson (2005) contends the attack on indigenous knowledge came at the same time that Indigenous Nations lost control of their lands and when their vision for a peaceful and just co-existence was ignored and undermined by colonial powers. This is clearly evident in the words of the Interior Chiefs statements, recorded in the 1910 Laurier Memorial, where they expressed their desire for peaceful co-existence with the settlers while at the same time maintaining their way of life.

Simpson (2005) holds the colonial infrastructures accountable and writes, “unless properly dismantled and accounted for, this infrastructure will continue to undermine efforts to strengthen indigenous knowledge and will harm the agenda of decolonization and self-determination” (p. 2). Wilson (2005) reiterates that although the recovery of Indigenous knowledge is survivalist in nature, it is also political. It is survivalist because

of its potential to restore health and dignity to our people. Recovering our knowledge, she says, will assist us in advancing our political aims. Simpson (2005) contends the political aspect of this process is that it defies those who have been defining our existence. The colonizing agents must realize that we do not all exist as assimilated subjects of their culture and society. Wilson (2005) concludes reclaiming knowledge is more than just resistance to colonization, it a signifier of cultural revitalization and nationalism. It is the basis for rebuilding communities.

## **Pedagogies of Resistance**

Denzin (2005), Grande (2004), Wilson (2005), and Alfred and Corntassel (2005) propose pedagogies of resistance which inform my research. Denzin (2005) suggests, “indigenous pedagogies are grounded in an oppositional consciousness that resists ‘neocolonizing postmodern global formations’” (p. 942). Theory, epistemology, methodology, and praxis he states are incorporated into strategies of resistance that are unique to each indigenous group. Although there are differences between the various indigenous pedagogies, they all have a common commitment to an indigenist outlook that Denzin (2005) states, “assigns the highest priority to the rights of indigenous peoples, to the traditions, bodies of knowledge, and values that have “evolved over many thousands of years by native peoples the world over” (p. 942). In my study, I must assign a high priority to responsibilities, as well, since we must always uphold our sacred responsibilities to always take care of the land, language, culture, and people.

Denzin (2005) and other indigenous scholars, concur that indigenous pedagogies are informed (in varying and contested ways) by decolonizing, revolutionary, and socialist feminisms. Additionally, underlying these indigenous perspectives are the

commitments to moral praxis, issues of self-determination, empowerment, healing, love, community solidarity, respect for the earth, and respect for Elders. Indigenous pedagogies, thus, share many similarities. Two examples are “red pedagogy” and Hawaiian pedagogy.

Denzin (2005) describes red pedagogy developed by Grande. He cites Indigenous intellectuals, some of whom include Grande, Rains, and Archibald, who articulate a spoken indigenous epistemology developed over thousands of years of sustained living on the land. These epistemologies must form what Grande (2004) calls a red pedagogy. She proposes the quest for this new red pedagogy, which would consist of the following elements:

- sustain the life-ways of indigenous peoples
- provide an explanatory framework that helps us understand the complex and intersecting vectors of power shaping the historical-materials conditions of indigenous schools and communities
- historically grounded in local and tribal narratives
- intellectually informed by ancestral ways of knowing
- politically centered in the issues of sovereignty
- morally inspired by connection among the Earth, its beings, and the Spirit world

Grande’s (2004) proposal of red pedagogy does not include the following critical elements: that pedagogy must be based on the land and that any pedagogy must have land protection and Indigenous language as its primary focus. To us, as people dependent on the land for our needs, these elements are crucial. Grande’s red pedagogy, however, does propose subjecting the process of “whitestream” schooling to critical pedagogical analysis which, if effective, can reveal deficiencies of such systems for Indigenous peoples. Grande’s red pedagogy does make a compelling case for the

decoupling and delinking of education from its Western colonist contexts and to reground students and education in traditional knowledge and teachings. In our case, we cannot think of education for just children and adolescents; it must extend to parents, families, and communities and to the entire Secwepemc Nation.

Hawaiian pedagogy, described by Denzin (2005) provides a useful framework for us. Hawaiian pedagogy:

- resists colonial systems of knowing and education and fights for an authentic Hawaiian identity
- asserts that there are specific Hawaiian ways of knowing and being in the world
- embodies seven themes that shape this epistemology—spirituality, physical space, cultural nature of the senses, relational knowing, practical knowing, language as being, and unity of mind and body
- stresses the place of morality in knowledge protection—culture restores culture, culture is sacred—culture is performed
- spirituality is basic to culture—sensuous and embodied involving all senses
- knowledge is experiential and expressed in sensuous terms, in stories and in critical personal narratives that focus on the importance of practice and repetition
- knowledge is relational and so involves harmony, balance, generosity, responsibility
- being a good listener and being kind

The restoration, maintenance, and transmission of our language and all aspects of our culture will be a monumental undertaking. Wilson (2005) recognizes the challenges. She states, “our alternative ways of seeing, being, thinking, and acting are necessarily political and a challenge to the dominant society” (p. 72). Our desire to protect the land from destruction so it can continue to provide for us is a challenge to the colonial governments and corporations who want it for their exclusive use and benefit. Knowing this, we must be persistent and be willing to face all challenges.

Wilson (2005) warns us of another challenge we must consider. She asserts that some of the greatest resistors to the recovery of Indigenous knowledge, and hence, decolonization, are our own people who have internalized the racism and now uncritically accept the ideologies of the dominant culture. She cites an example from her community. While working on a language program that eventually disintegrated, she realized that “the boarding school experience coupled with Euro-American society’s purposeful and complete denigration of our language had successfully destroyed the belief among many of my own people regarding the importance of our language” (p. 72). From this experience, she stresses the requirement of a strong decolonization agenda with various education programs.

## **Self-determination**

Indigenous scholars and activists in Canada, United States, New Zealand, and Hawaii agree that certain conditions must be met in order to achieve self-determination and Nationhood. Paramount to the goal of self-determination are the parallel strategies of decolonization and restoration of indigenous languages and cultures. These strategies, they contend, will lead to the emancipation and transformation of indigenous peoples.

Indigenous scholars, although agreeing on its basic elements, differ on terms they use when describing Indigenous post-colonial societies. Some of the terms used include sovereignty, self-determination, self-government, and Nationhood. Since the English language does not have the capacity to fully describe Indigenous self-determination, it is preferable for Indigenous Peoples to use their language to define this concept. Alfred cited in Grande (2004) cautions us of the ambiguity of terms and

structures. For example, he states, “traditional Indigenous nations had no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity” (p. 52). Alfred (1999) states that we have to detach and “dethink” the notion of sovereignty from its connection to Western understandings of power and relationships and base it on Indigenous notions of power. Alfred in Grande (2004) states that to argue indigenous nationhood within a dominant Western paradigm is self-defeating. Thus, Wilson (2005) promotes the return to traditional forms of governance as an alternative to European conceptions of sovereignty.

Lyon in Grande (2004) describes the political life of Indigenous peoples, historically, as “Nation-people” which he defines as “a group of human beings united together by history, language, culture, or some combination therein—a community joined in union for a common purpose: the survival and flourishing of itself” (p. 169). He contrasts “Nation-state” which is concerned with sovereignty of individuals and privileging of procedure to “Nation-people” which “takes its supreme charge, the sovereignty of the group through a privileging of its traditions and culture and continuity” (p. 169).

Grande (2004) describes Alfred’s model of “self-conscious traditionalism” for indigenous communities. He suggests that this be achieved by development of an intellectual, social, and political movement to reinvigorate indigenous values, principles, and other cultural elements best suited to the larger contemporary political and economic reality. In this context, Grande (2005) presents Warrior’s argument that tradition is not simply “predicated upon a set of uniform, unchanging beliefs but rather is expressed as a commitment to the future sustainability of the group” (p. 166) and that the struggle for freedom is “not about dressing in the trappings of the past and making

demands but about being firmly rooted in the 'ever changing experience of the community'" (p. 166).

All Indigenous peoples must be mindful of the fact that self-determination is not something the government or anyone else can grant us, we must live it. Grande (2005) contends that the degree to which Indigenous peoples are able to define and exercise political, intellectual, and spiritual sovereignty is an accurate measure of colonist relations. Besides these, we must consider legal, economic, and social elements of self-determination. Since, we want to restore as much as possible, our traditional systems which are interconnected, we must examine all aspects of self-determination. I fully agree with Alfred (1999) as he asserts, "returning the politics of Native communities to an Indigenous basis means nothing less than reclaiming the inherent strength and power of indigenous governance systems and freeing our collective souls from a divisive and destructive colonized politics" (p. 80).

Alfred (1999) sets out characteristics of strong, self-determined Nations:

- wholeness and diversity
- shared culture
- communication
- respect and truth
- group maintenance
- participatory and consensus-based government
- youth empowerment
- strong links to the outside world

To Alfred's characteristics, I add:

- strong links to the land
- upholding sacred responsibilities and

- strong, inspired, and ethical leadership

Secwepemc self-determination must no longer be just a dream. It must become a vision we actively and diligently pursue. Indigenous scholars, leaders in promoting visions of self-determination, have taken up the torch and remind us of our responsibilities. Grande (2004) informs us it must be a collective effort to uphold our responsibility to protect our right to live according to ancestral ways.

Deloria in Grande (2004) leaves us with optimism as he points out: It was our allegiance to traditional knowledge that has protected us from annihilation and absorption into mainstream culture. Indeed, throughout the destruction of our traditional societies, Grande (2004) reminds us that our cultures were not totally destroyed and we did not entirely succumb to Eurocentric culture and values. She declares Indigenous peoples chose to live in ways consistent with their Indigenous views and refused to succumb to a value system that elevates humans above all other creatures and treats nature as a hostile enemy to be exploited, subdued, and abandoned. Grande (2004) advocates the need for Indigenous peoples to develop a spirit of resistance and pedagogical structure that provides methods of inquiry and analysis that expose, challenge, and disrupt the continuing colonization of land and resources.

We must always recognize the critical role of the land in achieving self-determination. Lyon in Grande (2004) eloquently describes powerful relationships between the people and the land, "it is a people's right to rebuild its demand to exist and present its gifts to the world...and adamant in our refusal to dissociate culture, identity, and power from the land" (p. 57). Lyon declares, "The vision of tribal and community stability—of community stability—rests in the desire and ability of indigenous peoples not

only to listen to each other but also listen to the land” (p. 57). Wilson (2005) holds that our connection to the land, as well as, ceremonial life and values shape Indigenous consciousness and ways of being which, I contend, are crucial to self-determination.

Indigenous scholars, such as Grande (2004) and Alfred (1999), promote the recovery and maintenance of Indigenous worldviews, philosophies, languages, and ways of knowing and the application of these teachings in contemporary contexts. Wilson (2005) contends that the restoration of Indigenous traditional systems will not only benefit us, but mainstream society, as well. We know that we are part of the present and can never go back to the way it was. Thus, as Wilson (2005) states, “we must look to the truths within our forms of knowledge and bring them forward to the modern world while simultaneously working to transform the modern world to create a society more in tune with our traditional values” (p. 75).

I agree with Wilson (2005) that our ways of being, thinking, and acting are political and a challenge to the dominant society. Therefore, we must be prepared to face significant challenges in our efforts of decolonization and self-determination. In speaking of decolonization, she asserts that sustained resistance to the status quo requires energy to foster a critical mass of support for decolonization and that this effort is needed for long-term success in recovering Indigenous life-ways.

Another challenge, in reaching self-determination, will be critical examination of institutions and structures that impact our lives and perpetuate colonization and oppression. We must assess whether they harm or support Indigenous values and worldview. Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005) edited *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*. This handbook outlines strategies to begin decolonization in

various areas: decolonize Indigenous diets; indigenous governance, education; and tribal enrolment. Their manual also contains articles on decolonizing through indigenous languages and storytelling. In this manual, they examine the extent of colonization within Indigenous systems and provide strategies for their decolonization.

Indigenous scholars, writing from personal experience on colonization and its effects, offer many strategies for decolonization, restoration of Indigenous languages and culture, and self-determination. Possibly more valuable than this, is the hope and inspiration they give, which is desperately needed in my community, and with the Secwepemc Nation. Our task is to move these words of inspiration into transformative action.

## Chapter 6.

### An Ideal Education Model: Research Findings

Recovering and maintaining Indigenous worldviews, philosophies, and ways of knowing and applying those teachings in a contemporary context represents a web of liberation strategies Indigenous peoples can employ to disentangle themselves from oppressive control of colonizing state governments. (Simpson, 2004, p. 1)

#### Introduction

Given what we know about our traditional way of life and the devastating effects of colonization, we must now turn our attention to the “solution” and begin rebuilding from the ground up. We know enough of our history, language, and traditional way of life to develop and implement thoughtfully constructed plans or models. This education/training model must be comprised of two convergent paths—the restoration of Secwepemc culture, language, and ways of life that I outline in Chapter 6, and an active decolonization agenda which I outline in Chapter 7. Both will require a tremendous amount of motivation, energy, time, commitment, courage, and perseverance to act and to stay on the path. Both will require multiple strategies. This is especially critical in decolonization as we are faced with multiple forms of colonization and oppression.

We must take a radical departure from what we are doing and no longer employ the same strategies, which created our present situation, such as teaching/learning language and culture separate from the land; separating children, parents, and families

in the teaching/learning process; and adopting foreign systems of education, family structures, health, political, and economics. We must reconstruct our language and culture using traditional methods. Cultural education and language must permeate families and communities. We must immerse ourselves in Secwepemc culture and language. What we learn must become daily practice and a way of life. In doing so, we will regain our connection to the land and uphold our responsibilities as Secwepemc.

In my study, the Elders provide the necessary philosophy, knowledge, and skills needed to restore Secwepemc language, culture, and all aspects of our traditional way of life. Thus, any model developed must be based on Elders' knowledge. The parents, in my study, are articulate in describing the education/training desired for their children. They contribute their ideas, hopes, and dreams in restoring our way of life. It is amazing that in sharing their hopes and dreams for their children and themselves, they describe aspects of traditional Secwepemc teachings shared by the Elders. The parents are determined to rebuild and maintain the connections to the language, culture, and land. They are committed to making their own decisions on what will be taught/learned, where learning will take place, the methods and structures of teaching/learning, and who will teach. The parents are also determined to work toward decolonization and self-determination.

This chapter presents Elders' traditional teachings. They include the traditional child-rearing practices; learning/training method; forms of knowledge children acquired; who was responsible for teaching/learning; and the holistic nature of Secwepemc knowledge. This chapter also presents the parents' ideas on the type of education/training they desire for themselves and their children. Both Elders' teachings

and parents' ideas provide the basis for the education/training model presented in my dissertation

This model is unique in that it is rooted in Secwepemc knowledge, values, beliefs, and language; it is holistic and integrated into daily life; includes life processes; and is inclusive of the whole family (including the extended family) and community; it is based on the land; it includes multiple strategies and a decolonization agenda. It is a radical departure from regular school-based education where the child begins school at age five and finishes as a teenager. This model engages life long learning beginning even before birth and continuing until death. Parents, family, and community members will be active learners.

## **Part 1.**

### **Elders' and Parents' Teachings and Knowledge**

#### ***Elders' Teachings***

*As a Secwepemc mother of three, the education that I envision for my children is to live our way of life, to train and educate ourselves in order for our true culture and ways to continue and survive forever. At the present time, our Secwepemc ways are at the verge of extinction. If we don't begin to educate ourselves and our children now, we will lose our whole identity and homeland. (Speqmic)*

*I like to look at the way our ancestors educated our Nations before the coming of the white man and their societies and systems they brought with them. How did we teach our children and Nations? Currently, the way that the majority of our Secwepemc Peoples have been educated is through the white Western education system. (Sweetwater)*

The Elders remind us that there is no word for "education" in our language. Our people underwent training which would enable them to become whole human beings

and to fulfill the various roles they would hold throughout their lives. Child development expert, Martin Brokenleg (1990) in *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* explains the goal of Indigenous education, which applies to the Secwepemc, was to develop cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual competence.

In order for us to once again become whole human beings, we must restore the traditional training/learning process described by the Elders. This process is life long and must begin even before birth. The Elders say we must begin by restoring the traditional teachings to expectant mothers. The extended family must work together to ensure they are well taken care of and that they receive the necessary training and teachings to give birth to a healthy, happy child. Expectant mothers must learn the language so that their unborn children will have exposure to the language. She must learn cultural protocols and skills to practice with her children. Mona Jules, Secwepemc Elder, explains the training process for expectant mothers:

*Learning/training, for Secwepemc children, began before birth. Our people believed that the pregnant mother's thoughts and actions influenced her baby. Therefore, she had to be conscious of her thoughts and actions at all times. Her family and community members assisted by treating her with the utmost care and respect so the baby would be born healthy and happy. She was given the best food to eat and had to drink plenty of clear, running water. There were certain protocols for her to follow. She couldn't see or hear anything negative and she must always have positive feelings.*

When the child was born, family and community members ensured the mother followed birth practices and teachings. These practices were carried out with newborn boys and girls. Elder Mona Jules explains:

*as soon as the baby was born, he was bathed in medicine water. The baby was wrapped and placed in a birch bark cradle. The grandmother sang a Secwepemc lullaby to him. He was named in Secwepemctsin. By being*

immediately immersed in the Secwepemc culture, the baby knows where he comes from. All his senses are awakened. He smells the medicines, hears his language, gets to know the basket (baby cradle) and songs of his grandmother.

Jules states that within hours of his birth, he has already experienced much of his culture. Just as our ancestors did, we must ensure that newborn babies are immersed in Secwepemc culture and language.

One of the first lessons the new baby learned was self-control and self-restraint in the presence of parents and other adults. This was learned by being placed in the cradle at all times. When taught discipline at an early age, children need little discipline later in life.

Physical and mental strength was developed in the newborn baby by immersing the baby in cold water, usually a nearby creek. This first introduction to the cold water prepared the child for the continuing practice of cold water bathing which continued as he grew.

Jules further describes cultural birthing practices. "Burying the umbilical cord under a rock in the grandmother's land reinforces the child's attachment to his family and culture." Secwepemc Elder Flora Sampson explains that placing the umbilical cord in an ant pile to ensure the child would be a hard worker and tying the cord to a tree on the land ensured the child would remain rooted to that place.

The mother taking the baby wherever she went developed attachment. The baby was either strapped to the mother's back, laced in the birch bark basket, or cradleboard. Elder Mary Thomas states, "There was no such thing as babysitters" (personal communication, March 11, 2007). The child felt safe and protected and a deep bond

was built between the mother and baby. The child was involved (if only by observation, at first) in all activities the mother was involved in. Thus, the early acquisition of cultural skills and values was ensured.

The naming ceremony was the child's introduction to the community. All people gathered to celebrate the child's arrival. Extended family and community members affirmed their commitment to helping the new mother raise her child. The child was named with the people in attendance witnessing the name-giving. Girls were given names associated with water. Boys were sometimes given names of ancestors. Boys' names were sometimes changed when they reached puberty, as their previous name may have applied to being a child.

### ***Elders' Traditional Child-rearing Strategies***

Child-rearing strategies, synonymous to the learning and teaching process, were based on holistic Secwepemc philosophy of child development derived from the Elders' teachings. Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockren (1990) report Native people "saw education (training) of children as the highest function of the nation" (p. 5). Hence, how children were raised affected their later learning and determined what kind of adults they became. Brendtro et al. reinforce this philosophy. They state "First Nations peoples of North America used sophisticated child development strategies designed to nurture caring, respectful, and courageous children" (p. 137). Mary Thomas (2001) describes traditional child-rearing practices as having clearly defined expectations of behaviour and boundaries set out by the family and community, which minimized the need for discipline and punishment.

The Elders, in my study, report that:

children were well looked after. Children were raised in a gentle and loving environment. No harsh punishment or anger was shown to them. Children were never scolded but spoken to softly. Lots of patience was practiced with children.

Brendtro et al. (1990), who have worked extensively on reclaiming youth at risk, confirm what the Elders say. They report:

Native American philosophies of child management represent what is perhaps the most effective system of positive discipline ever developed. These approaches emerged from cultures where the central purpose of life was the education and empowerment of children. (p. 44)

The authors describe traditional Native educational practices which address four bodies of self-worth: (a) significance was nurtured in a cultural milieu that celebrated the universal need for belonging; (b) competence was ensured by guaranteed opportunities for mastery; (c) power was fostered by encouraging the expression of independence; and (d) virtue was reflected in the pre-eminent value of generosity (p. 45).

All the Elders in my study describe how they were raised together in extended family situations. First cousins (children of siblings) were considered brothers and sisters. Children's aunts were considered mothers and uncles were considered fathers. The child's grandparents and extended family were fully involved in caring and teaching the child. Thus, children learned as a family. One Elder recalls:

I remember being home from the residential school at summer, I went everywhere with my mother, grandmother, aunts, and the other women. We would go to the berry picking camps and stay there until we picked all the berries we needed. We would dry them at the camp and then divide them all out among the families. I loved these times.

## ***Parents' Child-rearing Strategies***

The parents in my study were asked to provide child-rearing strategies they believe crucial for families to practice. Even though child-rearing was disrupted by many factors, the parents are aware of traditional child-rearing strategies and methods like the ones described by the Elders. There was consensus among the parents that:

*children of extended families should be raised together. The parents recognize that family values, beliefs, discipline, etc. must be consistent among the group. Parents and family members must have clear expectations of children. They need to know what is appropriate, what is not. Discipline must be firm, but kind. Traditional discipline methods must be restored such as 'using water'.*

The Elders tell us that water is a teacher. Children had to rise early, run to the water, and bathe, even in winter months. This taught self-discipline as well as courage. This teaching can be used today. "If children or parents are troubled, they can go to the water and cleanse their minds", suggests Rainy.

The parents state that the environments children are in must be positive and that people who work with and look after children must display positive attitudes. They agree that *parents must surround their children with positive attitudes and experiences*. Metsukw states *nowadays children are so accustomed to negative behaviours and attitudes, they think it is normal*. She notes *what you surround yourself with at home (e.g., negativity), your children will become that*.

The parents stress the need for families to work together. Rainy explains:

*within families, everyone has various strengths and knowledge, we have to work together to share the knowledge and teach others. Children and parents can learn together. The knowledge and desire from the Elders is still there for young people.*

Parents realize that because of colonization, there needs to be much healing among parents, families, and community.

When a parent is having difficulty, other family members must intervene. If no father is present, then other male family or community members must take responsibility for helping raise the child and impart the teachings. The family must ensure that the children undergo the life processes required—naming, puberty training, first kill, first berry ceremony and that they gain the cultural knowledge needed, e.g., hunting.

The parents identify ways to help and support each other.

Mothers and other female family members take turns going out (mothers on moon time, stay at home with children while others go out, share the food, medicines, and materials gathered.) They can help with transportation, food gathering for various ceremonies, and share childcare. Parents can also share knowledge they receive from Elders.

## ***Elders' Teaching/Learning Methods***

### **How Knowledge Was Acquired**

As Elder Mona Jules explains, a child acquired knowledge from birth.

Training (education) followed a rigid pattern and children's learning continued throughout life. From a very early age, children were exposed to and involved in the activities of their parents, grandparents, and family members. Their training consisted of hands-on, practical experience, "by doing the activity, right where it happened."

Children would have a smaller version of the materials being used, e.g., smaller basket. Elder Mary Thomas explains:

I was very young when my grandmother taught me how to make a basket. Because sooner or later, we were going to part of the food gathering. They would tie a little basket around a little girl's waist. The little girl might fill it with leaves, or dirt, or anything, but she learned that that little basket was a container and it has to be filled. And she'd go

along. The bigger they(the child) got, the bigger her basket would be. And she was made at a very young age to fill one basket before she would go play .Thomas explains how children were expected to be responsible. So, we were a part of the food gathering at a very young age. And if give a child that kind of responsibility at home, then this is the way they will learn. (Thomas, 2001, p. 10)

Elder Irene Billy reports that children learned by observation and experimentation. They practiced making different things and saw whether they turned out or not. Elder Flora Sampson explains that her grandmother would show her, only once, how to make a basket. She had to pay close attention and watch carefully. After that, Flora was expected to practice making baskets until she perfected the skill. Children were expected “to do”. From necessity, all teaching/learning activities were practical and “hands-on”. One of our Syilx neighbours and allies, Jeanette Armstrong and her colleagues recount the teachings of the Elders:

Children were taught from the time they could learn. Skills such as fishing, hunting, tanning hides and making baskets were taught with great patience. By the time the child was grown, he or she already had what they needed to take full part in the community. (Armstrong, Derickson, Maracle, & Young-Ing, 1994, p. 14)

Children practised skills and activities under a mentor. Elder William Ignace (personal communication, March 14, 2007) recalls he was the last young person to train under Elders who still maintained the knowledge and language of the land. He travelled all over the traditional territory with Elders learning the cultural skills, sometimes staying for months at a time in the mountains. As a child, he was treated as an adult and the reasons for doing certain things were explained to him, for example, animal habits (why a marten is high in the mountains) trails, shortcuts, and animal tracks.

According to the Elders, the way the learning was presented was just as important as teaching the skill. *Things were gently explained to them instead of lecturing. Lots of humour was used to make learning fun. Lots of singing took place while working.* The same child-rearing practices were extended to learning situations with lots of patience and no anger shown to children. Armstrong et al. (1994) describes the treatment of children in the learning process:

Harshness was not used in teaching children. Learning was always made very easy at first then it gradually became harder, but only as much as the child could do well at. There was no such thing as failure. Teaching them through success opened up the child at a very young age to being good at things. They were then ready to do harder things later, without fear of failing. (p. 14)

Children learned a great deal through play, report the Elders. Elder Irene Billy states that work was always made to be fun and it didn't seem like you were working. Elder Mary Thomas says:

And the many things that we did, it was all a game to us. We used to play quite a bit. When we would go down to the river to gather rope hemp, it was very light. She'd (her grandmother) tell us 'you pack it over and put it in this one big pile'. And we did it as a game and we pretended that we were horses. Everything was a game. It was so happy. (Thomas, 2000, p. 4)

The child's environment was predictable as expectations were consistent and made clear. Children always knew what to do and what was expected of them. This structure, in many cases, allowed for children to do little wrong and to succeed in what they attempted. Hence, in many cases, discipline was unnecessary.

Secwepemc children, thus, acquired knowledge from authentic experiences and participation in daily activities as a result of practical needs, for example, making a tool

or harvesting food. In these instances, direct learning—seeing and doing—without asking questions was the strategy employed. Learning, then, was meaningful as it always took place in concrete contexts.

Parents and grandparents told the children stories about animal behaviours and how they related to humans. Elder Mary Thomas explains that youth, as they were entering puberty, were told the story of the sockeye salmon. The story related the life changes in the sockeye to the changes the adolescents would experience. The teachings helped develop self-respect and prevent promiscuous behaviour among the youth. She further explains how this story showed that changes to their bodies were normal and natural.

When you're just a tiny baby, you depend a lot on your mother, your big sisters, your aunts, your father, your uncles, your grandparents. They protect you. But there comes a time, when you learn to stand on your own feet. That's because you're growing up, and you become more independent. And the fish are going down the rivers and their bodies are changing, the transparent look is gone, and they begin to form into beautiful looking fish. And so that's how you look when you become a teenager. (Thomas, 2001, p. 9)

Many strategies were employed to help children practice proper behaviour. Stories containing morals and values were constantly repeated. The stories explained how certain land markers were created as a result of someone's misbehaviour, usually Coyote. Seeing the land markers, then reminded the children of proper behaviour. The stories reinforced the children's awareness of the consequences of not following community protocols, rules, beliefs, and values which minimized the need for discipline.

Children learned that they had to work for what they wanted. Elder Mary Thomas reports that as children she and her siblings had to fill her basket with berries before she

could go swimming or play. Children were able to sit quietly for long periods of time in return for hearing stories and songs. This helped instill self-discipline. The stories were made enjoyable and children did not want to miss them.

Researchers Morgan (2005) and Jules (1996) compiled information on Secwepemc teaching/learning methods in their Masters theses. Morgan and Jules interviewed Elders within the Secwepemc Nation; many of whom have since passed away. (See their theses for additional information on Secwepemc pedagogy and child-rearing methods.)

### **Acquisition of Knowledge**

The Elders present the teachings they received as young children growing up in an extended family and community environment. At this time, some, but not all of the traditional culture was practiced. By this time, much EuroCanadian culture had infiltrated the communities. Some of the Elders in my study remember participating in traditional activities while some of them remember observing their parents and grandparents doing the activities. Hence, they were only able to present some traditional teachings.

Secwepemc children learned all the practical activities practiced by their families. Since traditional Secwepemc life was based on the land, learning these skills were essential for survival. Cultural skills were gender specific. Secwepemc Elder Wolverine recalls the training of boys.

*They boys learned hunting, trapping, and fishing. They were taught about animals—their habitats, habits, uses, technology for harvesting them, and preservation techniques. As well, they learned about the ecosystems—elevations of land, landforms, etc. Boys participating in these activities acquired spiritual knowledge as well. Much preparation had to take place before hunting, fishing, and trapping. One had to cleanse oneself thoroughly*

and participate in ceremonies in order to be worthy of getting an animal. Fasting helped ensure a successful hunt. Boys had to learn survival skills such as making a temporary shelter. They had to learn which foods to eat while in the bush.

The female Elders describe what young girls were required to learn. *Young girls learned how to pit cook, weave, strip sage and weave the stalks, look after younger children, harvest and prepare food. They learned how to tan hides and make articles from the hides.* Mary Thomas possessed the most Secwepemc cultural knowledge since she learned a lot from her mother who lived to be 106 years old and held the accumulated knowledge of previous generations. Mary reports that young girls learned virtually all the skills needed in the households. She says the girls even learned parenting skills by taking care of their homemade dolls.

### **Spiritual Knowledge**

Since all Secwepemc knowledge was holistic and integrated into everyday life, spiritual knowledge, too, was an integral part of Secwepemc life and was gained by participation in various activities and ceremonies. Although the Elders are reluctant to fully share spiritual knowledge, they share some of its aspects. Some of the teachings they share include:

Young women were powerful and had to be respected. They were especially powerful in their moon time and so were secluded during that time. Young men and women underwent spiritual training for five years or longer. Training included fasting, cleansing, and prayers. Such rituals enabled young hunters to be worthy of obtaining game. Fasting also took place before important events and at the beginning of each season. Young people were taught to pray for good things to happen. Secwepemc medicine people were responsible for spiritual training and guidance and the true knowledge.

Certain processes, such as *etsce7* provided intense spiritual teachings. Due to its highly spiritual nature, I can only briefly describe how it contributed to the acquisition of desirable values and qualities. With long periods of time spent alone in the mountains, and rigorous physical, mental, and spiritual training, *etsce7* was a fundamental part of the total educational experience of youth. The late Secwepemc Elder, George Manuel, reports that boys had to stay away (in the mountains) for several months and some even trained for a year or more. Manuel in Grant (1996) explains:

Try to imagine what was expected of a twelve year old boy. He had to live on his own strength and on the resources that the Creator put at his disposal. His years with his parents and his great-grandparents were like the years spent in elementary school. Now he was beginning his secondary education. He would learn to apply the many stories he had been told from his earliest childhood. (p. 42)

Wolverine states that young boys were taken to the mountains before their voices changed. The men responsible for the boys training established a rigorous training schedule which included fasting, swimming in early morning in cold water, physical activity, sweat bathing, praying, observing the land and animals, and building temporary shelters. With this training, boys would receive spiritual power, animal helpers, and their own song. Thus *etsxe* developed self-discipline, courage, patience, endurance, as well as mental, physical, and spiritual strength.

Secwepemc girls also underwent intense training. Young girls, before their first menses, were taken away from the community to undergo training. Women in the family and community were responsible for their training. The skills, values, and qualities developed in this process were ones required in later life. While in seclusion, for example, girls had to gather a number of fir boughs and pick off the needles one by one.

This enabled them to become fast berry pickers. It also developed patience and perseverance

### **Acquisition of Values**

Elders report Secwepemc cultural values and qualities were instilled at birth and throughout childhood. Secwepemc values and qualities were acquired through daily practical activities as well as spiritual ones. The values of sharing and generosity were acquired children at a young age. Boys were required to give away their first kill and first fish caught. Girls had to give away the first berries picked. The late Elder Mary Thomas explains how the collective nature of Secwepemc society facilitated the value of sharing. She explains: "We always prayed and we shared. We even shared with the neighbouring communities. And children growing up with that knowledge, you became kind, considerate because nobody owned, privately owned, anything. That was the way of my people" (2001, p. 20).

Honesty was an important value to acquire. The story of Coyote and the Birch remind of us of the value of honesty.

Coyote wanted to go for a walk so he asked Birch tree to watch his food which he had hanging in a nearby tree. He was gone a long time and while he was gone, Crow came along and asked Birch who owned the food in the tree. Birch told Crow that he didn't know. So Crow went ahead and took the food. Coyote returned and saw his food gone. He asked Birch what happened to his food. Birch said, again, he didn't know. Coyote became angry and got a stick and whipped Birch until Birch had many little lashes on him. Today you can still see the marks on Birch. These markings remind us to tell the truth.

Humour was an important value to nurture. Irene Billy shares her experience of growing up with an Elder they called Old Christine. The Elder always used humour and make things fun so the children didn't feel as they were working.

Respect for self and family was a central value. Children were taught to listen to their parents, grandparents, and extended family. As Elder Mary Thomas explains, “to the Secwepemc, the family was of the utmost importance’ and “it was taboo to walk away from your family” (personal communication, March 11, 2007).

Respect was extended to the natural world. Strict teachings were instilled in the children to develop these qualities. Elder Mona Jules informs us, “before any food, medicine, or any item was taken one always had to show gratitude and appreciation by offering prayers. One had to show appreciation by not wasting food or any other material” (personal communication, April 20, 2007).

### **Acquisition of Qualities**

As we learned from the Elders, desirable qualities were instilled in children by birth and child-rearing practices. Self-control and self-discipline, developed at birth, was continually nurtured, for example, children had to learn to eat only a small amount as *there was no such thing as second helpings*. Development of self-discipline at an early age meant little discipline was required as children grew older. Cooperation, perseverance, and the ability to work hard were highly desirable and necessary qualities. Children had many role models who exhibited these qualities.

Bravery was developed early in young children. Mary Thomas (personal communication, March 11, 2007) explains how young boys had to go, at midnight, into the graveyard and fetch an object put there. Traditionally, bravery would have been acquired in many ways. *Knucwetwecw* (to help each other, to cooperate) was a highly desirable quality. Children were expected at a young age to help their sisters and

brothers, parents, grandparents, and extended family in various activities. Humility and patience evolved from practical and spiritual activities.

Endurance and perseverance were developed by participating in day-to-day activities. Elder Irene Billy reports that children had to stay with their task until they finished. Even if the days were extremely hot and they were tired, they could not quit what they were doing. Mona Jules reports that young children had to stay in the sweat-lodge from morning to late evening so they were not allowed to play, run around, or eat food during that time. The children also had to withstand the hot temperatures (sweat) and cold (going in cold creek).

The Elders explain how the sharing of common values and qualities and the focus on the proper behaviour of children worked to maintain agreement, and hence, harmonious relationships between children and adults. They speak of the importance of learning to live together. According to the Elders, because of the way children were raised and treated, they rarely showed bad behaviour. Parents and Elders employed strategies to prevent improper behaviour, for instance, the children were continually showed their progress in various skills and activities. There were consequences for improper behaviour. The consequences were mild such as the children not being allowed to go fishing or not hearing the stories.

Secwepemc pedagogy, thus, ensured the acquisition of skills, attitudes, customs, beliefs, values, and qualities required in a collective, cooperative society. Agreement among people was easily reached through patience, honesty, cooperation, sharing, autonomy, and problem-solving enabling them to survive and exist together. Activities based on practical life taught children self-awareness and inner strength, to handle

problems, to have good judgment, to learn to examine things from more than one point of view, to be flexible, and to adapt to change.

### ***Parents' Teaching/Learning Methods***

Through discussion in the focus group meetings and from individual responses, the parents identified teaching/learning methods that would develop autonomous, self-reliant individuals and families and that would promote life long learning. They focused on the affective aspects of teaching/learning methods which they consider just as, if not more important, than the actual teaching/learning strategies. The affective aspects they outlined include:

- gentle, loving, natural teaching manner
- use of humour
- allow for mistakes to be made
- build on and ensure success
- informal learning just as important as structured learning
- no coercion (instill desire for learning in individuals)
- establish a readiness to receive knowledge (by fasting)
- present learning as purposeful and meaningful
- develop a deep understanding of the natural world
- encourage curiosity and the desire to question
- encourage self-learning and reflection obtained through ceremonies

The parents include concrete learning/teaching methods to be included in a Secwepemc education/training model as:

- learn through play
- lots of repetition and practice in learning

- include explanations what individuals are teaching/learning (e.g., explain all aspects of ceremonies so they develop a deeper understanding)
- use of demonstrations using real objects and materials
- learning from direct experience (what time of the year to get birch bark for proper thickness and quality of bark)
- learning from real life situations, rather than contrived ones
- children and adult learners have “to do it, see it, smell it, feel it”
- use connections to help remember (edible mushroom shaped like a hat)
- make meaningful connections between what individuals are learning and real life (e.g., learning about traditional medicines so they can use them when ill)
- develop the ability to learn a number of things at once (tell stories while working, sing while working)
- allow for problem-solving, little of no intervention in learning
- use a variety of teaching/learning methods (multi-sensory)
- present concrete learning before abstract (actually hearing grouse ruffling feathers helps in understanding how grouse behaves in a story)
- develop the power of observation

### **Acquisition of Knowledge**

The parents met in focus groups to determine what forms of knowledge to be included in a Secwepemc education/training model. They articulated learning must be holistic: that is, physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects must be integrated in all learning/teaching.

The parents emphasized the need for training/learning to take place on the land. Of utmost importance, according to the parents, is learning the “rules” of the land and how to take care of the land.

In addition, to harvesting from the land, we must learn and practice traditional care-taking regimes, such as, burning the landscape for

better crops. Knowledge must be extended as much as possible. For example, in preparing for the next season, while picking Saskatoon berries, we prune the branches so the crops are more plentiful next year. This also ensures there are nice long branches next year for making birch bark baskets.

Learning on the land requires learning traditional skills. The parents outlined the following:

- hunting: all aspects of hunting, habitat, habits, season to hunt, which deer to hunt (no females), spiritual teachings (sweat-lodge, songs, prayers) practical skills—preparing the meat, tanning the hide, making a drum, tools, values—sharing, cooperation
- fishing
- trapping
- berry and root gathering
- medicine gathering
- implement and tool making (snowshoes, baskets, canoes)
- building outdoor shelters (winter home, summer home, temporary shelters) using materials available
- building a sweat-lodge
- singing and drumming, dances
- traditional sports and games

The parents asserted that all teachings (practical, emotional, spiritual) must be integrated in the learning of all cultural skills such as those outlined in the activity of hunting.

The parents say, we must gain intimate knowledge of the land and being out there is the only way to achieve this. Being on the land, they contend, develops observation skills that help in understanding concepts. Sweetwater provides an example of seeing baby grouse and hearing the sound as they flap their wings. She says that you

wouldn't relate to the story (Willow Grouse and Her Children) if you didn't actually see the baby grouse. She explains:

having these experiences helps visualize and understand stories (especially stories in the language). Stories about the land, like *Coyote Loses His Eyes*, enables you learn about the land, for example, that red willow grows by water. By being on the land, you learn nature signs, weather patterns, and traditional knowledge such as the best cedar roots are found by old, rotten fallen cedar trees.

Traditional ecological knowledge, the parents' state, is critically important. *We must learn about everything we can while in certain ecosystems.* Another parent provides an example of her fasting experience in a volcanic area. While there for four days, she said she learned a great deal about the area as she observed the medicines, roots, animals, and the landscape.

The parents insist that we must learn all we can about the traditional territories.

We must learn about destruction of our traditional territories—how clear-cut logging is affecting the water and land, the medicines and foods. We must learn how to repair the land and water using traditional methods and modern techniques. We must be out on the land to monitor the developments and destruction caused by them.

## **Spiritual Knowledge**

Since spiritual ceremonies for children were largely disrupted by colonization, parents insist that they and family members restore traditional growth and development practices and accompanying ceremonies, for example, puberty rites. They deem spiritual practices are paramount in training/learning process. Sweetwater shares her desires for her children. *Children, parents, and extended families must learn about and participate in our traditional ceremonies—sweat-lodge, winter dance, and all life*

*processes previously outlined (estxe, fasting, birthing, naming, first kill).* Metsukw described how her cousin, who was having alcohol and drug problems, became involved in the ceremonies (sweat-lodge and sundance) which, not only helped him to heal, but to learn the language (Secwepemctsin) in the sweat-lodge.

*Ceremonies have the power for natural healing and providing a sense of belonging. We need to know prayers, begin each day with a prayer, and always offer thanks. Practicing spirituality facilitates holistic healing of self and family. Learning Secwepemc songs and dances will come from participating in the ceremonies.*

Active participation in ceremonies, then, enables children and parents to acquire desirable values and qualities.

### **Acquisition of Values**

The parents identify Secwepemctsin (language) as the primary vehicle for instilling values since they are imbedded in the language. This means that parents, elders, and community members must lead by example by learning and speaking the language. This will ensure intergeneration transmission of language and values. Indigenous scholar, Dr. Marie Battiste (2002) confirms that “language is by far the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge” (p. 17) and “we cannot stand outside of Indigenous languages to understand Indigenous knowledge” (p. 17).

The parents identify the values they want their children and families to acquire:

- sharing (knowledge, material items)
- caring—for people and the land
- respect
- respect for the land
- honesty

- integrity—know right from wrong—the right to be who you are
- trust (feelings, beliefs)
- love (for self)
- faith in the traditional Secwepemc way of life that it will provide food and shelter for self, family, and community and courage to protect and preserve it
- belief in what you are doing
- have pride in what you are doing
- cooperation
- true to self (you can say “I am right .”)
- give something of yourself
- help others (contribute to the family and community)
- leave person/community more enriched after your contribution
- sense of responsibility
- personal autonomy

### **Acquisition of Qualities**

The parents anticipate that learning and participation in traditional activities and spiritual ceremonies will develop desirable qualities in themselves, their children, and their families. Desirable qualities include:

- ability to work hard
- perseverance
- self-sufficient
- independent thinker
- supportive (to family and to new people to community)
- self-responsible
- positive frame of mind
- ethical (children and parents, anyone involved with them)
- self-confident (in every situation)
- self-pride
- creative

### ***Who Taught the Children? Elders***

The whole family, report the Elders, were the teachers of children. Within traditional Secwepemc society, the extended family consisting of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins (on both mother's and father's side) assumed responsibility for the training/education of children and young adults. Children and young adults learned as a family. Elder Mary Thomas explains:

our family units were like a big circle, just the way we were treated as children—the mothers and fathers, the aunts and uncles, the grandparents, the cousins. We were all on the outside of that circle. In the middle was the little ones, and each one of them had the responsibility to help those little ones become part of the outer circle. And that builds the family really strong. (Thomas, 2000, p. 4)

Later on, parents become involved in economic activities away from home, such as becoming migrant workers and labourers, and grandparents undertook most of the caring and training of children. Grandparents rarely worked away from home.

### ***Who Will Teach? Parents***

As in traditional times, the parents advocate the family, extended family, and community members take responsibility for training/learning. According to the parents, *"People who hold knowledge are responsible for transferring and transmitting it."* They say a family learning together is paramount. Snewt explains:

Families would need to participate with their children and will be able to live our language on a daily basis, rather than learn it in a class room. This type of school or education can only be practiced by committed families and Secwepemc immersion teachers. Those families that are dedicated to bring their children up in as much in a traditional Secwepemc way as possible and to go with out western style comforts. To provide our selves with food, clothes and shelter. To live each season as our ancestors did.

## ***Where Will Learning Take Place? Parents***

Parents identify the traditional territory as training sites and are adamant that learning/training traditional activities take place on the land. Speqmic states:

I think that realistically the type of education that would be possible in our Secwepemc communities and Nation is to have a full-time Secwepemc immersion school based on the land and located appropriately according to the season and what our People would be doing at that time of the year: i.e., spring time—digging and drying roots, harvesting greens, medicines, etc.; summer time—mountains berry picking, building; fall time—fishing, hunting, drying meat, getting homes winterized and collecting fire wood, etc.; winter time—making baskets, storytelling, hunting, tanning hides, etc. Each season we would have a teacher or multiple Secwepemc immersion teachers skilled for the season, who would live at the site for 3-month intervals. Teachers would take part and teach the children and families for three months each for the total of 12 months.

Training sites would include:

Shelters can be built throughout the territory and used for hunting, berry pickings, and medicine gathering camps. Families, children, and community members could stay there for 2-3 weeks or longer. Since learning has to take place where the activity is conducted, people have to leave the reserve boundaries and go out on the land.

Elder Bill Arnouse confirms this and reminds us, “You can’t learn about the land from maps, you have to be out there” (personal communication, April 12, 1999). Tsutswey’e describes the ideal situation: “*being on the land, you learn how the different eco-systems—rivers, mountains, are connected and interdependent.*”

Rainy provides her ideas on training locations:

A larger underground pithouse will act as the common area for learning sessions, ceremonies, meals, etc., we could build smaller pithouses for families to live in. In the winter depending on size of student families the larger pithouse can be shared to get a better understanding about our

traditional practices where five or so families would live in one pithouse all winter. This type of living with your families everyday, learning together, being a part of a very crucial step in preserving our Secwepemc way of life and existence, is something very sacred and will connect the family in many different levels to become stronger and more true to our ways than before. The roles of each of the students will become prevalent. Each season will bring new Secwepemc words into our vocabulary that would only be taught and remembered and retained in the right context in actual living them in our everyday life.

Speqpmic further elaborates on where and how training/learning should take place.

A year of education the way that I propose is to live in our traditional underground pithouses and use these homes/shelters as the base to work out of and receive our education. This form of education would require families to be involved and take part in each season of teachings. The importance of families learning together with the children is that it has been found that when children go to a western school setting to learn our culture and language, they learn but when they go home the language is not spoken so our language doesn't become a spoken language. We need to learn with our children, speak to our children and community and not be scared or ashamed of who we are.

The time set aside for learning, just as the places where we learn, must be completely altered, so must the time we structure for learning/teaching.

Learning and teaching must take place at all times of year—throughout all seasons and at all times of the day and night. There will be no time limit for learning (we work until the activity is finished). Learning and teaching must take place as the opportunity arises, for example, if someone is making a canoe, go to that place to learn.

Parents point out the benefits of learning on the land. Lecetkwe explains:

Being on the land restores the relationship to it. The existence on Indian reserves disrupted the feeling of being comfortable on the land. The more you go out on the land, the more comfortable you will be out there. You will learn to pay attention to the surroundings. You won't fear the unknown. You will know the animals so well you will become one of them.

## **Part 2.**

### **Structure of the Program**

#### ***Learning Environment***

The parents affirm that the learning environment must be supportive and conducive to the acquisition of Secwepemc knowledge. Martin Brokenleg (1990) describes this as a “reclaiming environment that restores the element of trust and cooperation essential to whole person learning” (p. 31). The parents declare that learning must be approached with the heart, mind, emotion, and intellect. They add that the learning environment must be risk-free and boost self-esteem (not deflate it). Such an environment, they say, has the potential to develop the natural potential of all involved.

#### ***Physical Structure***

Throughout my study, the parents met in focus group meetings to articulate the components of a Secwepemc education/training program. They have outlined many aspects -such as the vision, philosophy, goals, and content; however, their ideas must be further developed into a formal, organized plan to ensure the program reaches fruition. This is especially important since Secwepemc culture and language are no longer fully practiced as a way of life. Much effort is needed to begin and maintain the restoration of Secwepemc knowledge and language. The parents agree that, although, they are planning a training model to restore Secwepemc knowledge and way of life, eventually it must evolve into a natural way of living.

As Sweetwater asserts:

I believe that in order for us to be Secwepemc is to live our way of life, we cannot just practice our culture as a religion or part-time hobby. It entails teaching our children the way of life our people, through everyday living, knew but we must relearn this bring it back into an everyday reality. We need to teach how to live our nomadic lifestyle through every season, through our ceremonies from conception until death, through harvesting, preparing and eating our traditional foods and gathering what is needed to survive the harsh Secwepemc winters, and to speak and continue to learn our Secwepemc language.

The parents agree that the education/training model be based on certain organizational principles. These principles include: shared decision-making (consensus), no hierarchal structure (Derrick, 2007), circle structure (Derrick, 2007), collective and shared responsibility, collaborative, family-based, politically autonomous (separate from colonizing bodies), free from interference, and self-sustainable. Such a structure will allow self-empowerment for individuals and families. Parent Iswell states, "We start from the family (following these principles) and expand into the community."

The parents identified one of the first steps in organizing is to create a family support network. Such a network is already happening among the parents but needs to be more organized. This network will be the organizing body to:

- outline the responsibilities of parents and family members;
- identify resource people with various skills/teachings to contribute and share;
- outline all necessary life processes, for example, *Etsce7*; naming, etc.;
- identify individuals or groups who will be responsible for carrying out necessary ceremonies;
- outline a year long plan with all traditional activities to learn;
- coordinate all activities and events;
- organize around events, such as the Winter dance (learn songs, harvest traditional food, learn the teachings of the ceremony);
- outline all resources and materials needed;

- assist individuals in developing self-learning plans;
- organize on-going meetings and gatherings to assess, evaluate, adapt, and monitor all activities.

Some activities will need to be highly structured. Since there are very few fluent language speakers, lessons will have to be organized to ensure the maximum number of people have the opportunity to learn the language in the most efficient manner.

Language self-learning can also be structured (finding language tapes, lessons, etc. for individual study). Mentoring with Elders and other knowledgeable people can also be structured. Teaching circles (such as drum making) can be planned as structured lessons.

### ***Required Resources***

The parents realize that the establishment of a Secwepemc education/training model will require considerable resources. Rainy identifies required resources.

*What we need in order to make this happen is committed Secwepemc immersion teachers, committed families to take part in preferably a 1-year commitment, but at least a minimum of three months. We need the resources to make this happen. We need to be able to pay the Secwepemc immersion teachers with a good salary. Money to pay for the cost of the living at the course, for food, vehicles, gasoline for travel, to build up the site and structures that will become the seasonal school and homes for the student families, transportation costs, supplies and tools for learning sessions.*

The parents advocate that they, as parents, extended family, and community members take responsibility for learning/training and do much of the organizing on a volunteer basis. They will seek out people who hold specialized knowledge and encourage them to share their teachings. Learners, however, must take the responsibility to seek out resource people to obtain knowledge in certain areas. Much

learning can take place within the group, the parents' state, "Since the teacher and student role is interchangeable and that all of them is a teacher/learner. In group activities, older children will be expected to take care of younger ones".

The parents, however, acknowledge that in order for a program to be sustainable some paid positions will be required. They determine that the program will need at least two paid positions: an overall program coordinator/Immersion teacher and fund-raising coordinator (the program will depend on fund-raising and contributions). Parents will work as a volunteer group on political issues, which will work toward the establishment of a traditional governance structure.

### ***Qualities and Skills***

According to the parents, the qualities of teachers and leaders involved in the program are just as, if not more, important as qualifications.

Children must know all the people involved in their learning/training and be intimate with them. All individuals involved in the program must live a healthy lifestyle—free of alcohol and drugs. Individuals must possess, or be working toward, strong life skills/inter personal skills. Individuals must be willing to undergo healing and know where to seek guidance. Strength in cultural and western knowledge (knowledge of colonization) is important. Pride in self and who he/she is and belief in Secwepemc knowledge are also desirable qualities. Individuals must possess an understanding and non-judgemental manner. Individuals must understand the "teaching/learning" process and have insight into child's life purpose and role so that the community could prepare the child into manhood or womanhood. Patience is a desirable quality as small but accomplished steps will be taken in the learning/teaching process.

## **Challenges**

The parents recognize there are many challenges in establishing a Secwepemc education/training model. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of fluent Secwepemctsin speakers to participate in the program. Many of the fluent speakers are elderly and cannot participate actively in such a program. There are very few qualified Secwepemc Immersion teachers. The parents, themselves, lack sufficient language skills. The challenge is finding enough fluent speakers who can teach Secwepemctsin on a daily basis in order for the parents and their children to become fluent speakers.

The economic situation of families presents further challenges. Many of the families are living at poverty level (social assistance). They do not have vehicles to go out on the land. They do not have the finances to fund trips out to the land or purchase necessary tools and equipment. Parents and families working together to pool resources can ease this situation.

There are social/emotional problems to overcome. Families must learn to work together, like they used to. Many of the younger generation (teenagers) are being lured into negative lifestyles (alcohol and drugs). Fenelon and LeBeau (1998) cite challenges found in Indigenous communities: destructive relationships, climate of futility, dysfunction of families and communities, living in constant survival mode, and imposed loss of purpose. Many of these are challenges we face in our communities. The healing strategies proposed by the parents in my study; however, will work toward improving the social/emotional conditions within the communities.

## Conclusion

Within this chapter, the Elders in my study provided much knowledge about Secwepemc child-rearing practices, teaching and learning methods, spiritual knowledge, Secwepemc values and qualities, ways knowledge was acquired, and people responsible for teaching the children. This knowledge is the basis for a Secwepemc education/training model designed by the parents in my study. The parents also provided their ideas on the same topics. Since most of the parents in my study are already actively involved in re-learning Secwepemc culture and language and possess some of the traditional teachings, their ideas on these topics were strikingly similar to the information provided by the Elders. There are many challenges to implementing this model of education/training. Some of which include: lack of fluent speakers of Secwepemctsin, very few Elders who hold traditional knowledge, lack of unfettered access and use of traditional territories, destruction of traditional territories, on-going colonization of institutions that Secwepemc participate in, the forced assimilation policies of all levels of government, and the imposed system of governance, namely, the Department of Indian Affairs.

The parents, however, are determined and committed to establishing a Secwepemc education/training model despite all the challenges. It will require a great deal of perseverance and dedication from these parents, their children, their families and the communities. The emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical benefits of restoring Secwepemc culture, language, identity, and land far outweigh the destructive effects of colonization and oppression.

## Chapter 7.

### Decolonization Strategies and Conclusions

Indeed this resistance will eventually succeed. And it will be finally successful when people are in total control of all the means of their physical, economical, political, cultural, psychological and spiritual survival, so we have to strengthen our capacity, and that of our children, to resist the evil. (Nguigi wa Thiong'o, quoted in Pavel, 2005, p. 128)

#### Introduction

As Secwepemc, we must uphold our responsibility to preserve, maintain, practice, and transmit our way of life to future generations. Restoring our philosophies, our knowledge, and traditional structures means restoring our identity which is key to the decolonization process. Cultural and language restoration strategies were presented in Chapter 6. These strategies were extrapolated from the interviews with Elders and parents. The Elders provided cultural knowledge/ teachings while the parents contributed their ideas on cultural and language restoration. This chapter presents decolonization strategies developed from contributions of parents and from the literature of Indigenous decolonization theorists and activists engaged in decolonization.

In order for true decolonization to occur, we need to develop a critical consciousness to free our minds and release ourselves from colonial domination and control. For this to happen, deep structural change must take place within our lives. We need to challenge colonial, settler institutions and their ideologies. We must challenge

institutions that uphold dominant EuroCanadian hegemony, including ones administered by our own people. We need to deconstruct the education, social, health, political, economic, spiritual, and cultural systems imposed upon us. If not deconstructed, our efforts in cultural restoration will be undermined. Since there are multiple forms of colonization and oppression, we need to employ multiple strategies of decolonization. The two parallel paths of restoration of traditional systems and an active decolonization agenda have the power to transform and heal our lives and, ultimately, our Nation and achieve our illusive goal of self-determination.

Restoring Secwepemc philosophy, culture, language, and all other aspects of our way of life is a major decolonization strategy. This chapter presents further decolonization and resistance strategies. The decolonization strategies presented in this chapter are not as exhaustive as the ones to restore Secwepemc culture, language, and identity. Much more work is needed in the decolonization process. We need to research traditional governance models and work toward their implementation. This will ensure we practice other traditional systems, such as health and economics, in an integrated and holistic model. We must educate and engage the people in on-going consultation, discussion and dialogue.

## **Theoretical Explanation of Research Results**

I analyzed the parents' comments from the focus groups and interviews from the lens of critical theory and indigenous decolonization. Critical theory, in its broadest sense, seeks to explain emancipation in circumstances of domination and oppression and work toward social transformation.

Indigenous decolonization theorists, such as Alfred (1999), Grande (2004), and Wilson (2005), provide understanding of the history and effects of colonization and propose remedies. Indigenous decolonization implies there is “an intergenerational component as trauma may have been accumulating in Indigenous families over the decades or centuries of intense struggle against assimilation or extinction” (*Indigenous decolonization*, n.d., ¶1). Indigenous theorists recognize that colonization still exists today in many forms and that Indigenous decolonization involves a holistic and integrated approach involving physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual healing.

In the focus group sessions and interviews, the parents did not view my research as an academic exercise, but rather were simply relating their lived experiences of colonization, oppression, and loss of language, culture, identity, way of life, and land. They clearly understood the role colonization played in their families and community, and even in the larger society. They showed much determination to overcome the negative effects of colonization in their generation. The parents were clear in their desire for their children and themselves to be educated/trained in all of our Secwepemc ways. Like Indigenous theorists, they insist that decolonization requires a holistic approach.

## **Colonization**

In order to actualize decolonization and resistance strategies, we must understand how colonization affected our people and how it continues to affect us. This section will present a brief description of how colonization has personally affected the Elders, parents, their families and communities. When we understand colonization, we can devise strategies to overcome its debilitating effects.

## ***Elders***

The Elders in my study spoke poignantly of the past when Elders were the teachers and were highly respected because of the knowledge they possessed and the role they held in the family and community. They describe how the Kamloops Indian Residential School experience instilled shame (of their culture, language, and family) into the children who attended which affected their ability or desire to transmit traditional teachings and language to their children and grandchildren.

The Elders say that although many Elders possess traditional knowledge and language, they will not admit to knowing things. They will not share or pass on teachings they possess. When only a few Elders will agree to share the traditional teachings, it decreases the pool of knowledge to draw from. A key example here is language knowledge. Very few Elders know the language associated with certain traditional activities, such as trapping, because these activities are no longer carried on and, hence, the specialized language is no longer used. Elder Mona Jules says, “The teachings don’t flow”, “Everything is stripped down”, and “The underlying teachings are not being taught—just the activity.” For example, one may learn to make a birch bark basket as an activity only, but he/she doesn’t learn the spiritual teachings (taking only what you need and giving thanks); the ecology of the land where materials are gathered; and the process needed to maintain integrity of the land (not destroying the tree). Another example she gives is that when making fish egg soup, the story that goes with it, is not being taught.

A contributing factor to the disruption of teaching/knowledge is that young people are not going out on the land with the Elders like they used to. William Ignace describes

his experience as a young man (personal communication, March 14, 2007). He reports that as a young man he was chosen to go with the Elders for months at a time. There he learned traditional skills such as trapping, hunting, making implements (snowshoes), and many other skills. He also learned the language (Secwepemctsin) associated with these activities. By being on the land, Wolverine also learned the place names (in Secwepemctsin) throughout the traditional territory. Now we have very few Elder males who can fill this teaching role.

The Elders recount the many factors contributing to the decreased practice of Secwepemc culture and language and subsequent breakdown of cultural transmission. The change in lifestyle from a traditional hunting/gathering culture to the adoption of an agricultural one was a major factor in this process. The establishment of the Indian reserve system, with our people being placed on small tracts of land and the indoctrination of agricultural skills at the residential school, greatly reduced the amount of knowledge and language gained from activities directly conducted on the land. Lack of access to sacred sites, the outlawing of ceremonies, and churches built on every reserve greatly reduced and almost eliminated the number of people practicing Secwepemc spirituality.

Many traditional knowledge keepers, the very old, who still retained knowledge of the old ways died during the many epidemics which swept throughout our territory. Elder Flora Sampson recalls that her all of her mother's nine siblings died in the flu epidemic, around the late 1800's. Flora's grandmother was the only survivor, which greatly reduced her family support system and that of her children and grandchildren. Another Elder laments the loss of language and knowledge which she attributes to all

the storytellers dying. The storytellers were generally the old people who ensured the children would hear the stories constantly and learn them.

Traditional Secwepemc way of life was transformed by inter-marriage (people married others from neighbouring Nations or non-Secwepemc). Many people moved to cities and took jobs as domestics, labourers, migratory workers and never returned to their communities. In *Windspeaker*, the late, highly respected Secwepemc Elder Mary Thomas explains, “and when I came out of that school (residential school), I really wanted to become like the white people. I didn’t want to go back to the reserve. I was really confused” (Thomas, 2000, p. 4). Mary Thomas eventually, due to pressure from her daughter, gradually became interested in learning about traditional Secwepemc way of life and started teaching others about it.

In our community, as the younger people show interest in learning Secwepemc culture and language, some Elders began to share their cultural teachings. We are fortunate that the Elders in my study are committed to the restoration of our culture, language, and all aspects of knowledge. They are willing to work with the young parents in realizing their vision of social, cultural, spiritual, and political change that will lead to harmonious relationships between individuals, families, communities, and the land.

### ***The Parents***

It is clear from parent interviews and discussions that parents recognize we are complicit in our own colonization and oppression by continuing to participate in foreign systems and institutions. They hold all levels of government (including band councils) and education institutions responsible for on-going colonization of our people. All of the parents withheld their children from attending public schools and even band controlled

schools at one time or another. The majority of them do not vote in band council elections. The majority of them were raised in homes where culture and politics were discussed on an every day basis.

Our institutions have adopted some aspects of the dominant society worldview. Indigenous educator Leanne Simpson (2004) describes this worldview as existing “in direct opposition to the foundation of Indigenous Knowledge” (p. 376). Indeed all aspects of Secwepemc way of life are not honoured or upheld in institutions our people participate in. Chief Atahm Immersion School is the only school, in our Nation, which upholds Secwepemc language and way of life.

One parent passionately describes her views on the education system as contributing to the on-going colonization of our people:

I feel that the current education system that is in place here in British Columbia is just a continuation of the government run Indian Residential School system. Instead now parents are sending their children to school to get colonized by the colonizers. Our Secwepemc children are still taken away every day to attend the white Canadian public school system, the white ways, language, history and culture indoctrinated into our children's minds, which inevitably influence their thoughts, actions and identity for the rest of their lives. The English language, the European history, the Canadian history that only focuses on white values are taught to our Secwepemc children. I feel that the current school system focus is on training the students to become “good upstanding Canadian citizens”, who will get an “education”, and get a good career so that they can work their way up into white European/Canadian society.

The problem with this is that Native Peoples are being colonized and assimilated every day because of these schools and our own Secwepemc ways not taught and passed on to the children. The students are taught that this land they are living on is Canada. Where I teach my children that this land is our land, it is Secwepemc land. The white school system teaches that you must find jobs in every sector of industry, such as mining, logging, tourism, service, which is all wreaking havoc on our territories. The public school

system is teaching nothing I want my children to learn. We, as the Secwepemc Nation, are failing in our responsibility to the land and future.

I am blessed to see this and refuse to send my children to the Canadian public school system.

## **Decolonization Strategies**

### ***Rebuilding Family Structures***

As a decolonization strategy, the parents stress the need to rebuild the extended family structure. Using their own personal family experiences, the parents explain how traditional social structures based on the family, extended family, and with the involvement of the whole community are now replaced largely by nuclear family structures. All of the parents interviewed in my study (except for two) do not have grandparents or great grandparents who speak the language or practice the traditional culture. Hence, they have no direct access to Secwepemc culture and language learning for themselves and their children. One parent explains:

It is hard to function thinking Secwepemc in a white man system. We must strengthen social structures of our people through healing from disconnection. If there is no healing colonization state of being will be the norm.

Participation in the Secwepemc education/training model, with its emphasis on the family, will help strengthen cooperation and *knucwetwecw* (helping each other) among families and communities.

## ***Development of Critical Consciousness***

The decolonization process, the parents assert, besides emphasizing the re-learning of Secwepemc language, culture, and way of life, requires the development of a critical consciousness. We must learn to think critically and resist the impact of cultural and all forms of oppression. Graham Smith (1997) states that we as Indigenous peoples, need to understand how and why we became complicit in our own oppression and domination. A critical consciousness will free us from dominant ideology and hegemony. We must refuse to accept and participate in institutions, organizations, and programs that are contrary to our values and beliefs. We must remain free from interference of oppressive and colonizing institutions.

## ***Healing Strategies***

Restoring physical, emotional, and spiritual health using traditional methods is a critical decolonization strategy. Traditional healing methods, diet, intense physical activity, participation in ceremonies, and developing interpersonal skills (communication) promoted in the Secwepemc education/training model will greatly restore the overall health of our people. The parents deem restoring emotional and spiritual health, largely suppressed by attendance at residential school, as paramount. They specify identifying and handling emotions an integral part of the healing process. Children and adults must learn outlets for their emotions, such as using the water even if it is as simple as taking time out to splash with water if having a bad day or sitting under a red willow tree, which takes negative emotions. Since the repression of emotions was inherited from parents and grandparents who attended residential school, strategies on restoring emotional intelligence are being practised by at least one parent who shares her knowledge with

the other parents. One parent has pursued the development of emotional intelligence from Indigenous educator, Lee Brown (2004), who has written extensively on this topic.

The parents recognize that some healing is taking place; for example, they say that as parents, they are more involved with their children than their parents were with them. They, as parents, ensure their children are being raised in safe environments; spend more time with their children; and arrange for their children to obtain as much cultural training as possible. The parents, however, agree that healing from the trauma of residential schools, dysfunctional families, alcohol abuse, and family violence is critical to decolonization and to the restoration of Secwepemc culture, language and identity. As Sweetwater states:

The first step is to heal from colonization—after years of disconnection (resulting from trauma of colonization)—murders, rapes, residential schools, abandonment, 1960s scoop of children). We must connect with children first, then listen, truly feel for them. Everything will grow and develop from there.

Restoring relationships destroyed by colonization is one of the steps to decolonization. In her study of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, Haig-Brown (1988) describes how this institution purposely impaired our ability to feel and express emotions. In this writing, she quotes Prentice and Houston as stating: “Their education must consist not merely of the training of the mind, but of a weaning from the habits and *feelings* of their ancestors, and the acquirements of the language, arts, and customs of civilized life” (p. 25, italics added).

The feelings we develop about Secwepemc way of life, are extremely important to the parents. They stress that parents and children must believe in and be proud of

what they are learning; that they must value the cultural teachings. Family relationships, they say, are critical to children's' development. Rainy states:

The home influence has a big impact on how children will develop and learn. If they are taught "right", they will develop self-confidence and assertiveness and these values will stay with them in all situations. So, they suggest, "always work toward enhancing self-confidence and self-awareness". We need to build trusting relationships so Keep your kids close to you.

Part of the healing process, according to the parents include: clear and open communication; clear roles and responsibilities; possessing and practicing common core values; agree upon principles of child-rearing and teaching/learning; consistency (in discipline, etc.). They believe that parents must lead by example.

Madame Erica-Daes, who has studied colonization extensively, confirms their ideas. She states, "I am convinced that strong, healthy and loving families are indispensable to the survival of Indigenous cultures" (2000, p. 3) and "genuine decolonization can only be achieved by a means that involves the genuine, deserved love and respect of the children for their elders and grandparents" (p. 3).

### ***Political Strategies***

The parents agree with Alfred (1999) who states that we must do more than cultural revitalization. He writes:

the social ills that persist are proof that cultural revitalization is not complete; nor it is in itself a solution. Politics matters: the imposition of Western governance structures and the denial of indigenous ones continue to have profoundly harmful effects on indigenous people. Land, culture, and government are inseparable in traditional philosophies; each depends on the others, and this means that denial of one aspect precludes recovery for the whole. Without a value system that takes traditional teachings as the basis for government and politics, the recovery will never be complete. (p. 2)

The parents, the majority of whom are politically active, recognize that we need to develop the political will to respond to old and new forms of colonization. New forms of colonization include band council governance and the programs they administer; living on the reserve being governed by a band council system; and having direct experience with oppressive policies and practices. These infrastructures, they contend, must be dismantled or they will continue to undermine efforts to strengthen us and will incapacitate the goal of decolonization and self-determination. According to Taiaiake Alfred (1999) one of the steps of decolonization is to remove ourselves from direct state control—in our case, the band councils who receive their governing mandates from the Canadian Federal Government (Department of Indian Affairs) and impose them on the people.

The parents identify restoration of traditional governance as a major decolonization strategy. This strategy is supported by Indigenous scholars who have written on decolonization and self-determination. Alfred in Grande (2004) states, “Returning the politics of Native communities to an Indigenous basis means nothing less than reclaiming the inherent strength and power of indigenous governance systems, and freeing our collective souls from a divisive and destructive colonized politics” (p. 169). Fenelon and LeBeau (1998) advocate learning how traditional systems were undermined, adapted, and changed into modern social practices (p. 47). Now, they say, we have individual and manipulated leadership (band councils) which replaced community responsibility.

Any governance structure to implement must be based on our ways of thinking and according to our values. One of the incremental steps in implementing traditional governance is transforming the decision-making process. Consensus decision-making,

on all areas of importance to the people, must be restored. No important decisions can be made by a few people (band councils). The people must become the source of legitimate power. Villebrun (2006) provides Patricia Montour's advice:

In order to shake up our communities and get them thinking as communities again, relying on themselves instead of bureaucracies, all that needs to be done is to shift the pieces so the "common" answer, depending on the colonizer, is no longer available. It is out of this chaos that change will come. (p. 19)

Another important consideration in implementing traditional governance is spiritual guidance. Traditionally, the people and the various leaders relied on the advice and guidance of spiritual people (medicine people) who had access to knowledge that was not available to the average person. Since colonization has disrupted the training of medicine people, this will be an important aspect of the Secwepemc education/training model.

### ***Recovery of Land***

The recovery of traditional territories is crucial, not only to decolonization, but to the restoration of Secwepemc culture, language, and identity. This means we must have free and unfettered access to our traditional territories. One of the strategies outlined by parents is reclaiming land by occupying it. They maintain:

building sites on the land will assert our title to our lands and resources, these sites will connect the Secwepemc to the land. We have to set up homes and learning/training sites on the land that are not dependent on western society (funds, policies, etc.)

The recovery of land is vital to breaking the cycle of poverty and dependence created by the alienation of our lands and disruption of traditional ways of living on the land. These

strategies will work to protect traditional territories from destruction. One parent states her strong views on protecting the land.

In my views on Secwepemc education, cultural revitalization is of the utmost importance in educating of our Secwepemc children. But along with learning and reviving our culture comes the responsibility of also defending and protecting our lands and territories which our culture flows from. So teaching our children to live our way of life not only means to practice our culture but to understand in the fullest context that this is our survival and only with a land base can we continue to survive. This is what the white school wants us to forget.

### ***Resistance Strategies***

According to one of the parents, resistance is “creating and bringing back a strong sense of self” and “to be able to see beyond the oppressive structures of the western world”. One of the strongest resistance strategies they argue is:

having a group of Secwepemc educated people will create a strong support system with similar beliefs, values, and principles, who are motivated toward the same goals. Living our traditional way of life and resisting non-Secwepemc beliefs, values, and philosophy contributes to decolonization.

The parents focus on the family as being responsible to carry out resistance strategies.

One parent elaborates, *Begin with the center—the babies—children. Protect the Secwepemc in them. Prohibit violence around young (bullying, name-calling, abuse, authoritarian/ domination of learning and life energy).*

Resisting mainstream economics and promoting alternatives is another strategy the parents outline.

Through surviving on our own economy, we will problem solve through new obstacles and adapt on a personal and family level to our old customs. We will

restore our food, tools, hunting, child welfare, nutrition, health, human resources—therapists, doctors, and healers.

### ***Mobilization Strategies***

To mobilize people toward decolonization, the parents said

Start with families and eventually expand into the community. We must appeal to the moral strength of people (their responsibilities as Secwepemc); however, that means beginning with people who are ready as we cannot wait until all agree. We must make cultural/spiritual activities available to all people. The youth, especially, need to be targeted. We have to find what they are interested in and "hook" them. All people must be invited to join gatherings, workshops, teaching circles, etc. Talking to people on a one-on-one basis is the preferable method of communication. The ultimate goal is to "grow a critical mass of culturally knowledgeable and decolonized Secwepemc".

Parents list some basic indicators that we are being decolonized which include:

Secwepemctsin is spoken by all ages (as a natural language); it is being transmitted to younger generations; ceremonies are being practiced; families are healthy; communities are self-sustained; and the land is being protected. In my conclusion, I present their criteria of what a "trained" (and hence, decolonized) Secwepemc would look like.

True decolonization will require commitment, uncompromising work ethic, dedication, love for self, family, community and the land. Education/training plays a significant role in decolonization. This requires practicing the traditional teachings and ensuring our daily activities work toward decolonization. Cree Elder Ermine (1995) promotes a vision of social change that leads to harmony (of the people and land) rather than control over environment. He reminds us that we have a responsibility and birthright to take and develop an epistemology congruent with holism.

Madame Eric Daes (2000), United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Heritage of Indigenous Peoples, speaking on the Aztec experience of colonization cites Tezozomuc, Aztec historian, who told his people as long as fragments of their heritage and history survived in the memories and hearts of their people, there was still hope of recovering what seemed to be lost (p.3). Daes words leave us with hope. She says “centuries of foreign occupation and oppression cannot destroy a people’s heritage, if they continue to cherish it and believe in it.

Aboriginal judge Murray Sinclair eloquently outlines our responsibilities:

Aboriginal people are not without hope, for we are strong peoples. We have overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in our long and painful histories, because our creator has given us the tools necessary for our survival. We must not be shy to use them. We must no longer feel the shame and fear that our grandmothers and grandfathers felt about what we are and where we have come from. We must look to ourselves for our own guarantees, for we are the only ones that we can trust to ensure our needs are met. (quoted in Lanigan, 1998, p. 104)

## **Engaging the People**

The extent to which we can fully implement this model of Secwepemc education/training will depend on the will of the people. We need to draw on Secwepemc values of courage, perseverance, cooperation, self-responsibility, and hard work as we begin this work. We need courage to defend our position, to do what is necessary to create a better future, and we need to stop defending our way of life.

Restoring a way of life dismantled by colonization, and all of its pathological effects, aggravated by living with oppression for over 150 years seems an overwhelming undertaking. Many of our people have become accustomed to EuroCanadian lifestyles. Incremental and gradual steps will be necessary to work toward restoring our way of life.

Sharing my research information and educating as many people as possible will be a first step. Indigenous educators, such as Grande (2004), Alfred (1999), Wilson (2005), and Battiste (2002) have contributed much knowledge on colonization, oppression, and loss of traditional ways of living, which needs to be shared among our people.

We need to set goals and take risks to reach them. We need to identify uncompromising leaders who will motivate and empower the people and community organizers who will ensure the needed work is carried out. The parents and Elders in my study have demonstrated leadership in restoring our way of life and working toward decolonization. They will be the core group to lead the revitalization efforts. Without leadership, the people may be left floundering and lose sense of direction.

We can begin by engaging our people on a gradual basis. We need invite them to participate in all cultural, spiritual, political, and social gatherings within the communities. These gatherings will facilitate their gradual learning about our traditional way of life.

Active involvement of the people is crucial to their continued engagement. One of the critical tasks will be to organize on-going gatherings where we can discuss and debate what will comprise our collective core values and beliefs until we reach consensus. As we agree on these values and beliefs, we can plan on how they will be integrated within our family, cultural, spiritual, educational, and political systems.

## **When Will We Know We Have Reached Our Goal?**

As we work toward the restoration of our way of life and toward decolonization, we can determine when this goal is reached when all Secwepemc strive to acquire the

knowledge, language, values, beliefs, and qualities that the parents deem a “trained Secwepemc” would possess. These include:

- have Secwepemc identity—know who they are—know their families
- know their ancestors’ history
- know where they belong - to the land, to the Nation
- know the land
- be connected to the land and the people
- love the land
- know our history pre-contact/contact,
- be decolonized (know historical events that contributed to colonization)
- be good ambassadors/ know protocols
- be healed
- be strong and healthy (physical, emotional, spiritual, mental)
- be physically strong—eat good food (traditional) —alcohol and drug free—emotionally and spiritually healthy—work hard
- participate regularly in sweat lodges and ceremonies
- be knowledgeable about diseases e.g., diabetes and how to prevent them
- be open-minded—see things clearly from regular participation in sweat-lodge
- possess cultural skills (building a traditional shelter—winter home)
- possess cultural values (respect for people and land and culture, be fearless, confident, comfortable in any situation)
- know their responsibilities and act on them
- be self-sufficient, able to provide for themselves, family, and community in all areas (housing, food, etc.)
- practice traditional sustenance skills e.g., hunting, food and medicine gathering
- be independent and interdependent (helping each other)
- *etsxe* (and other puberty training)
- participate in ceremonies
- know the boundaries of the territory; know the markers and the stories behind them

- be knowledgeable about cultures from around the world
- be environmentally conscious
- be a leader
- nurture strong family and kinship ties
- speak Secwepemctsin
- serve as a vast repository of tribal knowledge
- participate in traditional governance

Wilson (2005) asks the question, “How is it that our spiritual ancestors will recognize and claim us?” The answer, for us, he says depends on our ability to train our people to recover our knowledge and lands and “work toward building future generations whose essence will be recognizable to the Elders who came before us” (p. 77). Indeed, when we acquire and practice the necessary Secwepemc knowledge, language, skills, values, and qualities, our spiritual ancestors will recognize us.

## **Further Research**

Much research is needed to restore our way of life. Cultural skills along with the accompanying values and beliefs, long neglected, need to be re-learned and practiced. We need to approach cultural experts and anyone who holds this knowledge to share with the rest of us. This can take the form of mentoring or community workshops. Whoever gains the knowledge must share with family and other community members.

Research on spiritual training must be conducted by certain people in the family who can help their family and community members undergo spiritual ceremonies. There are a small number of people within our Nation who still hold this knowledge and they must be sought out.

We need knowledge on appropriate emotional healing techniques and practices which will help release intergenerational trauma and increase self-esteem and self-confidence. Traditionally, our medicine people's practices assisted in emotional and spiritual healing.

One example that comes to mind is grieving customs. Our people undertook certain practices to assist people in the grieving process so that they could release grief. This is especially important today as there are many deaths within our communities.

We need to research traditional governance/leadership models. Some of this information can be obtained from Indigenous researchers and some from Elders who hold this information from their Elders. Included in this research will be models of decision-making and communication. Leadership based on traditional values will emerge from restoring these models.

## **Conclusion**

The Europeans took our land, our lives, and our children like the winter snow takes the grass. The loss is painful but the seed lives in spite of the snow. In the fall of the year, the grass dies and drops its seed to lie hidden under the snow. Perhaps the snow thinks the seed has vanished, but it lives on hidden, or blowing in the wind, or clinging to the plant's leg of progress. How does the acorn unfold into an oak? Deep inside itself it knows—and we are not different. We know deep inside ourselves the pattern of life. (Hampton, quoted in Battiste, 2001, p. 197)

As this journey comes to the end, a new one begins; a journey to find our rightful place, to restore what was lost in our lives, to stop existing and begin living. I reflect on all strength and courage of my people who survived incredible odds—colonization, oppression, and the near-loss of our language, culture, identity, way of life, and the land.

We survived and are still here today. We know Coyote and Old One will one day return to help us. The Elders and parents in my study have the Coyote spirit. Like Coyote, they are strong and resilient.

My research set out to unearth Secwepemc ways of training/educating and teachings that we had. My aim was to identify ways to restore the teachings, language, culture, identity and land to families and communities and present the findings in a model, which include an active decolonization agenda.

I began by examining my research method. Employing decolonizing methods was extremely important in my research. Active involvement of the participants, the Elders and parents, in designing a model of Secwepemc education/training was paramount in my project. Furthermore, my research was meaningful, practical, and useful, and I was determined that it not remain on a bookshelf collecting dust.

The Elders provide the traditional Secwepemc teachings. They speak of their own experiences being raised when our people still practiced, to a moderate degree, our way of life. The Elders share child-rearing strategies, learning/teaching methods, and acquisition of spiritual knowledge, values, and qualities. They explain how traditional knowledge systems were disrupted as a result of colonization. From my research and discussion with the Elders, it is clear that they are committed to regaining their traditional roles of teachers and mentors and assisting the parents and children in the teaching/learning process.

The parents contribute their ideas on how we can recover and maintain Secwepemc knowledge, language, ways of life, and the land. They are determined to rebuild and maintain their connection to Secwepemc culture, language, identity, and the

land. Their approach is holistic involving physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects. They want to ensure Secwepemc teachings, denied to them, will not be denied to their children and grandchildren. The parents describe ways that Secwepemc knowledge and language continue to be disrupted and factors which contribute to the on-going colonization of our people. They propose various decolonization strategies.

My intent, in undertaking this project, is to create space where traditional Secwepemc knowledge, language, values, beliefs, and philosophy are restored, maintained, and practiced; where they become a way of life; and where they are successfully transmitted to present and future generations. The Elders teachings combined with the parents' contributions provide the basis for a Secwepemc education/training model grounded in Secwepemc philosophy, based on the family and on the land. The parents propose that with this transformation, the recovery of traditional systems of governance, economics, and health will transpire as will the recovery of territories. This revived community of autonomous and self-determined people will work toward the ultimate goal of self-determination.

My hope is to empower our people to challenge and confront the colonizing, oppressive, and dominant forces in all areas of our lives, which continually marginalize individuals, families, and communities and displace us from our lands. My hope is to motivate the people to question how we ought to live. Do we want to continue labouring under the yoke of colonialism and oppression or do we want to become a free and self-determined Nation? If we decide to be Secwepemc, it means upholding our responsibilities to always look after the land, language, culture, people, and sacred laws. We must respect and honour the legacy of knowledge and responsibilities handed down

by the ancestors. Today the Confederated Okanagan/Shuswap Declaration reminds us of our duties. Our Elders are also the living connection to our past.

We must honour the wisdom of our Elders and allow their knowledge its rightful place. We must no longer allow ourselves to be alienated from our knowledge, language, and ways of life. We must heed the words of Indigenous educators, such as, Marie Battiste (2002) as she proclaims, “without Indigenous languages and knowledge, Indigenous communities can do little to recover their losses and transform their Nations based on the legitimate base of their knowledge and languages” (p. 191).

In reclaiming our ways of training/education, we must reject Eurocentric views of intellectual superiority and cognitive imperialism. Battiste (2002) advocates that we develop our own ways of knowing and being, rather than accept curricula in mainstream education whose purpose is “forging conceptions of Indigenous peoples with frozen or fabricated identities” and which provide “distorted histories that marginalize Indigenous peoples, and ‘romanticized or stereotyped Indigenous realities” (p. 190). Like, Grande (2004) who has developed a ‘red pedagogy”, we must develop a Secwepemc pedagogy based on Secwepemc values and which includes a decolonization agenda to facilitate transformative action.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A.

### Confederated Traditional Okanagan—Shuswap Nations Declaration

#### CONFEDERATED TRADITIONAL OKANAGAN-SHUSWAP NATIONS DECLARATION

We, the Sovereign Traditional People of the Okanagan and the Shuswap Territories Declare at this time Our Position to be Known Before All People of the World. We Stand Together as one Under Four Hereditary Chiefs:

N' kwala

A' tum

N' hum chin

Chil Heetza I

In their declared relationships with the Royal Crown of England there are three witnesses that the relationship between our Nations and the Royal Majesty continues without diminishment:

1. The Rising and Setting of the Sun;
2. The Great Waters which continues to Flow through our land on its way to the ocean;
3. The Flying of the Royal Flag of the Imperial Crown. It is our understanding that these would always bear witness to the truth of our Relationship and is now Symbolized in the Royal Coat-of-Arms of British Columbia granted by King Edward VII in 1906. This is our stated position as it was then and is now.

We Declare that this stated position is Protected and Insured to us through our Four Hereditary Chiefs Agreement with the Crown of England which insured Peaceful Coexistence with our subjects. The Okanagan Nation and the Shuswap Nation are Sovereign Nations. This originates from the Creator when he places us on this Island in our Territory; We were given instructions under which our people have lived in Health from time untold. These instructions are contained in the Teaching of Coyote. It is through our Values that we live under the instruction of the Creator. Our values form the foundation of our survival.

Therefore, our first responsibility is to protect our Spirituality. Our People are a Sacred Trust, countless Generations to come will carry the Sacred Trust of our Values from one generation to the next to keep it a living thing.

Therefore, our second responsibility is to protect our Future Generation. Our Culture is a Sacred Trust. The Values carried by Generation of our People are passed through the Language, Customs and Knowledge that we practice in our daily lives.

Therefore, our third Responsibility is to protect our Culture. The Land is a Sacred Trust. Our Knowledge and Customs are Understood and Practiced in our relationship with our land and in that way it Protects and Ensures our survival and, therefore, it is the Living Body of our Spirituality. It is our mother nourishing us in all ways; Physical, Spiritual, Mental, and Emotional.

Therefore, our fourth responsibility is to Protect our Land. We hold these truths to be the truths upon which we stand as one.

We have never knowingly sold our title to our land or the Rights to use or the resources on it. We never made any Agreements which give any other Nation the right to take any of these Lands and Resources into their possession.

We have never lost a war with any Nations. No Nation can claim any of our lands by conquest. We have never given consent to join any other Nation of the World.

We will never surrender our Right to carry the Instructions and Responsibilities the Creator gave to us. We will never betray our Children. We will never consent to Extinguish Our Sovereignty to any Nation.

We are Declaring Our position before ALL Nations of the World in Peace as our Four Hereditary Chiefs declared before the Crown of England.

We declare that the Relationship of the Crown of England to the Okanagan and Shuswap Nations was of mutual Respect and Peace with her Subjects, one that Upholds and Protects and Ensures the Sovereignty and any of the above mentioned Rights.

This is Witnessed by the Flag that Continues to Fly over Britian and is Vested in the Royal Promises made to these Four Chiefs that it would remain so as long as the Great Waters Continues to Flow and as long as the Flag of Britain continues to Fly.

We do not recognize a Relationship with any other Nation of the World, as long as these Witnesses stand.

We shall stand as one behind This Declaration. Only the Crown of England has the Rights to Changes in its relationships with us only through Meetings and Agreeing with the Hereditary Descendants of those four Chiefs behind whom we stand and rejuvenate the original relationship.

We will never consent to Surrender or Sell our Land. No one has the right to sell what we collectively own.

We will continue to Live on and Use Lands in ALL our Territories. We will Live our Spirituality and Share it and Pass it on to ALL who Desire to live it. We will practice our Rights to hunt, fish, pick berries, dig roots, and to use the resources of our lands.

We will Practice our Ways and Teach Our Children our Ways.

We will use Our Language and Protect it. We will care for and Respect each other and Protect each others.

We will Protect our land.

We will continue to live as Sovereign People and Never Surrender under ANY circumstances.

These are Our Rights.

Only the Creator could Take away these Rights.

We Speak As One.

/s/ Tommy Gregoire (Okanagan-Shuswap)

/s/ John Terbasket (Similkameen-Okanagan)

/s/ W.A. Arnouse (Shuswap)

/s/ William Chilheetza (Okanagan)

Ratified in Good Faith at Alkali Lake, B.C., on  
8<sup>th</sup> December 1986.

## Appendix B.

### Questions for Elders

#### Acquisition of Knowledge

1. What did traditional Secwepemc education/training/teachings consist of?  
What was education based on? Land? Natural laws?
  
2. What were some of the methods/strategies of transmitting knowledge?  
Indirect teaching, hands—on, example, trial and error?  
Immediate? Contemplation time needed? Shown once? Lots of repetitions  
Expecting the young to be responsible? Natural consequences?  
What were the most effective ways of gaining knowledge?  
Why were successful?  
  
How did young people gain knowledge?  
Practical knowledge (e.g., making tools)?  
Spiritual knowledge (e.g., ceremonies)?  
Morals and values (e.g., stories)?  
  
How were the values instilled?  
How were values and beliefs instilled? Using examples of people  
Actions? Feats?
  
3. What were the essential components of “education” ?Moral teaching, etc.  
What was important for a young Secwepemc person to know?
  
4. What are the common core Values—hard work, cooperation  
Beliefs?  
How were these values taught? Practiced?  
How was self-esteem developed?
  
5. Who as responsible for teaching/learning? How did it happen?  
One-on-one, small groups,
  
6. How was the ecosystem involved in acquiring knowledge? Some example?

7. How can these teachings be instilled? Practiced? Today  
What are some practical examples?  
Can they be adapted to today?
8. What would a modern program consist of? Survival skills, English, etc.

### **Loss of Knowledge**

1. What contributed to the loss of Secwepemc knowledge?
2. What major events were responsible for loss of Secwepemc knowledge?
3. Who was responsible for loss of knowledge?
4. Who/What was responsible for loss of culture and language? Colonization

## Appendix C.

### Research Questions for Parents

#### ***Questions to Access Present Situation***

1. What is wrong with the present system of education for Secwepemc?
2. What are the inequalities/injustices?
3. Who/what system is/are responsible for inequalities/injustices?
4. What is contributing to the declining rate of language and culture?
5. What is preventing people from speaking language and practicing culture?

#### ***Questions Related to Philosophy of Secwepemc Education?***

1. What does it mean to be Secwepemc?
2. What would constitute a Secwepemc education?
3. What would an educated Secwepemc person look like?
4. What would compose of a liberatory education for the Secwepemc?

#### ***Questions Related to Components of Secwepemc Education***

1. What skills, value, beliefs would be included in a Secwepemc education program?
2. To what extent is healing intergenerational trauma necessary pre-condition to education?
3. What kinds of teaching/learning strategies are most conducive in a Secwepemc model of education/
4. How do we teach students to achieve excellence, be culturally motivated, proud?
5. What common core values, beliefs, and principles should we possess and practice?
6. How can these values be incorporated into an education program and extend to the family and community?

7. What traditional knowledge—practical, intellectual, mental, and spiritual knowledge should Secwepemc students/people possess?
8. How can these skills be developed?
9. To what extent should Western knowledge be included in Secwepemc education?
10. What kind of qualities and skills should teachers and leaders possess?
11. What are the priorities and how should they be ranked?

***Questions Related to Responsibilities***

1. How can we resist the on-going colonization of our institutions—education, social structures and governance?
2. What are the processes that maintain colonization? Hegemony?
3. How can Secwepemc be empowered to develop an empowering model of education?
4. What are the processes needed to develop this model?
5. What kinds of incremental changes can be made in restructuring Secwepemc education?
6. Who will be responsible for developing this model?
7. How can education/training/learning be extended into the community?
8. How can “education centers” be sites of indigenous sovereignty/self-determination?
9. How can we ensure Secwepemc education embodies a pedagogy rooted in the land?
10. How can we ensure we have free and unfettered access to undisturbed land within our traditional territories for land/culture based education?
11. What are the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual effects of not restoring Secwepemc knowledge and not implementing a decolonizing agenda.

***Questions Relating to Evaluation***

1. How will a restructured model of education lead to emancipation/self-determination?
2. How can we ensure Secwepemc knowledge is protected and successfully to future generations?
3. What are the basic indicators that Secwepemc knowledge is being maintained?