

TRADITIONAL WAYS SHUSWAP PEOPLE IDENTIFIED AND NURTURED GIFTED  
AND TALENTED GIRLS: SHUSWAP EMINENT WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

Much of the literature on First Nations education is written by Euro-Canadians. However, in recent years, American Indian scholars have initiated research on gifted and talented First Nations children. The purpose of this paper is to present eminent Shuswap womens' perspectives of traditional ways gifted and talented girls were identified and nurtured over their lifetime.

Seven eminent Shuswap Elder women from the Interior of British Columbia, whose gifts and talents were identified and nurtured form the nucleus of the study. Because Shuswap people traditionally have an oral culture very little was written of the Shuswap peoples' experiences, therefore, interviewing was deemed the most appropriate research technique. Through the Elder's own words, the experiences of the identification and nurturance of their gifts and talents in the four phases of life (childhood, adolescence, adult, Elder) are presented.

The Elders were selected to represent various time periods and several different bands of the Shuswap Nation. All of them have been recognized for their service to the people locally, provincially, or nationally.

The most outstanding feature which is revealed by this study is the extent to which the Elders struggled to stay on the path paved for them throughout their lives since their grandparents identified their gifts and talents. Their struggles may be viewed the same way First Nation people continue their fight for their aboriginal rights.

The need to continue the work of preserving, recording, perpetuating and enhancing the Shuswap language, history and culture is shown here. Implications for further qualitative research are numerous. From specific aspects of culture such

as the Shuswap concept of giftedness and the traditional ways Shuswap people identified and nurtured boys to more general comparisons of finding a national First Nations concept of giftedness or trying to determine how band-operated schools are trying to identify and nurture their gifted and talented students, there are many possibilities. What has emerged is strong individuals and cultural group healing, adapting and surviving very well despite the dark ages.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

### Problem Statement

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Shuswap womens' perspectives of the traditional educational practices in the stories which they tell of their experiences as being identified as being gifted and talented. The three main significant concepts which emerge from the data gathered through the interviews with seven eminent Shuswap Elders, who range in age from their sixties to nineties, are the Shuswap definition of giftedness, the identification of their gifts and talents and nurturance of them over their lifetime.

Since I am presenting the traditional lives of seven eminent Shuswap women, I thought it best to discuss each phase of their life as presented in the medicine wheel. The traditional way many First Nation cultures relate how the unfolding and development of each individual's gifts and talents is discussed in the medicine wheel as presented by Bopp, Bopp, Brown and Lane's (1984), *The Sacred Tree*. The direction for *The Sacred Tree* was set at a conference held in Lethbridge, Alberta in 1982. The authors claim that almost all traditional societies used the symbol of the medicine wheel. However, in some First Nations societies they prefer to use the term holism rather than medicine wheel. One of the symbolic tools which exemplify the ways in which many First Nations people see the interconnectedness of our being with the rest of creation, is the medicine wheel. Although there are a number of models to choose from, this model was developed by many First Nations people over a two year period. To show the interconnectedness of all things, they used many relationships of four, such as the

four cardinal directions. The medicine wheel was used to provide purpose and understanding in life. It also served as a reminder that the four aspects to our nature, the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual, were like seeds that have the potential to grow into powerful gifts if we use our "volition" and receive the nurturance and guidance from our Elders and loved ones. Everyone was responsible for ensuring that they were active participants in the unfolding of the potentialities. For if they failed to do so, their gifts would remain hidden. It was also taught that by looking "deeply within your own being, using the medicine wheel as a mirror, (it was) an image of your strengths and weaknesses and a vision of what you could become" (p. 37). The struggle that the people went through was rewarded by the development of their gifts to ensure that they were a knowledgeable, responsible and independent member of the community. Moreover, the development of each individual's gifts, particularly those with exceptional abilities, would not only contribute to and enhance their society, but would ensure their survival as a people.

In an attempt to keep within the framework of the medicine wheel as presented in *The Sacred Tree*, only the discussions of the traditional teachings at the four ages of development (childhood, adolescence, adult, and Elder) will be presented both in the chapter on First Nations Traditional Literature Review and in the Data Analysis chapter.

However, it appears imperative to clarify some of the misconcepts about First Nation societies. Haig-Brown (1986) asserts that nearly all of the early works by Europeans led people to believe that First Nations societies were "inferior and primitive." She argues that:

Few researchers writing of Native people have taken the time to develop the trusting and understanding relationships necessary for open communication and meaningful interviews. Anthropologists have fared somewhat better in presenting the life experiences of Native people. Although some studies suffer inaccuracies through their attempts to present a comprehensive study of Native cultures across the country (Jenness, 1963), others such as those of James Teit (1900, 1909) are in direct contrast. Fluent in a number of Native languages and married to a member of the Thompson Nation, Teit in his life work with the people of the Interior of B.C. has provided invaluable resources on traditional life styles considered accurate by both Native and Euro-Canadian historians (p. 7).

Haig-Brown (1986) has revealed that too often researchers and historians consult documents written by early European explorers, missionaries and anthropologists in trying to obtain information on the early lives of First Nations people. She asserts that talking to the First Nations people that are still here would be a better means of garnering information about their history and culture.

Further to this, Niethammer (1977) found that most of the work done regarding First Nations women in earlier times were obtained from men. She argues that:

Certainly the best information on what it was like to be an Indian woman in early America would be that obtained from Native American women themselves. Unfortunately the very early American left no written histories. The earliest accounts we have of the Native Americans were reports made by early European missionaries and explorers. Being almost exclusively male, these writers concentrated on the male roles in Native American society.

Modern anthropologists - again mostly male - have continued this tendency to consider women's activities as uninteresting and irrelevant....Additionally, much of the information that was gathered on women's activities came from male informants (p. xiii).

Niethammer (1977) has shown that written literature on First Nations women were mostly done by men who never took the time to understand or

examine what the women's roles were in traditional First Nations societies. It appears the male writers just did not think the women were of any importance.

Bataillie and Sands (1984) has found that the literature written about First Nations women were inaccurate. She asserts that the sources of such biased evaluation of the status of women in Indian culture is not difficult to discover. They cite Kidwell, who argues convincingly,

The positions of women in European societies, largely derived from Judaic and Christian ideals of womanhood, led European men to overlook the power that Indian women could wield in their own societies. The idea of the roles of Indian women in their own societies that emerges from the literature in which women tell their own stories contradicts the usual stereotypes of the subservient and oppressed female (p. viii).

Support for this view comes from other American Indian women today:

If the roles of American Indian women in their own societies and society at large are to be analyzed with fairness and accuracy, we must take a closer look, not from an outsider's viewpoint but through modes of expression within tribal society. Indian women's autobiographies offer, in both methodology and content, an intimate look into the lives of these women (p. viii).

Bataille and Sands (1984) have shown that First Nations women in nearly all traditional societies held equal status to the men. Although their roles were clearly defined, they worked in partnership and both were valued and necessary for survival.

Many people today are totally unaware of the valuable contributions that First Nations people gave to society. Lowes' (1986) *Indian Giver, A Legacy of North American Native Peoples*, gives a well documented account of these contributions which he categories under the terms: language, survival techniques, sports, health, medicine, agriculture and folk democracy. Anyone reading this book

will be impressed with the tremendous wealth of knowledge and skills that First Nations people had and have to offer.

The failure to present First Nations people, particularly women, accurately, and to not include their words in the literature is a shame as First Nations people have a wealth of information to share. When these eminent Shuswap Elder women were consulted, they weren't the shy, passive women often portrayed in much of the literature.

The Shuswap people have endured the onslaught of the epidemics which wiped out 18 of the 35 Shuswap bands, killing over 2/3 of the population between 1850-1906 (Teit, 1909, p.466). The gold miners and settlers pushed them to the margins of society so they could take away their land and resources. In 1858 the Colony of B.C. was declared, Canada's Confederation was in 1867, and in 1876 the Indian Act was passed. In the World Wars, many lost their Indian status so they could fight for their country and when many returned they suffered severe social problems due to their horrifying experiences there. However, the residential school era which lasted from 1893 to 1967 (Haig-Brown, 1986, p.1) in the Shuswap Nation, left far-reaching effects because the goal of the government and the missionaries was to "Christianize and civilize" the First Nations people and assimilate them into the mainstream culture. Fortunately, despite this oppression the Shuswap people have survived and are actively fighting for their aboriginal rights today.

Their defiance of an oppressive system is paralleled in the Shuswap traditional educational practices. In the stories which follow, many of the responses of the Shuswap eminent Elders show the strong family foundation

which helped them overcome the oppression all around them. This community spirit fostered the survival of a strong Shuswap identity. In order to examine this survival, the words and the experiences of the Shuswap people must be presented. Their stories offer a different perspective from that written by Euro-Canadians. Hearing the Shuswap stories is long overdue.

In 1969, the federal government proposed the *White Paper Policy* which advocated termination of their obligations and responsibilities to the First Nations people and making them the provinces responsibility. When the First Nations people collectively joined forces against this policy the federal government dropped it.

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood had developed a response to this paper entitled, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, which they defined as having control over their children's education. They believed that having control over one's educational system is vital to the people's development and survival physically and culturally. In addition, they believed that only by regaining control over their children's education, could the healing process of our shattered culture begin.

The stories that follow show the Shuswap people fought to retain their identity by continuing their traditional educational practices. Their stories have been disregarded long enough. This paper is an attempt to record the words and experiences of seven eminent Shuswap Elder women to present a bigger picture of the Shuswap history and my informants' struggles to develop their gifts and talents in accordance with their grandparents' expectations of them.

### **Approaching a First Nations Concept of Giftedness**

In the past two decades, numerous studies conducted in Canada and the United States have shown that minority children are not achieving well in school. Thus, educators have become increasingly concerned with providing equal educational opportunities to all children, especially those who are culturally different. Therefore, all students must be properly assessed and directed into challenging programs that will best support them in striving to achieve their full potential.

Since Terman (1925), pioneered the scientific study of gifted education, much debate has occurred on whether or not gifted and talented children need special programming. Some educators argue that gifted and talented children can make it on their own and that providing a differentiated program would foster elitism. On the other hand, other educators, in particular, Sternberg and Davidson (1986) argue that giftedness is our most precious natural resource. If one looks back on what made certain civilizations great, it is peoples' gifts, both individually and collectively. In addition, they argue that many gifted and talented students throughout the country are not being identified and supported. For the gifted minority students, this is even more evident. Moreover, females in gifted programs comprised one third of all participants in the United States program (Daignault, Edwards, Pahlman, & McCabe, 1990).

Sullivan's (1988), *A Legacy for Learners, The Report of the Royal Commission on Education*, was an extensive study of the B.C. school system. Many students, particularly First Nations students, were not succeeding well in the education system. Furthermore, in Csapos' (1989), *Children In Distress: A*

*Canadian Perspective*, found that First Nations childrens' successful school completion remains less than 1/4 of the national rate.

The B.C.'s Ministry of Education (1990), *Year 2000: A Framework for Learning*, mission statement says:

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and prosperous economy (p. 3).

The Year 2000 Document does allow for a differentiated program to meet the needs of individual students. The mission statement promotes the education goals of intellectual, social and career development, the principles of learning and the learner, the curriculum, and assessment and evaluation which strive for equal educational opportunities for all children, including First Nations girls and gifted children. However, as pointed out in the document, the pivotal role played by the teacher in achieving a quality system and implementing change where required in order to improve the system is one of the keys to its success.

However, unfortunately, if McKenzie's (1986) findings are also true here, then only the schools in more wealthy areas of B.C. will have gifted or enriched programs. His study of New Jersey school districts attempted to determine if identification procedures reinforced social inequities. He found in the racial data that Asians represent 3.55% of the total gifted population, while the Whites represent 72.64%, the Native American represents 0.06%, the Blacks represent 17.25% and the Hispanics represent 6.5%. In examining the identification data he found that teacher nomination was utilized 90.0% of the time; achievement tests, 89.6%; IQ tests, 82%, Grades, 56.4%; Parent nominations, 54.7%; Informal

ratings, 33%; Peer nominations, 27.8%; Creativity tests, 26.5%; Self nomination, 24.7%; Appeal, 20%; Interview, 17.1%; Audition, 9.1%; Community nomination, 8.7%; and culture free tests, 3.5%. His findings of the socioeconomic data show that there is a statistically significant relationship between those gifted and talented participants and the area which is primarily suburban and wealthy. The district's definition of giftedness to work for the financially advantaged was reinforced in his study. If his study can be generalized to other areas, then a definition of giftedness, identification procedures, and programming must be radically changed to enable the First Nations students, particularly girls, "undiscovered gifts" to be identified and nurtured.

Additionally, there are many band-operated schools throughout B.C., who do not always follow all the provincial curriculum guidelines. However, they do promote the positive development of the student's First Nations identity through educational programs in their language, history and culture.

As educators began to diversify their efforts to meet the needs of all gifted students, they found that giftedness applied to all students, regardless of their racial, cultural, or economic backgrounds (Cummings, 1991; Florey & Tafoya, 1988; Shutiva, 1991). It has only been recently that some First Nations scholars have initiated research to determine how gifted and talented First Nations children can be more accurately identified and placed in appropriate programs (Kirschenbaum, 1988; Tonemah, 1987). As a result, it has been found that there are unique aspects that clearly define the special needs of gifted and talented First Nations children. The gifts and talents of these children are manifested in ways influenced by their own cultural group (Swisher & Tonemah, 1991).

Studies conducted in the United States have overwhelmingly shown that First Nations people do want their gifted and talented students to benefit from appropriate educational programs (Montgomery, 1991; Tonemah, 1987). Using the U.S. Office of Education definition, it was estimated that 3% of the school-age First Nation population could be gifted and talented (Marland, 1972). Montgomery (1989) suggested that as many as 1,350 to 2,250 gifted and talented students, attending Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, are not receiving the specialized instruction needed for their development. If the same prevalence rate is applied in Canada, with an enrolment of 100,717 First Nations elementary and secondary students (Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada, 1991) then 3,350 gifted and talented students are not receiving the help they need.

Although numerous American studies have now been conducted in this area, many gifted and talented First Nations students are not participating in gifted educational programs (Bradley, 1989; Daniels, 1988; Florey & Tafoya, 1988; George, 1989; Kirschenbaum, 1988; Montgomery, 1989; Sisk, 1989; Swisher & Tonemah, 1991). In fact, the figures published by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights revealed that minority groups, including First Nations groups, are under-represented by 70% in gifted programs (Hiatt, 1991; Kirschenbaum, 1988; McKenzie, 1986; Richert, 1987) and over-represented by 40-50% in special education programs (Kirschenbaum, 1987; Richert, 1987). For example, a 1982 study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that although First Nations people comprise 8% of all public school students, only .3% participated in gifted programs, whereas Euro-Americans comprised 73.3% of

the public school enrolment, 82% participated in gifted programs (Florey & Tafoya, 1988; Shutiva, 1991).

Kirschenbaum (1988), in citing Plisko and Stern's 1985 study, states that:

across the country only 1.1% of Indian students participated in educational programs for the gifted and talented in the fall, 1980, compared to 1.5% of Hispanics and Blacks, 2.9% of Whites, and 2.6% of all students....In contrast, a higher percentage of Indian students are in programs for the learning disabled than students from any other ethnic group (p. 59).

Florey and Tafoya (1988) found in their overview of identification of gifted and talented American Indian students, that most were not identified because of certain factors which covered their gifted potential, thus, interfering with proper identification. The reasons, they argue, are because the identification measures "have a reference that is uniquely white middle class in terms of test items and group norms" (p. 2). Furthermore, Shutiva (1991) cited Ramirez and Johnsons' 1988 study where they found that although there was a slight increase in placement of gifted and talented First Nations students in appropriate programs rising from .8% in 1982 to 2.1 in 1986, there was still a large discrepancy between majority and minority students being identified as gifted and talented.

Frasier (1991) argues that the reasons for the exclusion of gifted minority students, are that it is due to the attitudes regarding the abilities of these children, the reliance on the traditional screening procedures, the assessment focus on IQ scores, and the curriculum adaption, rather than accommodations. Further to these reasons for the exclusion, Kirschenbaum (1989) asserts are the effects of alcohol abuse among First Nations people, the high school staff turnover rate, intertribal/clan rivalries, and the inner fighting among school personnel.

In light of the above, I must agree with Kirschenbaum's (1988) conclusions that "American Indians are generally perceived as below average in academic ability, requiring remedial work and ...(are) learning disabled" (p. 62). Learning disabled students do not perform according to their intellectual capabilities and neither do gifted underachievers. Since the behaviour norms for many First Nations students and the mainstream culture differ, Scruggs and Cohn (1983) believe this may be one of the reasons why many of the First Nations students are labelled as learning disabled rather than gifted underachievers. Thus, educators need to ensure they are making informed decisions before they label a child.

First Nation's gifted and talented children, especially girls, are our most neglected natural resource. However this was not always the case. Kirkness (1987), who has devoted her life to the betterment of First Nations education, states that First Nations people had their own methods of effectively educating their young. The community members instructed the children and gave them the knowledge and skills to function in accordance with the tribal and family standards. In addition, a crucial aspect to the teaching was the belief in the Great Spirit. Every aspect of their life fostered the development of the values of respect, sharing, and caring for one another, the land, the animals and the supernatural. Furthermore, Kirkness (1987) asserts that "traditionally, our people's teachings, addressed the total being, the whole community, in the context of a viable living culture" (p. 19).

But how does this relate to the First Nations concept of giftedness? Through the traditional holistic manner of teaching and rearing their children, all children were given the training to assist them in striving to obtain their potentials in their

areas of interests and capabilities. The goal of many First Nations societies is to create knowledgeable, responsible and independent people who could take care of themselves and contribute toward the good of their nation.

However, as in all societies there are certain individuals who possess exceptional abilities. The community recognized these individuals by guiding and nurturing their gifts not only for the individuals' benefit, but for the benefit of all. For example, these individuals' gifts could be expressed in their abilities in dance, music, art, oratory, hunting, fishing, running, medicine, crafts, and leadership. These people went through rigorous training, and only those who were the best were chosen to be leaders in these areas (George, 1987; Matthew, 1987; Provincial Archives & Provincial Museums, 1966; Teit, 1909; and Tonemah, 1987).

Morrison and Wilson (1986) and Matthew (1987), wrote about traditional Shuswap political leaders and Jules (1987) wrote about contemporary political leaders. I found several recurring themes for those who were chosen as political leaders. The gifted and talented qualities most sought after were wisdom, demonstrated ability, generosity, peacemaker, orator, worthiness, and respect and humility toward their people. Many chiefs' positions were inherited patrilineally or matrilineally, depending on the nations' social organization, however, only the male descendant (son or nephew) who showed the best leadership qualities was chosen by the Elders' council. Teit (1909) found that the Shuswap people traditionally chose their hereditary chief patrilineally, however, among the western Shuswap, women occasionally became chief when there was no male heirs to fill the position. Then the woman's son became the next hereditary chief (p. 569, 582).

The main responsibility was to oversee the welfare of the band by ensuring everyone had food, controlling the band's movements, assuming a leading role in ceremonies and celebrations and dealing with outsiders on behalf of the band. However, all decision-making was made by consensus with the band council. Additionally, the Shuswap had war chiefs, hunting chiefs and dancing chiefs who were men chosen as being the best qualified to fill the positions (p. 569).

Steiner (1968) summed up the Indian concept of leadership in this way, "[The leader has] the willingness to listen to what the group desires and ability to wait and be patient for the real issues to surface before drawing conclusions" (pp. 310-311). Moreover, Christensen (1991) states that one way in seeking a tribal definition of giftedness, would be to define who is a leader and how that leader is defined.

While the band chief played an important role in the community, there was another individual, the shaman, who Miller (1986) describes as powerful, influential and who ranked close behind chiefs. Foster (1986) and Sequin (1986) said the shamans lived a lifestyle distinctive from others and were considered to possess the spiritual power to keep evil spirits away from the tribe and to help those in need. Matthew (1987) further describes the Shuswap shamans as specially trained in the herbal medicines and who gained special powers through training from knowledge passed down from previous shamans (usually a relative). Teit (1909) found the Shuswap shamans "cured people by exorcising the disease, by incantations, by certain prescriptions, by laying of the hands, by massaging parts of the body, and by sprinkling water on the head and blowing it over the body" (p. 612). He also found that men and a few women were shamans among the

Shuswap people. There were many women who were herbalists in nearly all First Nation cultures.

Kirkness (1987) sums up best how the educational system must be changed to meet the needs of First Nations children, she asserts;

We must research the traditional values, customs, methodologies of our people and utilize those which have meaning in the 21st century....Our children are our future. We have a tremendous responsibility to ensure that future. The need is for radical change, a complete overhaul of the education system for our people. To do this we must look beyond the current systems in which we are involved...let us look within ourselves, our communities, our nations (p. 26).

Quetone, a Kiowa Elder, (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) argues that in order for the success of First Nation education in the future, we must have more First Nations in leadership positions, both within and outside of our own communities. He emphasizes that:

We want to be able to determine our future ourselves...we (need) self-determination....Indian tribes (need) a chance to influence their local school boards. These are the mechanics Indian parents need to in order to actually influence the way their child is educated (p. 166).

It will only be through having more of our own people in decision-making positions that First Nations people can truly have self-government and self-determination. If we continue to have other people making decisions for us, then how can we say that we determine the future for our children.

Furthermore, Old Coyote, a Crow Elder ( Morey & Gilliam, 1974) advises being selective:

Send your children to school. By going to school, you want to learn all you can about what the white man has to offer; but accept only the good things....By gaining formal education, you can be accepted by the white people. At the same time, retain your identity; try to keep the good things that your own people have to offer....We need a

person with a formal education, who has an inner understanding of the Indian and can project his feelings and ideas in the classroom (p. 168).

However, with more First Nations people graduating with university degrees, we are better equipped to make that radical change and utilize our traditional methods of teaching to provide quality education for our children. Each child deserves the right to be nurtured, loved and valued in our society.

We must do more than adapt the present screening instruments, which are usually culturally-biased, we must go back and learn from our Elders. Although we cannot go back to live as we did long ago, our Elders can teach us the basic underlying principles of traditional educational practices which evolved and developed over thousands of years. Moreover, once we learn the traditional conception of giftedness, we will be better able to identify and nurture our gifted and talented students.

Fortunately, Torrance (1977), founded the International Network of Gifted Children, the author of numerous books and articles, and is known particularly for his emphasis on finding giftedness and creativity in people of all economic and ethnic backgrounds, believes there is more readiness than ever before to respect and use the strengths of American Indians in art, music, dance, and government (Deloria, 1970).

But why, you may ask, am I concerned with examining the traditional ways in which Shuswap people identified and nurtured their gifted and talented girls? There are several reasons: first, because I am a Shuswap woman who was raised on the Kamloops Indian Reserve and had the great fortune of being traditionally educated by my grandmothers, my two great aunts and my mother; secondly, I

have two eminent brothers and an sister whose gifts and talents were recognized and supported through the traditional educational practices; thirdly, I am a graduate of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program and had the opportunity to synthesize my traditional and contemporary teachings in an attempt to find answers to First Nations educational dilemmas. One answer, I believe, is in identifying and nurturing the gifts of First Nations children. For in doing so, we will strive to build on the strengths of these children.

Traditional Shuswap educational practices for identifying and nurturing their children's gifts and talents are still being practised today. I know because these practices have been done in my family. To exemplify what I mean I will tell you a story.

While the band members quietly listened to their young chief respond to some of the critical issues facing First Nations people today, his mother sat beaming, her dark eyes sparkling with pride. She sighed deeply as she recalled his many accomplishments for the betterment of his people and the respect and recognition he earned for his efforts by nearly everyone locally, provincially and even nationally. As she smiled lovingly at her son, who was conversing with his people so confidently, personally and respectfully, she recalled the early recognition of his leadership qualities by the community Elders. In fact, his grandmother held him up and said he would be a great man and, thus, was how his nickname came about. Because of this early recognition, his extended family actively participated in guiding and nurturing his gifts through traditional Shuswap teachings. Throughout his childhood he was given a certain amount of freedom to discover and explore his environment through observation and participation in community work projects, social outings and gatherings and political meetings. In doing so, he learned much of the traditional beliefs and values of his people. As he grew older, he was expected to become increasingly more independent and responsible as an individual and as a member of the community. In his family he assisted his mother in raising his younger brothers and sisters, as his father was away frequently at work.

In regards to his formal schooling, however, parental involvement was not encouraged until the 1970's, so he was left on his own to deal

with the educational system. Although the school staff had evidence of his high intellectual abilities, high achievement scores in specific domains and exceptional creative abilities in the arts, he was not given a differentiated program to meet his special educational needs. Fortunately, however, despite these obstacles, he has attained great heights as an adult because of a few concerned and supportive teachers and more importantly, his loving extended family's early discovery and nurturance of his gifts and talents.

My eldest brother, Chief Manny Jules, has been serving on the Kamloops Indian Band Council for over two decades. He was first elected to the band council in 1974 at the age of 22 and then was elected chief in 1984, a position he still holds. Some of his major accomplishments are as follows: he was a founding member of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council in 1981, he was instrumental in the framing of the *Shuswap Declaration* in 1983, he was founding director of the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society from 1984-1989, he was appointed to the Project Pride Task Force by the Minister of Tourism, Recreation and Culture in 1987, he had Bill C-115, an amendment to the Indian Act, passed into law by the Parliament of Canada in 1988, he was the founding chairman of the Indian Taxation Advisory Board from 1988 to present, he was founding chair of the First Nations Heritage, Language and Culture Advisory Committee from 1989-1991, he was past co-chair of the Assembly of First Nations Chiefs Committee on Claims from 1990-1991, he signed the Statement of Political Relationship between the Kamloops Indian Band and the City of Kamloops in 1991, he was the past co-chair of the AFN/Government of Canada Joint Working Group on Specific Claims Policy from 1991 to 1993, he was able to negotiate a satisfactory agreement in court in the dispute regarding the Scheidam Flats Land Claims Settlement in 1995, he is vice-chair for the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources from 1995 to

present, he is chair to the Sub-Committee on Taxation Incentives, National Aboriginal Financing Task Force from 1995 to present, he drafted the Kamloops Indian Band Heritage Policy in 1996, and through Manny's leadership, the Indian Taxation Advisory Board and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have established the Centre for Municipal-Aboriginal Relations in June 1996.

Manny was identified as exceptionally gifted at an early age by all four of his grandparents. Since he was young and even to adulthood he was guided and encouraged by our extended family, particularly by our late paternal grandmother, late maternal grandfather and our parents, to develop into his fullest potential. Before we went to school our late paternal grandfather used to visit us every evening and relate many stories. Our paternal grandmother spent time with us throughout our childhood and took us berry and asparagus picking. Although she was nearly deaf and spoke only Shuswap we were still able to understand and communicate with her easily. Since she had no formal schooling, she believed education was of utmost importance, so she checked on us daily to ensure we went to school. With Manny, she lavished praise and recognition for his efforts in school and at home. Both she and our maternal grandfather expressed that Manny would be a great leader someday. He took Manny aside frequently and gave him praise and encouragement, but at the same time demanded only the best from him. Unfortunately, however, most of our grandparents died when we were still fairly young.

Our father served on band council for several years then served as the chief of the Kamloops Indian Band for a decade when we were young. He also worked as the Range Manager to provide for his large family and foster children. He was a

founding member of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs in response to the *White Paper Policy*. Our father would often take Manny to many political meetings and community gatherings to prepare him for his future. Since our father was away from home frequently, Manny helped our mother rear his eight younger siblings. He not only assisted in coordinating us in household chores, yard work, and in maintaining our chickens and garden, but he used to take the time to teach us how to do things properly, check our work, and then correct any mistakes we made.

My maternal grandmother gave me extra attention since I was born and when I was three years old and had a serious accident so she kept me until I was able to walk and talk again. From the age of eight to eighteen I spent nearly half of that time with my great-aunt, who related many stories of the past. Throughout our childhood she used to sew us quilts and clothes and help our mother cook at large family celebrations which my mother has continued to do. My other great aunt and Uncle Mitch encouraged my two sisters, Jeanette and Freda, and I to become members in their traditional Shuswap song and dance group. We performed at numerous schools throughout B.C., Alberta and even went across Canada one summer to perform our songs and dances at various reserves.

Our grandparents and our parents, always encouraged us to live bi-culturally. Their belief in maintaining a strong Shuswap identity and striving to achieve our fullest potential, especially in education, has had a strong influence on my family. For example my other older brother, John, whose gifts in the knowledge of traditional Shuswap culture was recognized by our great-aunt or as we called her, Granny Katie. She taught him many Shuswap traditions, songs, and how to play lehal, a traditional Shuswap game. When he got his Bachelor of Arts Degree from

S.F.U. he was the first male university graduate from the Kamloops Indian Band. He started his masters of arts degree, is currently working as a researcher for the Kamloops Indian Band, is a pipe holder, sundancer, traditional singer and dancer and teacher of these songs and dances to the youth. There is a clear distinction between what my brother's Manny and John do. Manny was groomed to be a political leader and John was groomed to be a traditional leader. In fact, at a give-away, Manny was asked to perform the ceremony but he declined and said that was John's expertise. Additionally John taught me how to read and write before I went to school. My younger sister, Felicity's gifts were recognized by both of her grandmothers because she had both of their names. They said she would be a great lady. When she got both her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Education she was the first person from the Kamloops Indian Band to obtain both a bachelor and a master's degree. She has worked for the Native Indian Teacher Education Program at U.B.C. first as the Program Coordinator and now is the Assistant Director. Another sister, Jeanette, has been the Nursery School teacher for the Kamloops Indian Band for nearly two decades, is a pipe holder, sundancer and is an active member of a number of community committees. Our youngest sister, Freda, has three years of university transfer courses, is the head of the Lands and Estates Department for the Kamloops Indian Band, is the President of the Shuswap Brothers and Sisters, is a pipe holder and sundancer. Finally my youngest brother, Raymond, whose gifts were identified and nurtured mostly by our father, holds a certificate as an Heavy Duty Operator and is one of the few people from the Kamloops Indian Band who holds knowledge about animals, particular horses, and the mountains of Kamloops.

Although there are many other First Nations families who carry on this tradition, I can only relate best how my extended family went about identifying and nurturing our gifts. I want to emphasize that I am not using my family as an example to brag, as it is up to one's extended family members to relate other members' accomplishments. The important point is that traditional Shuswap educational practices of identifying and nurturing individual's gifts and exceptional talents are still in existence today.

### **The Potential Significance of the Study**

Studying how Shuswap people traditionally identified and nurtured their gifted and talented girls, as well as learning their concept of giftedness is of critical importance for educators who are concerned with developing the knowledge of First Nations education. The invaluable knowledge that my study participants possess must be recorded to not only enable future generations to learn of the remarkable forms of traditional educational practices, but to utilize that information to ensure that gifted First Nations children, especially girls, are not continually under-represented in gifted education programs.

If the First Nations traditional educational practices were so advanced, then why are First Nations people having so many problems today? To find the answer to this question, all one has to do is imagine how their cultural group would be affected if another group decided that, because they believed that their ways of living and educating their young were more superior, they had the right to pass laws enabling them to legally remove children away from their parent's influences and place them into residential schools for the major part of their early lives. The

negative effects the residential school era had on First Nations people has been well documented (Haig-Brown, 1987; Ing, 1989, and Meriam, 1977). How could any group not be adversely affected if many generations of their people were given severe punishment for speaking their native tongue or trying to observe the traditional rituals of their tribe. Fortunately, First Nations traditions persisted despite this oppression.

However, there are effective traditional methods that First Nations people can draw from to aid in their healing process. In fact, some of the effective child rearing practices presented in the current literature are what First Nations people did all along. For example, Streeter's (1986) article, *Parents: The Indian Children's First Teachers*, asserts that the child's self concept is a powerful determinant of his or her behaviour. She cites Coppersmith (1967) who concluded that children develop their self concept according to four of the following bases:

Significance (the way they feel they are loved and approved of by people important to them); competence (in performing tasks they consider important); virtue (attainment of moral and ethical standards); and power (the extent to which they influence their own or other's lives (p. 217).

Many of her suggestions, as the one mentioned above, are what First Nations people did in their traditional child rearing practices. First Nations people were well aware of each of the child's developmental stages and provided appropriate learning experiences and adequate care necessary to help each child develop to his or her fullest potential. Quetone (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) asserts that:

In the Indian way of life, the traditional life, there was a time for growing up. At each stage of life, there was no rushing; you did not skip....Today...there is a strong push to get him...doing things that are

actually beyond his years. The Indians feel that each stage is crucial and that the child should be allowed to dwell in each for the appropriate period of time so that every aspect of his being can evolve (pp. 147-148).

The Elders all across the land feel that we must encourage our children to take the best from both worlds. We must help the children to learn the ways of the white man in order to successfully survive in society, but moreover, we must help lay a strong foundation for the children so that they will not only feel good about themselves, but will feel good about their family, community and cultural heritage. In order for this to happen, the family must again become their children's main teacher. The family can resume the important role through utilizing as many of the traditional child rearing practices as possible and becoming more actively involved in their children's education. The parents must continue to fight for Indian Control of Indian Education so that they will truly be in a position to develop their children's education and not have to follow all of the provincial or governmental regulations in order to get funding for their schools.

First Nations parents must work at helping the teachers of their children become more sensitive in being able to develop their children's self esteem.

Gilliland (1986) gives these suggestions:

Teachers must expect success and ignore weakness, recognizing and emphasizing individual strengths.

Teachers can develop students' self esteem by having respect for students and showing that respect in their actions.

Teachers must develop good communication by listening to students and letting them know that their ideas are worthwhile regardless of how well they are doing academically.

Teachers must give students reason for pride.

Teachers must respect the students' tribe and culture, see the good things in that culture, learn its values, and develop a culturally relevant program (p. 68).

The pivotal role played by the teacher in achieving quality education and implementing change where required in order to improve the system is of importance to its success. You could have the best school texts, educational programs, facilities and so on, but if you do not have a teacher who is not committed towards the goal of providing quality education for his or her students and developing a close working relationship with the parents then things are destined to fail.

Many teachers complain that there is a lack of First Nations parental involvement in their children's education. On the other hand, many First Nations parents state that their children's teachers do not make a genuine effort to communicate with them. Obviously there is a gap in the communication and understanding between the parents and the teachers. In order for this to change we must open the lines of communication and work in partnership for the betterment of First Nations children's education.

Sarracino (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) argues that:

there should be more workshops to get the teachers, parents and principal together, so that they can come up with some kind of system to work on this child. They need to join together to become child-centred....Without that, they are just going against the stream (p. 177).

Chapter two will begin with an Introduction to the Shuswap, to enable the reader to gain some knowledge regarding their traditional history, land and life. The literature regarding traditional educational practices of First Nations people, including the Shuswap follows, not only to enable the reader to gain an

understanding of their traditional life styles, but to provide adequate background knowledge for understanding the data analysis chapter. Finally, in an attempt to keep within the framework of the medicine wheel, I will discuss the four phases of life of girls or women in traditional times.

Chapter three, highlights contemporary gifted First Nations educational programs, I will discuss the definitions of giftedness, identification procedures and programming. These issues are important to examine in any gifted education program, but are even more important when gifted and talented First Nations children are discussed because First Nations children do not usually fit the norms in all three categories.

Chapter four, is about my research methodology, I will discuss the reasons and the methods used for collecting and presenting this research. The reasons used include the rationale for using certain methods. Details about the methods are discussed.

Chapter five, data analysis, will present the women's stories in the four phases of their life: childhood, adolescence, adult and Elder. In doing so, the reader can see how their gifts and talents were identified and nurtured over their lifetime.

Chapter six, is the conclusion where I will discuss the findings from the literature and the data analysis.

## CHAPTER II - FIRST NATIONS TRADITIONAL LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction to the Shuswap

As First Nation Elders have always known (Christensen, 1991; George, 1987; Tonemah, 1987), and many First Nations educators are recognizing, that by identifying and nurturing the gifts and talents of First Nations students, their contributions can be better utilized to ensure the "perpetuation and preservation of their way of life, their values, their traditions and their language" (Romero & Schultz, 1991, p. 3). These same goals were established to develop the working relationship between the 17 Shuswap bands through the signing of the *Shuswap Declaration* in 1982.

The signing of this historic document was decided by some concerned Shuswap leaders, who believed that in order for the Shuswap people to retain their language, history and culture, they must have all of the Shuswap Chiefs committed to this goal. The Shuswap people have been laying the ground work for self-determination, self-government, and *Indian Control of Indian Education* for well over a decade. First Nations people must retain their identity and be the decision-makers for the future of their children.

In signing this document they declared to work in unity to preserve, record and perpetuate and enhance Shuswap language, history and culture by:

- i) Collecting and Recording memoirs of our Elders;
- ii) Recording and documenting the Shuswap Language to the fullest extent possible;
- iii) Research documents, records, books and notes on the use and management, in the pre-colonial areas, of land and resources;
- iv) Facilitating the collection and displaying of contemporary and historic Shuswap artifacts and archival materials;

- v) Facilitating and promoting projects directed towards the collection and preservation of contemporary documents resulting in and reflecting modern Shuswap developments;
- vi) Developing a curriculum project that imparts to primarily, Shuswap students practical knowledge, Shuswap history, culture and language;
- viii) Establishing a working committee, answerable to the Bands represented here, to initiate and carry out the mandate outlined above and to secure funding. (Excerpt from the Secwepemc Cultural Arts Magazine, Volume 1, Number 1, p.1)

Many Shuswap bands now have day care centres, pre-schools, band operated schools and post-secondary institutions. The Secwepemc Cultural Educational Society, which was born out of the *Shuswap Declaration*, has as its mandate to research, establish a resource centre, museum, and develop curriculum materials regarding Shuswap language, history and culture. These activities show that the Shuswap people are working towards self-determination, self-government, and *Indian Control of Indian Education*.

### Traditional Shuswap Life

I will now go back in time to explore the Shuswap traditional ways of life, by beginning with the Shuswap view of the world, the traditional boundary lines of the Shuswap territory, the two important religious festivals, and the three important aspects to the Shuswap ceremonies, as they are important in providing the reader with significant background knowledge of the Shuswap in earlier times. I believe the following excerpt from the *Secwepemc Cultural Arts Magazine* (1985) will provide valuable insight into the ways the Shuswap people lived traditionally;

### A Shuswap View of the World

The Shuswap people believed that the world was made good to live in by the all powerful "Old One" with the help of Coyote. The origin story, told and retold by generations of Shuswap people, explained how the earth was made ready for Shuswap people.

The Shuswap people lived in close contact with nature and their actions showed appreciation for nature's bounty and respect for her creatures. At the First Fruits ceremony, when the first saskatoons were picked, the people showed appreciation for the abundance of fruit that would help supply their winter needs. When game was taken, the hunters took time to show reverence for the animal which was fed to them.

During his or her training each Shuswap person found a guardian spirit from among the animals, articles or elements in their world which was thereafter a protector or helper to that person. During the winter ceremony each sang the mystery song of his guardian spirit, so that he could imitate the skill of it or use other kinds of knowledge gained from it to live a more successful life. It was also during training that the young Shuswap person learned the many prayers and rites which were to be used to show respect for the world and its creatures.

Respect and remembrance for the dead was shown by a ceremonial dance held each year. The Shuswap people practised this ceremony to keep in touch with the world beyond and to help their dead reach the spirit land. Everyone took part in these dances which were led by the chiefs.

All councils and many ceremonies began or ended with the smoking of the pipe. Everyone was in a circle and the pipe was passed in the direction of the sun's passage. The smoking of the pipe was a preparation for the discussion or celebration to follow. When going to war, the warriors passed the pipe in the opposite direction, to show that they were going to face an enemy.

In the traditional view of the world, the earth was a place made good for them to live in. They believed that they should respect the things of the earth and each person found something of the earth and drew from its strengths, as it became his guardian spirit. The Shuswap people found order in the world, and used their knowledge of it to help them create a successful lifestyle. They regarded their success as a people as a credit to the goodwill of the creatures of the earth, which they praised in songs and dances. They showed their appreciation for their bounty by sharing their goods with one another. (Recorded by: James Teit) (p. 2)

The Shuswap people, over thousands of years, learned to live in harmony with their environment. They were deeply spiritual people who held life around them with the highest respect. Their life was difficult at times but they survived the harsh winters through food preservation and being able to adapt to their land. In the book *Shuswap Cultural Series - Introduction to the Shuswap* they have found that just First Nations people lived on B.C.'s interior plateau 200 years ago. Additionally they claim that:

Throughout the area flow the waters of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers...of this plateau region...180,000 square kilometres, were traditionally occupied by the Shuswap people (See Appendix A)....Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Shuswap lived as bands, separate and independent of one another, but united by common language and...lifestyle. The only anthropologist to study the Shuswap people, James Teit, divided them into seven general groups or divisions (See Appendix B). These divisions identify people living near one another and sharing the same fishing, hunting, and gathering areas. The divisions included from three to seven bands (p. 1)

Teit (1909) found that they had two religious festivals each year, one in midsummer and one in midwinter. In the midsummer festival at Green Lake they held ceremonies, traded with other First Nation groups, and engaged in many recreational and social activities with Shuswap people from other divisions. They also held the ghost dance at this time as Teit (1909) recorded that:

It is said that the Chief of the dead, the Old One, advised them to perform the ceremonies for the dead...(so) it would make it easier for (them) to reach the spirit land, and to make life there more pleasant for them, and to strengthen the bonds between the living and the dead....(In midwinter they) gathered in the largest underground home....(One) purpose was to discover any sicknesses, bewitching, or any other evil threatening them....As nearly all the men were possessed of some shamanistic power, their spirits watched; and if they saw or found any influence that would be harmful to the community, they reported it in their song....(The second purpose) was to train the youth in the singing of their mystery-songs, to give them self confidence to find out how they were progressing in their training,

what their guardians were, and who among them was likely to become greatest (p. 610).

Jules (1992) in his research of the gatherings at Green Lake found that:

Due to the vast amount of territory held by the divisions of the Shuswap, except at the yearly gathering at Green Lake. There all the bands could meet together, and even those people who were generally considered enemies could meet there in safety and trade for various items (p. 2).

There are some aspects to all First Nations cultures that are considered sacred and are usually not discussed. Teit (1909) found that issue occurred while doing some of his research. For example, when he tried to determine the uses of small soapstone images of men, he failed to obtain any information regarding their uses other than that they were used in connection with the guardian spirits. In the Shuswap culture what occurred between the individual and their guardian spirit was not public knowledge. However, the individual could tell the people some of his experiences through singing his "mystery songs."

Jules (1992), who was groomed to be a traditional leader, and is a graduate student in the field of anthropology cites Jordan (1988), where he found that there were important aspects to the ceremonies of the Shuswap and other First Nations people, they were, tobacco, the pipe, and the sweat lodge. He explains these aspects as follows:

Tobacco - The common thread of cosmological knowledge that runs through the native religion in most of North America, the common ritual of offering tobacco and the specific ritual for offering it indicates a common ideological foundation....It is the only plant that when burned is ingested into the mouth and so symbolizes the purity and truthfulness of one's words. Also when it is blown out of the mouth, it wafts skyward and therefore signifies one's prayers rising up to the creator....Aside from the pipe ceremony, if a person accepts tobacco of a messenger, that person is then committed to perform the duties assigned by the messenger....This sacred plant is also used to form

bundles, small tobacco offerings to the creator showing the sincerity of the petitioner. It is for this reason that the offering of tobacco preceded any negotiations, trades or ceremonies.

Pipe - Within all native societies, the sacred pipe has held a special and honoured place. It can be used to intercede in arguments, stop fights, initiate dialogues, and plays a major part in all ceremonies.....To all native cultures it was a sacred gift given to the people by a celestially powerful being, sent by the Creator....it is interesting to note here that most origin stories of the pipe is that it was brought by a woman, except in the Shuswap and some other of the Northern Plateau cultures....The pipe is two parts, the bowl representing the female and the stem representing the male. The two parts are kept separate, except when they are joined together to bring the power of all of creation into play. Also keeping with the thought of the twinning of life, the pipe is made to be held with two hands, the left thought to be related to the heart is placed on the bowl, the right related to strength is place on the stem....The pipe is offered to the six directions and the smoke is passed over the smoker to consecrate oneself thereby bringing in all of creation into the sacrament. The pipe is then passed person to person in a clockwise fashion, following the direction of the sun, centring the ceremony on those involved. As always, when the ceremony is done, the pipe's separation indicates the termination of the ritual.

The Sweat Lodge - This is a primary purification rite which is known throughout North America, secondary rites also include sweet grass, smudge, and other aromatic herbs. The sweat lodge generally precedes all other important ceremonies, but is also used as an individual catharsis, confessional, and a direct vehicle of communion with the spirits....(It) is made of willows, representing the plants and trees, who are thought to always have their arms raised in prayer to the creator. It is blanketed with the skins of animals representing all those who sacrifice themselves to clothe and feed us. In the centre, or sometimes to the side, a pit is dug to hold the rocks and the earth, from this pit is used to form an alter to offerings....The fire (is used) to symbolize the centre of the universe, the creator, and the sun. The pit on the inside stand for the womb of the earth, into which the rocks are placed and when joined with water embodies creation. The darkness of the inside of this structure illustrates to the practioner and reminds him of the ignorance of mankind....One approaches as a human being, you bow down in humbleness and crawl into the lodge as a four legged, and sit within as the bird people....All of creation are called into play, to witness and help in the ceremony. Thus, when one leaves, it is as if they are born anew, cleansed in body, heart and spirit.

Teit (1909) found that the Shuswap covered their sweat lodges with earth and recorded that Simon Fraser said of the Shuswap people, "This tribe is extremely fond of smoking." He found that in lieu of tobacco they used a weed mixture with fat. After the introduction of the white man's tobacco they used kinnikinnic or bearberry leaves (p. 574).

In Coffey, Goldstrom, Gottfriedson, Matthew and Walton's (1990), *Shuswap History: The First 100 Years of Contact*, the authors state:

The missionaries had the most dramatic effect on the Shuswap...(for their) goal...was to convert the Indian people to Christianity and a European way of life - to civilize....The colonial idea that Indians were not equal citizens can be seen in government policy...the Shuswap were limited to small reserves....The strength of the Shuswap people has been severely tested over the last 150 years. Through the effects of the gold rush, residential schools, and epidemics, the Shuswap lost their status as equal partners and were pushed to the margins of white society. Since the 1970's, the influences of the government and the church have been reduced and the Shuswap Nation is once again flourishing (p. 8).

The struggle to regain what the missionaries and government officials fought so hard to take away is not over yet. The Shuswap people, and many other First Nations groups are fighting to regain control of their lives once again through self-determination and self-government. Jules (1992) cites Boelscher-Ignace, 1992) where he found that many political alliances over the years to fight for First Nations rights such as, the joint delegation of Secwepemc Chiefs, headed by Chief Louis of the Kamloops Band and Chief Basil Dick of Bonaparte, in their trips to Ottawa and London in 1906 and 1909, the Allied Tribes in 1916, the Native Indian Brotherhood in 1944, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs in 1969, and the Shuswap Native Indian Tribal Council, in 1981, and the Assembly of First Nations in the

1980's. What we need is our own people, as Old Coyote stated, with a strong First Nations identity and formal education, to lead our people.

Another ceremony that has sprung up all over North America is the pow wow. Jules (1992) states that:

The evolution of the modern pow wow came from the wild west show, rodeos, and the public exhibitions put on for the visiting dignitaries from other countries. This was also the time of enforced reservation existence, the demise of the vast buffalo herds, the end of the free roaming existence of pre-contact, and the outlawing of all Native religious ceremonies and rituals. This in fact was a hidden blessing for many native cultures, for without the vehicle of public exhibition of ritual that was socially acceptable to white society many customs may have disappeared. Also this provided an avenue for Native artistic expansion in exhibition, expression and syncretic innovations. In all of modern Native vehicles of education and socialization this is the best example of the incorporation of core concepts of Native ideology (p. 7).

The pow wows take place all over North America. It is a time for visiting with old friends, meeting new people, sharing the joy of practising and participating cultural heritage. Since the pow wows are considered sacred, the use of drugs or alcohol is prohibited in the grounds. It is so beautiful to see First Nations people show visitors from all over the world, how proud and rich our culture is.

### **Traditional First Nations Education**

Bopp, Bopp, Brown and Lane (1984), Morey and Gilliam (1974) and Teit (1909) made significant contributions recording traditional First Nations educational practices. The authors will be my main sources of information regarding my findings in traditional education. These authors took the time to develop the trusting and understanding relationships necessary for open communication and

meaningful interviews. I will not only discuss the traditional Shuswap ways of teaching, but will also discuss similar findings from other Nations to provide the reader with a broader understanding of common traditional teachings. Since these authors are important to my presentation, I will begin with Teit's (1909), *The Shuswap*. However, since his life's work has already been presented, I will just comment that his work is frequently used in researching the traditional lives of the Shuswap people. He also stated that for Shuswap children, they were taught that four was a sacred number in ceremonies and in mythology. In Bopp, Bopp, Brown, and Lane's (1984) *The Sacred Tree*, has also been presented earlier so I will just comment that their work is frequently consulted when doing research on the medicine wheel.

In *Respect For Life* (Morey & Gilliam, 1974), Sylvester M. Morey, who is the Chairman of the Myrin Institute, learned that Rudolph Steiner (1965-1925), a noted Australian philosopher, educator and seer, claimed that: "much of the success of the white man in America was due to the lingering effects of the intuitive wisdom of the American Indian" (p. xiii).

This statement prompted Morey to look into the matter and he found that "many ideas we have made use of in our daily lives were originally Indian" (p. xiii). In 1967 he decided to make the public aware of the American Indians' intuitive wisdom by sponsoring a week-long meeting with carefully selected First Nations Elders from throughout the U.S.; Dr. Winkler, the late President of the Myrin Institute, summed up their meeting in Denver in this way:

The U.S. today is clearly at a crossroads. In their brief history, the American people have built the strongest, richest and most generous country in the world. Yet the use of drugs, racial strife, crime and

violence, are reaching epidemic proportions...our civilization is one-sided;... (we need the) Indian people's...intuitive faculties that may restore to American culture the inner strength it so badly needs in this crucial era (p. xvii).

In 1972, John F. Gardner, an educator, succeeded Dr. Winkler as President and chose the topic, *Traditional American Indian Child Upbringing* for the next week-long meeting where they sponsored the following distinguished First Nations Elders: Jimmy Began, Navajo; Ernes Benedict, St. Regis Mohawk; Max Hanley, Sr., Navajo; Henry and Stella Old Coyote, Crow; Allen C. Quetone, Kiowa; Victor Sarracino, Laguna Pueblo; and Arthur Sutton, Arapaho.

Quetone (Morey & Gilliam, 1974), the conference's chairman, stated his hope for education:

(we should) cover the traditional methods used to teach and instill values in Indian children from...birth to adolescence. We know the philosophies, myths and legends used in traditional Indian education contain great spiritual truths and determine the way the Indian people look at their being here on earth....By exploring our heritage at the conference, we will try to discover some of the attitudes and methods that were used by Indians to teach their young....We would like to benefit from the wisdom of the past (p. 3).

I will begin now to go through the four stages of life and present what was found in the literature about First Nations peoples traditional teachings.

### Children

Those people love their offspring the  
most of any in the world, and treat  
them with the greatest mildness.  
(Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, 1528 describing Texas Indians)

First Nations people knew that the prenatal period was of greatest importance. This feeling was expressed in the strict observations of certain

traditional taboos frequently referred to in their legends and stories. Prior to conception, both the wife and husband were expected to be in good physical, spiritual, emotional and mental health. It was important that the parents act as adults and control their actions and moods. The father-to-be played an important role in accepting his responsibility because his child would look to him for guidance. He had to be prepared to set a good example and be a good teacher. Also, he took care of his wife and provided her with a comfortable, worry free environment. In order to ensure that the child would be strong and healthy, the relatives supervised the mother-and-father-to-be's observations of strict taboos, such as, diet restrictions, food preparation, work activities, exercise, and maintenance of a positive attitude (George, 1980; Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Provincial Archives & Provincial Museum, 1966; Teit, 1909; Terrell & Terrell, 1974).

Teit (1909) recorded that in earlier times Shuswap pregnant women were expected to:

rise early...work steadily...at light work, walk around frequently...not touch nor look at (a) black bear...not to eat any fresh flesh of (a) bird, mammal, or fish (excepting salmon), until at least a day old...eat (small portions) often...drink plenty of...water, and both she and her husband must bathe often (p. 584).

During childbirth, usually a mid-wife took care of the mother and child by coaching the mother, cutting the umbilical cord, providing medicines for the mother and baby to aid in healing and cleansing, and after the child was born, massaging and shaping the infant's face and body according to their tribal standards. As soon as possible the baby was nursed by the mother. The baby was usually nursed until about two years old. Once this was done both the mother and father would

undergo a cleansing ceremony to remove the restrictions placed on them. The mother still had some new taboos added for several weeks to ensure the safety of the baby and herself. It should also be noted here that, in cases where the mother could not survive giving birth, nearly all First Nations people had an adoption system in place. Once the remaining navel cord came off the baby, it was usually preserved and sewed into a little pouch where it was either attached to the head of the cradle or worn around the neck (George, 1980; Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Provincial Archives & Provincial Museum, 1966; Teit, 1909; Terrell & Terrell, 1974).

With many First Nations groups, within a month after the birth of a child, a name-giving ceremony and feast was held, families and friends were invited. The child would be given a name from the mother or father's side. As the child grew older he or she may be given other names, including the name of a distinguished ancestor, if the child did something outstanding, or the child may have their name changed if they are too sickly. After the puberty rites, the boy or girl could take the name of his or her guardian spirit. Honourable names were strictly guarded as family property and could be given only by the family head (Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Provincial Archives & Provincial Museum, 1966; Teit, 1909; Terrell & Terrell, 1974).

Teit (1909) stated that about the time he did his study about seven-eighths of the Shuswap people held hereditary names.

In the naming-ceremonies public feasts were given where the eldest male relative gave the name of the distinguished ancestor away by saying, "We have a name to be kept alive and...you better bear the name of your (father, uncle, etc.) (p. 571).

Old Coyote, (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) explains his responsibilities when he got his granduncle's name this way:

It was up to me to find out about the man....To find out what kind of personality and principles he had....I had to live by them. I try to control my emotions and try to be careful about how I use my words. I don't want to offend anyone; at the same time, I won't back down from danger. So you can see that inheriting names is one of the controls we have and also one of the aids (p. 35).

From about one month to eighteen months old the child was placed in a birch bark or cedar root basket or cradle board to enable the mother to more easily and securely transport the child wherever she went and to enable the child to view his or her surroundings (Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Provincial Archives & Provincial Museum, 1966; Teit, 1909; Terrell & Terrell, 1974).

In some First Nation groups, it was believed that discipline began here at this stage since the cradle board not only controlled the baby's body but began to discipline their mind. Sarracino (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) related this story about using the cradle board:

There is an interesting comparison that can be drawn between the cradle board and the crib and playpen....My mother was comparing them one day in terms of discipline. She said, "Well, we begin by tying you up when you are a child. We feel that discipline begins here...we need to control your body, not only discipline your mind. This has a significant effect. You're tied up with all these beautiful things, you're not free to move about, therefore, you lie peaceful and still. If we left you in these open cribs, you'd begin to kick and feel free. You'd begin to want to move about on your own, and when this happened, we'd have no control over you any more....So the Indians feel the cradle board is good not for posture, but also for discipline and control (p. 27).

Gardner, (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) had this to say about this form of discipline:

Strength and courage appear to be among the qualities the Indian most admires in a man. To achieve both you must be capable of mastering yourself; you must also be willing to submit to and obey what is higher and greater than you are, whether it is your parent when you are a child or your conscience when you are a man (p. 29).

The children were encouraged to play games, participate in food gathering and enjoy life. There was no distinction between play and work. The children were encouraged to run, jump and swim frequently. This was meant to strengthen their bodies and was the beginning of their rigorous training. Much of the children's teaching was through observation and imitation. The boys were given small weapons and were taught how to use them by expert hunters and fishermen. The girls were given dolls to play with and after the age of seven they assisted in the care of the younger children. When the children were successful in completing something they were given recognition and praise. During this period their families usually observed the children very closely to discover what their interests and capabilities were. Thus, they were able to discover and nurture their gifts. Moreover, those children who demonstrated exceptional abilities, were given extra attention to aid in their development. They prepared for later life in a manner that was natural and fun. In addition, many First Nation groups celebrated each of the high points in the child's early years, such as, their first laugh, when they walked, when they mastered new words or when they had their first hair cut. This was done to ensure that the child knew they were a valuable member of their community (Archibald, 1977; Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Provincial Archives & Provincial Museum, 1966; Teit, 1909; Terrell & Terrell, 1974). Furthermore, Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) states that traditionally children were taught respect early, he asserts that:

from the moment a child begins to speak, he is taught respect for the word; he is taught how to use the word and how not to use it. The word is all-powerful, because it can build a man up, but it can also tear him down....So a child is taught to use words tenderly and never against anyone (p. 30).

Further to this idea of developing the child's mind through learning their language,

Sarracino (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) believes that:

language is of prime importance in getting the child to establish a behaviour pattern....Young women are taught to sing many lullabies and songs....My people claim that this is one of the ways women start to develop a child's mind - the child's mind is formed through hearing the words of its language (p. 39).

In order to give the children a sense of belonging they must be talked to from the start. Communication was a tool used to aid in the children's growth and development. In addition, it was stressed to love the children equally so that they could learn to love, respect and value each other. Moreover, Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) states that:

The principle thing children are taught by hearing these lullabies is respect. They are taught to respect certain things in life and certain people. By giving respect, they gain respect of others. Self-respect is one of the qualities my people stress and try to nurture, and one of the controls an Indian has as he grows up. Once you lose your self-respect you just go down (p. 40).

Sarracino (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) learned the age four was very significant in First Nation societies, he asserts that:

Children at the age of four, thereafter, become great actors. The old folks claim that this is the time to establish a good foundation, because from the fourth year on, kids begin to learn many things that will stay in their memories for many years to come (p. 44).

Between the ages of four to about ten, many First Nations children began to receive more formal spiritual teachings. Ceremonies were sometimes held to initiate the child where he or she could be given a second set of parents to act as spiritual

helpers (Morey & Gilliam, 1974). The children were also trained to arise before sunrise and jump into the cold water, even in the winter, for it was believed that this would keep you strong and help you live a long and healthy life. With the living conditions being so harsh at times it was vital that they had strong bodies in order to survive that (Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Teit, 1909).

Teit (1909) presents the spiritual teachings of these children in this way:

Evenings were spent in playing games, smoking, and general conversation among the Elders; and in relating stories of war and hunting, and comic stories. About bed-time mythological tales were told by some old person until the people all fell asleep. On the following evening another elderly person told stories, and thus all the people who knew any myths took turns at relating them throughout the winter. These were the times when the old people would address the young, and when they would admonish them to follow the rules of proper ethical conduct (p. 617).

Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) learned this of storytelling:

Before the youngster goes to sleep, the grandparents will sing some songs and explain their meaning and significance; they'll also tell legends that are meant to help build character, or tell a story where somebody pulled a blunder. All of these things work on the child when he is asleep (p. 54).

Although First Nations people lavished love, affection and praise on their children, they were still firm with them. It was imperative that since women and their grandparents were the key people in bringing up the children, the grandparents and women must be treated with extra special care, kindness, and love. If this was neglected, the children would pick up on this and imitate the adult's behaviour. The children were also told that they would lose a certain amount of respect if they were to do a particular thing. The children were also taught that they were not to brag because it was unbecoming. Their relatives were

the ones who were to relate their accomplishments and deeds. Other forms of helping children become self-disciplined were through fears and taboos taught in legends and stories. This usually marked their first stage in the belief in the higher power, the Creator. In addition, children were given reasons why they should not do certain things. Thus, the child was held back by principles and reasons (Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Provincial Archives and Provincial Museum, 1966; Teit, 1909; Terrell & Terrell, 1974).

Morey and Gilliam (1974) quote Gardner who sums up instilling the wish to obey in this way:

Respect seems to be like at the centre of everything....It lies at the very centre of a person's relation to his fellow man, starting with the child's relation to his family. It lies at the centre of man's relation to nature and to the Great Spirit above him. Respect is really at the bottom of discipline and authority; it's basic to every kind of learning as well as to the enjoyment of life... (Respect) isn't just a word; it is a profound attitude (pp. 63-64).

Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) related the preaching of the older people in which they are guided by the principles of Love, Faith, Hope and Charity. These principles are:

The things that the Indian does are controlled by love, the love that he has for his relatives or for his people, and the faith he has in his beliefs, and the hope he has for his people. And charity began during the old days of warfare when any war booty was shared with the people (p. 182).

Teit (1909) recorded that for the Shuswap people "the ordeal of whipping ... was universal" (p. 586). This form of discipline will be clarified by one my informants in the data analysis chapter.

Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) further related the importance of the relationships people had with their children, he states that;

The older people tell us, It doesn't mean much to get deprived of material things because you can always get a replacement, but you can never replace a human life, such as that of a child. So appreciate your young while you have them. By this advice, our Elders teach us to appreciate people. One of the ways of showing appreciation is through the attention you give; it is also through listening to the advise of those who love you. My grandfather used to tell me, In return for the expressions of our love to you, you must show your appreciation in some way. You must obey some instructions, some orders, some commands (p. 61).

Clearly, the poem mentioned at the beginning of this section, shows that First Nations people did love and appreciate their children. The children were given only the best education possible and the children returned this love and attention given to them through the underlying principles of traditional education.

### Adolescence

The significance of a girl's entrance into woman-hood was... appreciated by all American tribes, It was believed that whatever she did or experienced then was bound to affect her entire subsequent life, and that she had exceptional power over all persons or things that came near her at that period. (Swanton, as cited in Hodge, 1906)

Adolescence was a very important time in the life of a child because it brings together the teachings they learn in their early years and the new teachings that will help them change from a child to an adult. As well, since the virtue of purity was highly valued, the youth were taught this at an early age through frank discussions on the facts of life (Hungry Wolf, 1980; Hungry Wolf & Hungry Wolf, 1987; Morey & Gilliam, 1974; Provincial Archives & Provincial Museum, 1966; Teit, 1909; Terrell & Terrell, 1974). Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) claims that;

the girls' teachers were their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. They stressed what is desirable in a woman. She was taught how to be a

good housekeeper, and that she should follow certain rituals in preparing food, like filling herself with a certain feeling before going out to pick berries or roots. She was told that she should be kind to others....She was given the background on how these things came about and was taught to have respect for the home. She was told what thoughts go into the different parts of the clothing she might make.... (pp. 79-80) A virtuous woman plays a prominent part in some of the ceremonies we have....Because of her respect for purity, there are certain things a woman will refrain from saying at times. And at certain times of the month, during the menstruation period, the woman doesn't stay inside the tipi ...so she leaves the household and lives in a little shelter all by herself until the period ends....That respect is instilled in the young woman from the time she has her first period (p. 81).

Teit (1909) stated that this practice was also true of the Shuswap people.

"The women had a separate dwelling for this time of the month...in winter, tiny but permanent underground houses were used" (p. 495).

Most cultural groups had initiation rites for their youth, but since they vary so much and because this period of training was one of the most significant rites the youth went through I will quote Teit's (1909) recordings in great length;

When a girl had her first menses, she was considered "mystery," and had to live in a small lodge apart from the people....Her grandmother, mother or aunt attended to her. Afterwards for one year, she trained...in practising the various arts and industries...(while) her...attendant instructed her...so that she (may be a useful family member) and become a valuable wife. Everything she made was hung up in trees near her lodge....About daybreak she bathed in running water and prayed to the Day Dawn....No one, excepting her instructor was supposed to see her....While out at night (she) practised running, climbing, carrying burdens, and digging trenches....(She) wore a large red robe..., (wore) her hair...in a knot at each ear....(and) painted her face red....(She) wore a head-band made from the inside bark of the willow....She placed little heaps of dry fir-needles on their wrists and arms, to which they set fir, meanwhile praying that she might be enabled to withstand pain of all kinds....Girls made pictures with paint on rocks (which) were representations of objects seen in their dreams, and the painting of them was supposed to hasten the attainment of a person's manitou (pp. 587-590).

Purity was of utmost importance to the Shuswap people. It was believed that if the youth engaged in sex before their training, (it) "would have a disastrous effect on their future, (it) would render of no avail the training they had undergone, and (it) would make it impossible to obtain a manitou or become proficient in 'mystery' for a very long time" (p. 590).

Quetone (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) found the most important thing for helping a youth through their adolescent years was that:

I think the most important thing is the building of a person....the building of character should be given priority. The Indian way is to teach the child from birth to puberty about the importance of behaviour and survival. Everything else will follow naturally after that (p. 178).

Marriage was of utmost importance to the Shuswap people, for the girl who had undergone this training, would usually marry shortly afterwards: "Girls usually married between the ages of thirteen to twenty-three. Men married from twenty-two to twenty-five years of age" (Matthew, 1986, p.8). Teit (1909) found that:

Marriage by presents and marriage by betrothal were the most common and honourable methods. Marriage by claiming or touching during the religious or ghost dance was also in vogue. As a rule, the woman took up her abode among her husband's people....Nobles also generally married within their class (p. 591).

Teit (1909) further added that the Shuswap Elders told the youth that:

You must all dance in pairs, each man with one woman (at the ghost dance at Green Lake)....Young people must dance in couples, holding each other's belts, and in this way choose a husband or wife. The (Old One) said no bachelor man or maiden woman would be received by him. Their souls would be turned into animals (pp. 604-605).

Obviously, adolescence was a significant time in First Nations cultures, for unless this period was handled well, it would have lasting effects on the future of

the youth. During this period the youth had to obtain their guardian spirits and prove they were ready for marriage.

### Women

Pity the poor squaw  
Beast of burden, slave  
Chained under female law  
From puberty to grave  
(Anonymous)

Terrell and Terrell (1974) point out the anonymous author of the above poem was influenced by misconceptions many early Europeans held of First Nations people due to the Judeo-Christian theology - where the male was viewed as superior.

First Nations women were presented as having a secondary and insignificant role in their societies. Whereas, in other works, it has been revealed that First Nations societies were highly developed and that women were a central part of their cultures. Many tribes were matrilineal where women were highly regarded, viewed as being equal, and held positions of authority (Bataille & Sands, 1984; Kirkness, 1980; Steele, 1985; Terrell & Terrell, 1976).

The *OHOYO Resource Training Manual* (1982), cited in Beiswenger and Jeanotte (1985), claims that:

While the plight of women in non-Indian society has been one of inequality (which has recently been challenged), Indian women have for the most part shared equality of position in important matters in Indian society, until the reservation system was enacted.

Both females and males can pledge to do the Sun Dance. The dance cannot be done without the presence of a virtuous woman to represent the White Buffalo Calf Woman.... Women have long held

and directed leadership roles in most tribal governments....The first recognized record of a true American Indian woman leader was in 1540....A council of Navajos had women members who could veto war. One fourth of the Indian societies were matrilineal in 1492 (p. 17).

Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) stated the belief that most traditional First Nation societies held of their home, he said that the tipi itself represents a woman. The belief is that:

you can lose your mother - your mother is on loan to you from the Great Father....It is the woman's role to make and take care of the tipi....The women are trained for this role already at a very early age...they are exposed to this procedure of setting and preparing the tipi (pp. 121-122)

Furthermore, Terrell and Terrell (1976) found women were an integral part of their societies, they assert that;

The concept that woman was made from man is not found in Indian religion. Indians accept and adhere to the doctrine that the female of their kind was created simultaneously with the male. For apparent reasons, each was endowed the peculiar qualities and sensibilities, neither was accorded supremacy, and each was made dependent upon the other for existence (p. 1). In general, upon women rested the duties of the household, of caring for the children, of preparing and cooking food, of dressing skins, sewing, ministering to the ill and aiding the crippled and wounded, making clothes and mats and sleeping robes, packing for travel or to accompany the men on a hunt, butchering, weaving cloth and baskets, making pottery (pp. 38-39). No diet of today anywhere in the world is more nutritious than was that of Indians....Meats, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and fish were consumed in well-balanced proportions (p. 54). Indians were not ignorant of ways to preserve...food - quite to the contrary...(their foods) could be safely stored in winter. Meat of big game...was thinly sliced and dried on racks... Indian pemmican, a combination of dehydrated meat and animal fat, was...one of the most effective methods of food processing ever devised (p. 55) Women of numerous tribes wove baskets with such fineness and tightness that they would hold water and could be used in cooking by dropping hot stones into them (p. 77). Spinning and weaving were known to all tribes (p. 80). Skin dressing by Indian women achieved a level of excellence comparable to that of any... people in the world (p. 81).

Obviously, one cannot argue that First Nations women did not hold significant roles in their societies. Although many people still hold a low opinion of First Nations women, there are more people in society who are becoming aware of the many gifts and contributions that First Nations women always had to offer.

### **The Role of the Grandparents**

The feeling of grandparents for their grandchildren can be expressed this way: Our children are dear to us ; but when we have grandchildren, they seem to be more dear than our children were....It goes right back to those wishes that were made for them when they were little girls: the wish that they would live to become grandmothers someday. So when the time comes...they do extra little duties to show their appreciation. (Old Coyote, Morey & Gilliam, 1974, p. 84)

The grandparents were the teachers of the children in all First Nations cultures. They passed on their knowledge and experience to the children to enable them to learn about their culture. Their teachings were a vital part of helping the children grow to love, respect and obey their parents (George, 1980).

Quetone, (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) said that the grandmothers played a significant role in teaching and forming the values of children and in trying to rear them in accordance with tribal and family standards. Many First Nations people would settle for only the best in their treatment and training of their children. For survival purposes, the children had to develop good qualities and yet have a strong enough character to withstand harsh conditions. Thus, the grandmothers lavished their love and affection on their grandchildren and spent many hours singing and telling them stories and legends. But even though they indulged their

grandchildren, they always reared them in a disciplined manner so that a balance is maintained.

The grandfather did much teaching as well, but they taught the boys as they grew older. Then the grandfathers would tell stories that relate to what people expect of a man. Of this Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) said his grandfather told him stories that related to how the various customs and traditions originated, and that it was up to him to remember them so he could pass on the right information to the next generation.

Quetone (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) claims that:

The other point is that old people under the old way had a philosophy of being a kind of excess baggage, and so they weren't too demanding...older people were reconciled to not having too much attention paid to them and not being a burden, mainly because of the necessity for almost constant and quick movement. And yet they had a very strong influence (p. 89).

It is clearly evident that the grandparents held a very important role in First Nations societies, not only in helping to ensure that the children had the best training possible, but they were also honoured for their great wisdom in council meetings.

In this chapter the traditional Shuswap life and traditional First Nations education were presented. The Shuswap were hunting and food gathering people who lived in the interior plateau region of British Columbia. Although they were affected by the settlers, epidemics, and missionaries they are still thriving and adapting today. In the traditional First Nations education section it showed there were many common methods of teaching the young. Each community member was valued and given recognition beginning as early as the prenatal period to those

who were elderly. Each stage of life was crucial and was not rushed. The women and the Elder were treated with extra love and kindness because they were the ones who gave the children the best treatment and training possible.

In chapter three, *Gifted First Nations Educational Programs*, I will discuss three aspects of gifted First Nations education: definition, identification and programming. Since many First Nations gifted and talented children do not fit into the norms of all three aspects, it is important to examine the reasons why this is so.

### CHAPTER III - GIFTED FIRST NATIONS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

My findings in the current literature on gifted and talented First Nations students fall naturally into three categories; (1) definition, (2) identification procedures and (3) programming. The question, "Who are the gifted?," can be answered in many ways. There are general ones, such as Renzulli (1978) who defines giftedness as above average ability, creativity and task commitment, and more specific ones developed nationally, provincially or by local school districts. However, these concepts of giftedness do not generally help in defining who First Nations gifted and talented children are because of their culturally relevant behavioral characteristics. For example, a gifted Navajo student may be humble and quiet and not want to stand out from other students. Moreover, these students needed their talents to directly benefit the family and community. These are themes which continually come up in researching First Nations concept of giftedness. The identification procedures currently being utilized eliminate most gifted and talented First Nations children because of many reasons, but mainly because the tests are not culture-free. George (1987) argues that:

Identification, however, is only one of the legs of the triad of Awareness, Identification, and Program. All over the United States, educators ask themselves why more identified, gifted American Indian student drop out of well- established gifted programs than do their non-Indian peers. The issue is one of relevancy, not race (p. 37)

#### Definition

In the examination of defining giftedness, I will present a diversity of the conceptualization of giftedness from the educational fields, psychological fields,

and from First Nations peoples' perspectives. My hope in bringing these viewpoints together is to clearly define the concept of giftedness so that more First Nations children will be provided with the special programming that is their right. If the definition is a useful one, then it can lead to many favourable consequences for both society and its individuals. Thus, for educators and parents to truly strive for equal educational opportunities for all children, we must all have a better understanding of the concept of giftedness.

The easiest distinctions that societies tend to make are the differences in race, economic level, and ethnic background. Perhaps it is because of these distinctions that equal educational opportunities have not been provided for all children. One internationally accepted definition, developed at the 1985 World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children in Hamburg, cited in Heller and Feldhusen (1986) summarized the conception of giftedness in this way:

Gifted and talented youth are characterized by superior general ability or intelligence, special aptitudes and/or talents, self concepts which recognize and accept the special ability and talent, and high level motivation to learn and to achieve. General ability in childhood evolves toward special talent in adolescence. High level adult achievement in any field requires development of the special talent or aptitudes requisite for that field. Gifted youth must also come to recognize, accept, and feel positive about their special talents and elect to pursue their development. Motivational characteristics can evolve through the development of intrinsic interest and task commitment in the talent area. Gifted youth must also develop drive, energy and persistence in their quest for achievement in the talent area. Schools should recognize the need to provide opportunities for the gifted youth to be grouped in special classes, to be accelerated through the regular curriculum, and to have a wide variety of enriched learning experiences. The needs of gifted youth are diverse and call for multi-service programs of services (p. 37).

This definition sounds ideal for students who are already identified, who are usually white middle class gifted and talented students, but where does it encourage the identification and programming of gifted minority students?

Sternberg and Davidson (1986) compiled a list of seventeen different conceptions of giftedness from prominent individuals in the educational and psychological fields. Although the definitions varied there were some recurring themes, which are that giftedness involves multiple qualities which are not just intellectual but involve social and motivational properties as well. IQ scores were thought as an inadequate measure of giftedness. Other defining qualities included task commitment.

This consensus definition is very helpful in understanding giftedness and shows ways in which the profile of gifted people's abilities differ from the norm. However, as Siegler and Kotovsky (1986) point out, there is one large unresolved definitional issue, this involves including intelligent children and eminent adults under the same definition.

However, the issue of the definition of giftedness is not adequately covering minority groups, even though many advances have been made, and this is evident by the small number of gifted minority students being identified and put in appropriate programming to meet their needs. Gallagher (1986) points out that in no other instance does our concern for definitions have more profound, far-reaching effects.

In addition, Gallagher cites Weiss, Ogesby and Thomas' (1983) study where they found that 28 American states have definitions of gifted and talented that reflect the influence of Marland's (1972) definition. In Marland's view the gifted

and talented would demonstrate high achievement or high potential in at least one of the following areas: intellectual aptitude, academic achievement, creative or productive thinking, leadership or visual and performing arts.

These definitions imply that the value of a particular person's potential or performance is determined by his or her social-cultural context. Further, there is recognition of whether potential or achievement is "high." The use of local norms, e.g., might result in one decision, while the use of national norms would result in a different one.

Torrance (1977) has provided a conceptualization based on his realization that people are motivated to do things that they do best. Thus, his central thesis has been that programs for gifted, culturally different students must build upon their "positives." Furthermore, the positives of culturally different groups are their creative abilities. Members of these groups have had to maintain their creativity in order to survive and adapt. His proposed solution is that in searching for giftedness among the culturally different we seek by whatever means possible to identify their creative positives and then use these characteristics as positives in educational programs and in career development.

Torrance (1977) stated that he was led to his conceptualization of creative positives by a recognition that the abilities and talents that flourish in any culture are the ones that are encouraged and honoured by that culture. He also cited a speech by Chief Standing Bear made about 1877 where he asked for more respect for the strengths of American Indians. His speech, in part, was as follows:

The attempted transformation of the Indian by the White Man and the chaos that has resulted are but the fruit of the white man's disobedience of a fundamental and spiritual law.

The pressure that has been brought to bear upon the Native people...in the attempt to force conformity of custom and habit has caused a reaction more destructive than war...and the injury has not only affected the Indian, but has extended to the white population as well (p. 130).

With Chief Standing Bear's speech, I will now focus on what I have found in the literature about how First Nations people currently define, identify and nurture their gifted students. However I must stress that it has only been recently that educators, particularly American Indian scholars, have done research about gifted and talented First Nations children (Daniels, 1986; Kirschenbaum, 1988; and Tonemah, 1987). Moreover, George (1987) asserts that gifted education and gifted educators have existed in every culture, in every time.

But first I must ask, are there still gifted First Nations children today? Are we, as educators, doing whatever possible to discover and nurture their gifts? Or are we just letting them make it on their own, and focusing our efforts in helping the "needy" children? My answer to the last question is yes. There are many First Nations children who have not and possibly will not be identified. Furthermore, I believe that as First Nations educators, we must strive for appropriate programming which challenges the abilities of all children. However, as stated earlier in this paper there are few references which address this specific group of children and there is little research being done on them. Thus, to find a First Nations conception of giftedness is a challenging one.

George (1987) a First Nations professional trainer and consultant in gifted education worked on a Gifted Program Planning Committee along with other First Nations and Non-First Nations education specialists, developed a definition clearly describing the target student for a gifted program. From this definition, the first

culturally adapted definition was accepted by the U.S. Office of Education, Title 111, Innovative Program section.

Gifted children shall be defined as those children who consistently excel, or consistently show potential to excel, beyond their age and the expectations of their cultural community in the following areas:

1. Cognitive and higher level thinking skills
2. Creative and performing skills
3. Social helping and leadership skills
4. Those skills the cultural community may deem important to the well-being of its members.

Because of these special skills, they need and can benefit from specially planned and developed educational services presented by qualified staff (p. 5).

Clearly, George's (1987) definition above meets this criteria, and more First Nations people need to work to have this type of definition accepted and recognized by the governing bodies.

There are American scholars, including many First Nations educators, who have conducted qualitative and quantitative research to determine appropriate methods to identify and nurture gifted and talented First Nations students. While conducting their research, all agreed that a definition of giftedness must be developed and this definition needs to reflect cultural values and needs. (Bradley, 1989; Brooks, 1989; Christensen, 1991; George, 1987; Kirschenbaum, 1989; Montgomery, 1989; Pfeiffer, 1989; Sisk, 1989; Tonemah, 1991).

On the other hand, Christensen (1991) offers her perspective of First Nations giftedness gained from her experience in planning and directing a gifted program, *The North Wind Warriors* and *Niibin*. She asserts that since the term giftedness, in First Nation cultures is "congruent with the white world's definition," the term is inaccurate, therefore, the Elders and spiritual advisors must be

consulted to interpret the gifts and skills within the tribal language and oral tradition. First Nations people create behaviour norms within their society to allow these gifts to be identified and nurtured. However, gifted people who understood their responsibilities to the abilities given to them by the Creator, were humble and not termed "gifted."

Hartley (1991) in her ethnographic research for her doctoral dissertation, found that while comparing the perceptions of giftedness and talent among the parents and teachers of Navajo and Anglo children that;

The level of acculturation to Anglo mainstream society affected the manner in which parents and teachers perceived and treated the concept of giftedness....In the Navajo language there was no general term for "gifted." The term "outstanding" was used in conjunction with a specific ability....The 10 G/T subscales in this study were perceived by most parents and teachers to be areas in which a child could demonstrate outstanding abilities....Navajo students' abilities in learning a second language, leadership and problem solving/reasoning may be overlooked by their teachers during the identification process for G/T programs....Many Navajo students learned best by watching and having something explained in detail (learning styles). They then needed a period of time to think about, practice, and perfect the task before it was performed for others....Being bilingual was considered to be an outstanding ability for Navajo students....Educators must constantly remind themselves that not all students perform according to established criteria and that the criteria differ for each community they work in (p. 61,62).

Hartley's (1991) study, the findings would probably be quite similar if done in other First Nations groups. Other First Nations authors have agreed with many of Christensen's statements.

Romero and Schultz's (1991) two-year qualitative study, tried to determine how to identify giftedness among Pueblo Indians. Their study focused on the seven Keresan Pueblo communities' perception of giftedness within their own cultural context and examined their students' performance on conventional gifted

identification methods. Their findings were somewhat similar to Hartley's (1991) study. They found that giftedness is viewed as a global human quality encompassed by all individuals and manifested through one's contribution to the well-being of the community. Although there is no Pueblo term for giftedness in their society, there are descriptive terms for those with special cultural abilities or talents. Their society recognizes the cultural abilities or talents, but does not recognize individuals over others, and forms of giftedness are intrinsically linked with the cultural values and activities of the Pueblo society. Their values include, giving from the heart, the possession of special articulation abilities, having abundant knowledge and know when and how to apply this knowledge, and being able to create with the hands.

Montgomery (1989) is a consultant and evaluator of *Explorations in Creativity* for the American Indian Research and Development and served as a consultant for the development and evaluation of programs for gifted American Indian students (Maker & Schiever, 1989). She cited Faas (1982) study where he

interviewed American Indians and Non-American Indians from three groups, designated traditionality groups (similar to dominant culture, bi-cultural, and traditional) and discovered that his population of Navajos defined giftedness to include 'wisdom' and a wide range of specific talents (p. 85).

Further to this she states that in order to identify gifted minority students we must learn to understand and appreciate cultural differences, and remember these differences are not good or bad, or right or wrong, but merely differences. Moreover, since one person seldom possesses all traits, the list of differential characteristics should not be used to stereotype or limit (Garrison, 1991).

Tonemah (1987) who is a First Nations educator and is the President of the American Indian Research and Development Centre, (AIRD) has asserted they have chosen to direct their efforts to develop future tribal leaders, the Indian tribal youth. Further to this, he states that the intention is to identify and select Indian students who are highly motivated, exhibit outstanding abilities and/or potential, while enhancing their individual gifts and talents and supporting their Indian-ness.

In an effort to gain a tribal perspective of gifted and talentedness ARID surveyed tribal people at three national education conferences. The survey asked the participants to list their tribes' characteristics of gifted and talented students. The 266 responses were gathered and analyzed by a Non-Indian and American Indian researchers. ARID, INC then conducted a meta-content analysis then pilot tested the items for appropriateness with 196 American Indians and derived a ranking of the weighted items. Four categories of perceptions emerged: Acquired Skills, Personal/Human Qualities, Tribal/Cultural Understanding, and Aesthetic Abilities, which follow similar themes suggested by George (1989). The top 10 out of the 33 rankings were:

1. High Intelligence
2. High Creativity
3. High Academic Achievement
4. High Problem Solving Skills  
High Degree of Self-Discipline
5. Respectful of Tribal Elders
6. High Leadership Ability
7. Respectful of Others
8. High Degree of Artistic Talent
9. High Mathematic Ability
10. High Degree of Task Commitment (p. 185)

As definitions of giftedness vary so much, it seems of utmost importance that the schools and the communities must work cooperatively to develop a

concept of giftedness that relates to First Nations students in their area. The dream of having more First Nations students in gifted programs will then become a reality.

### **Identification Procedures**

Identification of giftedness is a concern for educators because they cannot help develop giftedness if they cannot identify its existence. Thus, for proper identification most gifted programs use a wide variety of tools.

In screening and identifying gifted First Nations children we must ask ourselves some very important questions. What do we know about discovering the gifted First Nations children? Are the general characteristics of gifted non-First Nation children the same as gifted First Nations children? Can we be assured that gifted First Nations children will do well on individual intelligence tests? Are these types of tests fair to children who are culturally diverse?.

Most educators agree that there are problems with identifying giftedness among the culturally different. For these reasons educators must be careful of the screening and assessment procedures used to identify gifted students, as they may continue to screen out gifted First Nations students. George (1987) suggests having more parental and community involvement in developing these identification and assessment procedures to ensure they are culturally appropriate.

But what are the characteristics of the gifted First Nations child? Unfortunately, most educators do not know how to identify the characteristics of gifted learners. Moreover, many educators identify only the gifted children who "behave" as if they are gifted. However, many gifted First Nations children do not exhibit such behaviours because of their cultural values and expectations of their

community. Most tribes emphasize cooperation and discourage its members to strive for individual recognition.

Kirschenbaum (1988) who is a School Psychologist and Coordinator of a Gifted Education Program in Arizona, found that little research has been done that includes First Nations students in their norm samples on the gifted and talented students. However, he suggests that there are four circumstances where gifted and talented First Nations students can be selected in programs for the gifted, which are: a First Nations student may meet all the predetermined criteria for being selected; the student may have a superior score compared to peers in one or more areas of ability being assessed; the student could be identified as the most gifted relative to their ethnic group; the First Nations student who is low academically may be chosen for entry into a program based on measured strength, but be put through a special intensive preparatory curriculum before participating in the gifted program. To exemplify a successful program of this sort, he described the Zuni identification procedure in New Mexico. This program uses a combination of methods to identify students into a "talent pool" and takes an approach that follows some of the guidelines laid out in the Revolving Door Identification Model (Renzulli, Reis & Smith, 1981). Here, the whole school is involved in the Enrichment Program and the Enrichment Club meets once per week for an hour after school.

Further to this, he asserts that screening should include those students with above average scores on subtests, honour roll students, nominations from parents and students, and culturally valued behaviour characteristics. Once all this information is recorded on a data matrix, then the gifted and talented student can

be interviewed by the selection committee to enable them to determine the enthusiasm, depth and breadth of knowledge, imagination, ingenuity and social skills. The final selection is made then and those students who were considered but not chosen should be re-examined after a few years.

I agree with Kirschenbaum's (1988) idea that the whole school should be involved. To do this, the students, parents, teachers, principal, and school administrators would have to work cooperatively to make this come about. Having the whole community involved in gifted education programs for First Nations students is the ideal.

Sisk (1989) is an internationally known educator who currently serves as executive director of the World Council on the Gifted and Talented and is the author of several books and numerous articles related to gifted education, recommends early education to enable First Nations children to build a large cultural range (the ability where First Nations children can move comfortably from their culture to Anglo-American culture). She also recommends that parents and community be actively involved in their children's education early since the family is the most important unit in American Indian culture. However, educators need to realize why it may be difficult for some parents to be actively involved in their children's education. She states some of the reasons are: their own educational experiences, the lingering effects of the boarding/residential schools, the conflicts in traditional teachings with those taught in schools, geographical obstacles, biases felt against the First Nations people, negative treatments they may have experienced by some educators, lack of First Nations culture or history taught in

the curriculum, and misunderstandings of some school personnel with the community.

Sisk (1989) brings out significant points as to why some First Nations people may find it difficult to become actively involved in their children's education. Throughout the years, both while I worked for the Kamloops Indian Band and while I was enrolled in the Native Indian Teacher Education Program, a constant complaint of the teachers was that there was a lack of First Nations parental involvement in their children's education. Educators need to realize that some First Nations parents need to develop a trusting relationship with their children's teachers to enable them to work cooperatively with them for the betterment of their children's education.

George (1987) in discussing the identification procedures asserted that;

Public schools cannot help develop giftedness if they cannot identify its existence. It is because of this concern for proper identification that most gifted programs use a wide variety and combination of assessment tools....It is even more difficult to identify gifted American Indian students because most of the assessment tools are designed for and tested for use with students from the dominant society.... (p. 18)....If recognized during the formative years and presented with instructional methods and curriculum materials appropriate for learning style...the gifted American Indian child is more likely to respond positively to education and avail himself or herself of the opportunities that it has to offer. Furthermore, the acquired knowledge of self can contribute to personal growth and directed productivity within the natural or adopted culture (p. 37).

As stated by the authors in this section, the need for a wide range of culturally relevant identification procedures is essential in order to properly identify the gifted and talented First Nations students. Because of the gifted and talented First Nations students' cultural values, as stated earlier, their characteristics will be different from the norm. It seems imperative that the parent, teachers, principal,

community and the school district personnel, as stated by Kirschenbaum (1987), work cooperatively to ensure that they all work towards the goal of having First Nations children properly identified.

### **Programming**

Gallagher (1986) suggests the important issue for educators is how to make meaningful adaptations for culturally diverse gifted students. The three major types of adaptations he suggested are "counselling, the building of the self-knowledge, and the development of some meaningful curriculum adaptations" (p. 426).

He further asserts that an important consideration is that educators often have placed high ability, culturally diverse children in fast or accelerated programs along with middle-class children only to find that these culturally diverse students are not able to respond. It is not that their ability is lacking, it is their own experience and skill development that prevents them from participating as positively as possible.

But why is counselling so important? Are First Nations gifted and talented students feeling even more alienated from others because of their cultural background and because they are gifted? What does building self-knowledge have to do with gifted education of the culturally different? Does having a strong self-concept lay the foundations to successfully participate in a gifted educational program? Why is the development of meaningful curriculum adaptations so important? Will the gifted and talented First Nation students feel more comfortable with learning about his cultural heritage?

George (1991) states that many educational programs developed for First Nations students were unsuccessful because it was developed without considering the collective First Nation concept of themselves and their tribe. In building on this understanding the Gifted Program Planning Committee was established. The intent of developing a program for gifted and talented First Nations students was to increase the number of First Nations gifted and talented students, increase parental and student participation through developing goals consistent/ relevant to the First Nations community values and beliefs. The curriculum would draw on real-life experiences and needs as this would provide support for problem solving, critical thinking, and innovation related to their community needs.

She further reported the affective and cognitive factors in her Native American Gifted Program in Washington State. The affective factors are as follows:

a positive and safe environment; "visions time"; planned and scheduled thinking time; positive awareness of self and cultural community; opportunities for service, increase self-worth; emotional consistency; appropriate recognition.

The cognitive factors are as follows:

a variety of hand-on experiences; training in brainstorming, problem solving, projection; practice in evaluation, sequencing and interpreting; opportunities for divergent and creative thinking; synthesis of ability with real-life problems, relevancy; recognition of cultural validity (pp. 31-32).

Further to this she recommends that the program's philosophical and working models should reflect the intellectual and psychosocial needs of the student and should be flexible enough to allow variety among the needs. These programs should include all three program options; acceleration, enrichment, and

self-awareness. Guidance is of special importance to students because they are different intellectually and culturally. The curriculum should be challenging and channelling inquiry and personal expression. The student's gifts should be seen as having relevancy to the areas of life that they value as Indian people. The curriculum materials may be developed around cultural events. Such activities are important as a bridge from the regular classroom to a gifted program. The teacher chosen should be primarily concerned with encouraging the growth of the student's confidence and self-esteem.

The purpose of the program should be to develop skills necessary for gifted and talented First Nations students to successfully live bi-culturally. Another major purpose of the program should be to build on the strengths that the students already have and to develop those areas that they are weakest in. Finally, the family and community are important to the success of the student and the program. For if the parents are not made partners in the success of their children's education, the children will be left on their own to deal with the conflicting values of both cultures. Educators must work toward providing appropriate programming for gifted and talented First Nation students. For, as stated by George (1987) these programs should strongly emphasize the discovery and nurturance of personal potential for positive application to the general welfare of First Nations people.

When you examine the programs George outlined they are not a whole lot different than good educational programs for all students. I think where the difference is in the curriculum taught to gifted and talented children as opposed to those of all other students. George (1987) states "curriculum for the gifted and talented encompasses content, instructional strategies, and interaction time

elements that distinguish it from a curriculum for other students" (p. 54).

Additionally, gifted students need counselling as stated by most educators in gifted education. Many gifted and talented students cannot make it on their own. They need the support and encouragement from within the school and at home.

To exemplify what I mean I will describe the successful *Niibin's* (the Ojibwe word for summer) program. Christensen (1991) related that:

(The program) provided a strong academic focus within a culturally appropriate environment. It was possible to deal normally, naturally, and effectively with gifted and talented Indian children (there) because it featured Indian students only, was based on daily parental involvement with Elders in the classroom, and employed bilingual Indian people who...were successful in disciplining Indian children. We relied heavily on our Elders to advise us, and, as we progressed in this school, we learned how to better involve Elders in the daily life of the school....Our project lead to the finding that parental advice, Elder counsel, and Indian groupings are inherent ingredients in a successful gifted and talented Indian program. This, however, is impossible to maintain in a public school environment unless specific regulations beyond current laws allow program-specific anomalies....We began to discuss our movement toward young men and women Warrior societies, once a standard in our Tribal societies. Those Elder-mentor led groups assisted our young people's journey through rites of passage in a natural way, one that was designed to define Tribal society's continued strength (p. 13).

Brooks (1989) states that bilingualism is often ignored as a factor in the gifted program purpose. The program's advisory group must develop a common conception base tied to language. The question of whether or not fluency in two languages is necessary for future First Nations leaders should be determined. A program for gifted and talented First Nations children would benefit from curriculum based on cognitive education theories. Any language deficits should be strengthened in both languages. Gardner's (1983) theory could help identify those with nontraditional types of giftedness. In heterogeneous populations the key for a

successful program is the teacher who is knowledgeable about First Nations gifted and talented students' behaviour characteristics and who would use the teaching strategies recommended by Garrison (1989).

Daniels (1988) suggests a differentiated program where it builds on the student's strengths in their abilities, talents, general academic level, and special needs. She cited Rubenstein who reported the following traits: students remained visible; there were high expectations for staff and students; teaching approaches were flexible; and other cultures were involved. She presented Little Soldiers's Unit where the goal was to dispel the myths about First Nations people by concentrating on present day customs. Students have the opportunity to learn the historical contributions of First Nations people and are given the opportunity to know Elders personally through their visits. In this way they learn about the culture and history from knowledgeable Elders (p. 243).

Garrison (1989) a teacher, lecturer and consultant in the fields of education of the gifted and culturally different students argues that gifted and talented programs in the U.S. neglect minorities, especially First Nations students. Identification is not enough as identification, philosophy, and curriculum should serve the needs of gifted minority students. The program philosophy of multicultural programs should have the goals of perpetuating the student's culture, providing maximum development of gifted student's education or career, and helping the students become bi-cultural. The successful combination of culture within the classroom requires flexibility, the willingness to tolerate and accommodate cultural differences. In the establishment of *Cultural Comfort Zone*, the teacher can begin to change pedagogy that alienates the student. A

multisensory approach is found to be effective in teaching First Nations children. Classroom competition is an inappropriate approach for First Nations groups but group competition in class is more acceptable. Small group cooperative learning activities are good strategies for First Nations gifted and talented students. The attributes of a model for First Nations students include a conceptual approach; the student's knowledge as an information base; entry skills assessment; multiple modalities; learning from peers; and open-ended approaches.

Haugen (1981) recommends teaching students to become self-directed learners, and establish enrichment clubs and programs, but some of her suggestions do not fall in line with the First Nation recommendation for gifted and talented programs. For example, she suggests encouraging the students to make arts and crafts. Although some of her ideas are good, First Nations people did not teach an idea or activity by itself. When the Elders taught the children how to produce materials, it was done through modelling and observation in addition to explaining the values behind these activities.

Pfeiffer (1989) a Navajo educator and associate professor in multicultural teacher education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of New Mexico, argues that appropriate education will serve to strengthen First Nations people by improving their quality of life in areas of health, educational achievements through equity, language and cultural retention, and economic security. Developing leaders will help them be better able to fight for their aboriginal rights, acquire economic stability, and achieve spiritual tranquillity. A First Nations gifted and talented program would provide a resolution of critical societal problems, capitalize on the students' strengths, help to develop their inter-

personal skills and academic ability, nurture their abilities, skills and intelligence, and to develop their knowledge of tribal life. In using the gifted and talented First Nations children's cultural strengths as a bridge, they can be taught to become problem solvers and critical thinkers. The program curriculum should harmonize goals of home/school/community through studying how their culture functions. The student's program should strengthen their first language, be flexible, have relevant curriculum, utilize the students strengths in instruction, vary the instruction to meet the student's needs, encourage teamwork between parents and school and seek community mentors to assist the students.

Moreover, Pfeiffer (1989) asserts that the historical relations of First Nations people with the federal government has had a major impact on their education. Self-determination is the key for survival in a bi-cultural world.

Sisk (1989) suggests that when planning the curriculum for First Nations gifted and talented students they should ask themselves the following questions:

Is First Nations humanness recognized? Is the tone patronizing? Are they portrayed as noble or savage? Is the wording demeaning? In the past, negative stereotypes of First Nations people were always presented in school text books. The only way to stop this is to screen the books or materials used in the program very carefully.

Since curriculum is a major part of a gifted First Nation program it would seem imperative that the materials are screened by using the questions that Sisk (1989) asked. As a First Nations person I find it very humiliating and hurtful to read books that demean or belittle First Nations people, particularly when the teacher refuses to acknowledge the feelings of the First Nations students in the class. What most authors emphasize for a successful First Nations gifted program is for the students to be able to live bi-culturally. They would like to see the

program focus ensure the perpetuation of students' Native culture, while maximizing their educational and career opportunities. An important issue that needs to be addressed is that most of the authors did not address the differences between programs on reservations and those off reservations. If the program is on the reserve it should have the opportunities to implement changes where necessary, however, off reserve, where students from a variety of cultural backgrounds are being served in a program, the focus and implementation of programs will be much different.

## CHAPTER IV - METHODOLOGY

### The Reasons

As I was deciding on my thesis topic, I found that there was very little research on First Nations women, and little on First Nations gifted and talented or on the traditional ways First Nation cultures identified and nurtured their young. This is how my thesis was born.

One purpose of my thesis is to tell the stories of seven eminent Shuswap women Elders who are knowledgeable about traditional forms of Shuswap educational practices and to analyze these stories in terms of the traditional concepts of giftedness, identification, and nurturance of gifted and talented girls. It is only with the words of our distinguished Shuswap women Elders that these stories can be presented with some accuracy. Even though our people have had a long hard struggle with the white explorers, fur traders, diseases, settlers, and more importantly with the government and missionaries, we have managed to keep some of our traditional educational practices alive.

However, these influences have left their mark on the Shuswap people. Sometimes in trying to research our traditional knowledge First Nations people relate stories of missionaries or the residential school. For example, when asked what First Nations people did when someone died, they will say that you must ring the church bell four times. Additionally, many First Nations people will say that they are still struggling with the effects of the severe punishments they received for speaking their own language or trying to practice their cultural ways. The latter was what nearly all of my Elder participants stated either directly or indirectly.

The stories I was told brought forth many of their beliefs, values, memories and conflicts. Although some traditional forms of educational practices are still in existence today, there is nothing written about the traditional ways First Nations people identified and nurtured gifted and talented girls. Their stories are in dire need of being told.

### **The Methods**

To begin with, my research relied on written materials to examine First Nations traditional educational practices and the conceptions of giftedness, identification procedures, and programming for First Nation gifted and talented students. I sought information from the UBC libraries, First Nation House of Learning Xwi7xwa Library, and the Secwepemc Cultural Educational Resource Library. Although I found relevant materials for traditional forms of education, I did not find much that related to First Nations gifted and talented students. It was not until I attended a Gifted Education Conference in Saskatoon that I obtained a book and a dozen articles which related to First Nations gifted and talented students from the conference facilitator. An examination of the traditional and current forms of First Nations education, particularly gifted education, are the basis for my thesis. Although the government and missionaries goals were to assimilate First Nations people, the literature I found showed that the First Nations people still hold their traditional educational practices dear to them.

Since my Elder participants told their stories vividly, often in a different way than the written documents, in-depth interviewing was the best approach in presenting some of the traditional forms of educational practices. Seven eminent

Shuswap women were interviewed for approximately two hours each, four of these for an additional two hour visit and with the exception of one where I stayed with her for over seven hours.

I taped and then transcribed the interviews. However, two Elders did not want to be taped so I took notes during the interview. I was interested in obtaining the Shuswap concept of giftedness and the ways the Shuswap gifted and talented girls were identified and nurtured. It became obvious to me that some of the Elders were very experienced in the interview process. One was in the process of writing a book and told me that she would only give me information that was not going to be in her book. Another Elder had conducted many interviews herself with other Shuswap Elders over the past two decades. All were concerned about whether or not they were giving me the information I needed. All of the interviews were pre-arranged and since I was going to be learning some knowledge from them I thought it would be best to give the traditional presents of print and tobacco. My mother came with me to four of the interviews where she sometimes served as an interpreter to rephrase the questions in Shuswap so that the Elders would understand. I felt embarrassed as many of my questions were worded in mainstream academic language. Most of the participants did not understand my gifts of tobacco and print, but my mother knew this would happen so she brought a package of religious gifts and clothing; this they understood. On another occasion my sister-in-law, Linda, came with me, and on another occasion my sister, Jeanette, was present. One Elder agreed to do the interview only because Jeanette was my sister. In the one interview I did by myself, when I got there I could hear a woman singing an Indian song. I told this Elder and she said her

sweatlodge must be calling to me. I had a difficult time to get the message across of what I wanted in my list of questions. She had no formal schooling but was a very wise and respected Elder. I had wished that I had my mother there with me as I was afraid to show disrespect for this Elder. I wondered if I had been in the educational system so long that I forgot how to communicate with the Elders, and this made me feel ashamed as I have such high regard for my Elders. To develop a feeling of trust for me, this Elder asked many questions about my family background and what I was going to do with the information before we began the interview. I had spent seven hours with this Elder in one visit where we got to know each other quite well. All of my informants had received some community or provincial recognition for their efforts in the Shuswap traditional culture.

I interviewed two Elders from the Kamloops Indian Band, one former member of the Kamloops Indian Band, who resides in the Chilliwack area, three Elders from the Neskainlith Indian Band, two who reside in Chase, one who resides in Salmon Arm and one Elder from the Canim Lake Band, which is in the Williams Lake area. Although my intent was to interview Shuswap women who were over seventy years of age because I believed they would still hold much of the Shuswap traditional knowledge. I had two who refused; thus, I included two who were in their sixties and they proved to be very knowledgeable about the Shuswap values and customs. One of the Elders I wanted to interview refused because she said traditionally these are stories you are supposed to remember, not write down and I should seek my own family members to obtain this information. The Shuswap people, prior to the coming of the White man, did not have their stories in written form, as storytelling was our means of passing along our history and culture.

My interviews were open-ended. I let the Elder women tell their stories and often had to turn off the tape to let them rest or think about the question before answering. I had a list of questions that I wanted to ask but found that it was best just to let the ladies relate their stories without too much interruption as it is our cultural way not to interrupt an Elder when they speak. The interviews mostly took place in the Elders' homes. I found that in all cases we had to visit with them and have a cup of tea, do the interview, then have another cup of tea and something to eat. This is the traditional way people visit with one another. Cruikshank (1990) found similarly that;

Storytelling is a universal activity and may well be the oldest of the arts. It has always provided a vehicle for the expression of ideas .... (The women Elders she interviewed) tell us much about the present as about the past, as much about ideas of community as about individual experience....When they talk about their lives, these women use narrative genres familiar to anyone sharing their cultural background but not always clear to cultural outsiders....Yet oral testimonies are more than just the spontaneous product of an encounter between an interviewer and a subject: the narrative has symbolic qualities - a kind of autonomous life that simultaneously reflects continuity with the past and passes on experiences, stories, and guiding principles in the present .... Each of these women has taken an energetic role in determining both the direction of our work .... Under their tutelage my interests have shifted away from an oral history committed to documenting changes in social reality and toward an investigation of narrative forms for talking about, remembering, and interpreting everyday life (pp. ix-x).

In choosing my informants I asked my mother, my sister-in-law, Linda, who was the former director at the Secwepemc Museum, and my sister who continually has contact with traditional Shuswap women Elders, about who would prove to be good candidates. They were chosen by the degree of knowledge that they possessed and the recognition they had already received locally, provincially or nationally for their work in the betterment of their people. I feel that I have only

begun to learn the traditional forms of Shuswap education, as there are many more elderly women who possess the knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors.

As I stated earlier I had to establish a warm rapport with the informants before they let me interview them, even though they knew my mother, my sister-in-law and my sister. The Elders still had to get to know me over tea and visiting with them awhile. I felt that they had to make sure that they could trust me before they shared their stories. Because of my intense feeling of respect that I have for these Elder women and their words, I went through about ten sweatlodges where I prayed to the Great Spirit that I would express their words in a manner that would be acceptable to them. Additionally, I had discussed this feeling with Jo-ann Archibald, my UBC Adviser, who recommended that in addition to letting them read their transcripts, that maybe I would feel more at ease if I returned to see them personally to ask if they wanted any further additions or deletions in their transcripts. This was why I had gone to see five of the Elders twice. I found that in my second visit it was like a family visit as my mother, my father, my brother, my sister or my sister-in-law came with me. Afterwards, I sent all of the Elders a note of thanks for their participation in my research.

Two of the main problems I found in doing this research, particularly in trying to get them to recall memories of their childhood, was their selective memory and the oral tradition. At times some of the Elders had difficulty remembering the times before they attended the Indian Residential Schools. As mentioned earlier, the residential schools had a major impact on their lives. In fact, one of the Elders did not relate any stories at all about her childhood. This Elder had spent the most time in the residential school. Another Elder who spent quite a number of years in the

residential school only related a short story about her childhood. Another significant impact was World War 1 and World War 11, as some of their fathers, husbands, uncles, brothers, or cousins went off to war. Many of those who returned from the war had severe social problems due to their traumatic experiences there. Since these war veterans were a part of my Elder participants families, they often felt the effects of these social problems.

I kept a journal to record my feelings and what took place at the interviews. I found myself wishing that I had listened to the tapes already recorded by my informants and one of the books that two of my informants helped to write. It was not until after I had done the interviews that I looked at the tapes at the Secwepemc Cultural Educational Resource Library and found tapes by some of my informants. After completing the first draft of my data analysis, I found that there were some informants who supported my thesis and some presented ideas that had not occurred to me. Later, as I did a more comprehensive analysis, I was so terrified of not getting the Elders words or ideas across accurately. In response, I compiled my data analysis using the medicine wheel as my framework. I separated and colour coded the transcripts according to the four stages of life, childhood, adolescence, woman and Elder, as many First Nations cultures use the medicine wheel, I believed it would be a more appropriate way of presenting their stories.

In an effort to maintain the confidentiality of my informants I only gave them a number and stated which Shuswap band they belonged to. Other than that I have included very little details about them.

I am confident that my work will be both useful and enlightening to Non-First Nations and First Nations people, particularly educators. Maybe the great

wisdom and knowledge that my informants shared with me will encourage more First Nations educators to record the histories of their own tribal group, help educators see better ways of educating our children, and seeing how great our traditional First Nations societies were and the significant role that women held.

## CHAPTER V - DATA ANALYSIS

The essence of true leadership and what it is to be a human being is to be found in service to others. This is the greatest of all the lessons of the medicine wheel (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1984, p. 47).

The mystery of all endings is found in the birth of new beginnings. There is no ending to the journey of the four directions. The human capacity to develop is infinite. The medicine wheel turns forever (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1984, p. 71).

In this chapter I will discuss the four phases of life of my eminent Elders.

Since the definitions of giftedness found in the *Gifted First Nations Educational Program* chapter were focused on the Kindergarten to grade 12 schooling context, I thought a more culturally appropriate framework for analysis found in Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane (1984) was suited to address this because they discuss the four phases of life: childhood, adolescence, adult and Elder. The recurring themes which emerged in the interviews were leadership, service to others, and being a valuable wife, mother, and contributing member of the community. All of their gifts were identified by the Elder's extended family who saw the gifted and talented qualities like leadership, respectfulness to the Elders, being of service to others, responsible, strong spiritual beliefs, generosity, and wisdom. These gifted qualities follow the first principles found in Bopp, Bopp, Brown, and Lane (1984), which are:

all things are interrelated, everything is in a state of constant change, changes occur in cycles or patterns, a balanced life honours both the physical and spiritual laws, we are spiritual and physical beings, the process human beings use to develop new qualities may be called 'true learning' there are four dimensions of 'true learning', our spiritual development may be understood in terms of four related capacities, we must be active participants in the unfolding of our own potentialities, we must decide our journey, we must be committed to

our self-development and failure will be our own fault for not following these teachings (pp. 26-30).

Additionally, these gifted qualities fall in line with the traditional code of ethics from Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane (1984), which are:

praying and giving thanks to the Creator, respecting all, respecting council members, treating your guests with honour and consideration, the hurt of one is the hurt of all, the honour of one is the honour of all, welcoming strangers, viewing all people as equal, serving others, observing moderation and balance, being able to discriminate good from evil influences, and listening to guidance (pp. 75-82).

Although their gifts varied from being medicine women, herbalists, speakers, caretakers of their family and community members, and preservers of the traditional Shuswap ways of life, their main gift was service to the people. Many of their lives were similar in that they all worked hard beginning with doing smaller jobs as children, to working in partnership with their husbands, children and foster children, then as an Elder assisting in rearing their grandchildren and relating some of the stories of the past to them and any others who showed interest. Many were actively involved in their communities politically, socially, economically or educationally. They lived through the World Wars, the Depression, diseases and the residential school era, which made great disruptions and conflicts in their lives; however, as they became Elders they were able to resolve these issues and worked hard in preserving, recording and enhancing Shuswap language, history, and culture. These eminent women Elder's lives have come full circle, as they are identifying and nurturing the gifts they see in their children and grandchildren and are ensuring the future generations know of great wisdom their ancestors.

### The Gifts of the East

The East is the direction from where the gifts of light, beginnings, renewal, innocence, guilelessness, spontaneity, joy, capacity to believe in the unseen, warmth of spirit, purity, trust, hope, uncritical acceptance of other, love that doesn't question others, courage, truthfulness, birth, rebirth, childhood, illumination, guidance, and leadership come (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1984, p.72).

It is no accident that (from one symbolic view) one of the humblest creatures (the mouse) and one of nobility (the eagle) are the twin teachers of the East. For greatness of spirit and humility are opposite sides of the same reality (Bopp et al., 1984, p.47).

I will now discuss the first of the four phases of life, the childhood of my informants. I will begin by introducing each Elder by their approximate age, the Shuswap band they are from and discuss some of the major accomplishments to enable the reader to gain a clearer insight into what their gifts and talents are and to see how it was nurtured over their lifetime.

Many recurring themes emerged from the interviews. Nearly all of the Elders related the happiness and freedom of their childhood, prior to their residential school experience. They shared a great respect for their parents, grandparents, and other family and community members; the methods used in how they were instilled with the wish to obey was quite similar; and how they in turn listened to the requests made of them by assisting with the numerous chores required of them. Similarly they shared how their gifts and talents were identified and nurtured; how they showed they were a valuable, contributing member of their family and community, how they were taught generosity which was a valuable part of their culture and their deep spiritual beliefs, whether it was Roman Catholic or traditional Shuswap beliefs.

Before these ladies went to the residential schools, there were similar traditional beliefs and values as outlined in Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane's (1984) first principles and code of ethics and in the chapter on *Traditional First Nations Life*. These wonderful early life experiences left a tremendous impact on them throughout their lives. In order to begin to understand these impacts, one must examine their stories of the time before they went to school.

This late eminent Elder, who was about ninety years old, received an Honourary Doctorate from Simon Fraser University for her life's work in preserving, recording and enhancing the Shuswap language, history and culture. She had worked in close partnership with the Secwepemc Cultural Educational Society and others in writing books, and recording the Shuswap traditions on tape. Since she was in the process of writing her own autobiography when I interviewed her, she informed me that she would only tell me things that would not be in her book, thus, she only related a story regarding her childhood memories. She was fluent in both the Shuswap, Thompson languages and the Chinook jargon which was traditionally used as a means of trade among the First Nations societies all the Pacific Coast line. She dedicated her life to the service of others through raising numerous foster children and playing a leadership role in many cultural, social, educational and political events in the Shuswap Nation. Elder Number One related her childhood memories as follows:

(One time) my father got the wagon and my parents and us three little girls went up the mountain. That was our vacation, eh, trip, before haying time. Ooh, we enjoyed that vacation time...that was a beautiful spot....And I seen some nice saskatoons there, I was just getting busy when the beehive, I guess I stepped on it (laughs) I started screaming and jumping around, they told me afterwards, they laughed at me, nobody pity me. They said I had my hat off and I was

trying to whip it, (like) the horse. Oh (my mother and sisters) said, 'You're cowboying around, eh?' (laughs)....Ooh, it was fun for them....After we came back from our summer camp, it was time to work, to cut the hay....my father work, work, work all the time.

I went back (to school) for the fourth year, but I had to get sick, oh my. Instead of going to the doctor I stayed home. My father went to Europe, in the First World War. They didn't tell me he'd be gone for one, two, three years, no. Nobody told me. I didn't ask them. Maybe we are not supposed to ask questions when we are little in our days. I guess my father was gone from 1916...to 1919. I stayed and helped my mother at home.

If I go picking flowers, I tell mother, 'Mother, can I go picking flowers now it's spring time? I bet there's alot on the hill.'....Sure enough, there were Easter lilies. My dog was around, and he was busy too...with the ground hogs. Ooh that was a beautiful spring day for me.

My mother (would) sing an Indian song. I know those songs, but in my way. Mother would sing and she'd translate to me. She said I was singing in Okanagan and it is saying this....My mom, auntie and uncle, as they spoke in Okanagan, I'd be listening, I'd lose a word here and there and then I'd catch on to what they are talking about, and I'd be laughing with them. We were happy the way we were. As we were growing up, that was nice happy memories that come to me all the time.

I guess I was so happy...as the days went I always go back to my childhood....Ooh I think as we were children we were under the wings of our mother, our safety place, was under the wings of our beloved mother. All of us, you know. That's what I always think, as the song says, "sweet as a mother's heart....It seemed like yesterday, like what I'm telling you now. All gone. Beautiful, beautiful. The first gift of a baby is the child's smile to its mother (she cried a little).

We were happy in all our families, happy people, happy nation, the Native people were happy, with the team of horses we can just unhook our horses near the river, and put up our tent and be at home there, nobody will say, 'What are you doing there, you're on private property'. No, that was never heard among the Indian Nation. The Indian Nation was a great nation. Love, loving each other, caring for each other, where ever they were, it seemed like a warm blanket covered over them. In their reserves, loving each other, welcoming each other, all over. The way we lived we were happy, free, we loved our neighbours.

In this Elder's story you can see and feel everything the way she did as a little girl by her wonderful memories of the happy times spent with her family. There was so much love and laughter amongst her family. In her stories about the camping trip and picking flowers she shows that she has learned gifts of innocence, guilelessness, spontaneity and joy. She showed she had belief in the unseen because she told me later that her family were very devote Roman Catholics. She shows the gifts of warmth of spirit, purity, trust and hope through her relationships with her mother, father, and sisters. She shows her gifts of uncritical acceptance of others, and love that does not question others through not questioning her parents' decision to keep her home from school rather than taking her to see a doctor, not questioning why her father had to go off to war, and why she had to help her family work hard in the hay fields, gathering food, and in the garden. She shows the gifts of illumination, guidance and leadership by her exceptional abilities in learning the songs and language of the Shuswap and the Thompson Indians and in remembering the stories and legends told to her. She shows her gifts of beautiful speech by the way she creates such vivid imagery in telling her stories. She showed her ability to see through complex situations by knowing not to question why her father had to go off to war. She showed the gifts of watching over others, guiding others, and devotion to the service of others through helping her mother maintain their household and hay fields while her father was in the war. She was able to show her ability to focus attention on present time tasks and concentration through the work that she had to do to help her parents. At that time the Shuswap people were still very close to nature and seemed to love and respect every part of it. She relates how much the Shuswap

people were so loving, caring, sharing and respectful towards one another. They were not possessive over their personal property or their possessions.

The next eminent Elder is in her sixties and is from the Kamloops Indian Band. She has dedicated her life to the service of others through raising her nine children, although two daughters have passed away, and over two dozen foster children. She is highly honoured and respected for her work in the community culturally, socially, educationally and politically. Her commitment toward the preservation of the language, history and culture is exemplified by starting the Kamloopa Pow Wow in 1980, passing on the traditional Shuswap teachings to her children, grandchildren and many others. She is a powerful supporter of her son, the chief, thus, many people from her community seek her advice and assistance in matters relating to the Kamloops Indian Band. For example, she will speak on someone's behalf to the band workers or band council on problems regarding housing, education, social and recreational concerns. She wields a lot of political power behind the scenes. She still actively serves on various community committees both in the City of Kamloops and on the Kamloops Indian Band. She spent many hours with the Elder ladies of the community just to visit them and make sure that they were okay. She used to organize informal gatherings for them at their homes. These Elders would take turns hosting the gatherings and she would bring all of the other Elder women to that home. She also goes to the homes and helps those families who are sick or have lost a loved one. She is an adopted mother, aunt and grandmother of many people, including some older than her. Elder Number Three relates her childhood in this manner:

The thing that I remember most when I was just little, whenever I frequently got sick, my grandfather, (who) was a medicine man and hereditary chief, would come down from Chu Chua, to...see me and give me (Indian) medicine....I remember my grandpa telling me some stories about how it was to be a good Indian person and to never be ashamed of being Indian, always be proud. Even today when I am afraid I still pray to him for support and guidance.

I learned from my uncle how to do things like sweep the floor, hold the baby and just generally how to look after the kids....The biggest thing about my childhood...was looking after my brothers and sisters .... Daddy,...mom and my granny realized that I was the one who looked after them and taught them what I knew....My dad depended on me to be there for the kids (when my mom left). I used to really miss her at times, but I never used to let on to the younger kids....I had to be strong and brave for them....I don't think I was very big then because I used to have to drag a stool up to the table to wash the dishes. Daddy sat beside the stove and...showed me how to cook .... I always tried my best to help my mom and dad and try to do whatever they put before me....Many times I'd have to make decisions alone.

I remember when we were growing up we had to learn to share. We didn't have much but my (older) brother made us (wooden) toys guns or whistles and granny made us dolls. When other kids came to the house we had to share what we had with them....My grandmother used to always stress to feed your visitors first. Make (them) some tea, coffee, or whatever you have and share it with them. Never let people leave your house without showing them good hospitality. There'd be people that used to pass through during the depression, mom always had something for them to eat when they chopped wood because she was saying that someday the person we gave coffee and a meal to might be Jesus.

My dad always got us out there working so we wouldn't be afraid of hard work. He said if you don't work for what you want, nobody will hand it to you. He said to be proud of who you are, be strong (and) never let means things people say get you down. If someone did something for you, remember to show that person you care about them. If someone got sick, hurt, or died, help that family. These are alot of beliefs that I can't go against. These are just things to help me along my life's journey. I always try the best I can by trying to be friends with others and helping others.

(Because of my health) I was 12 years old before I went to the Indian school for two years. I wanted to go back for another year but mom told me that you'll be just getting married and be a mother and your

husband is supposed to provide for you. Since I didn't stay there long, all the Indian culture and my belief in the Roman Catholic Church wasn't taken away on me.

This Elder's story relates how difficult her childhood was, for this was a period when the effects of the residential school system started to show up in people through alcoholism. Although she had older siblings, she was the one chosen to take charge of the home while her mother was away. She exhibited great strength and responsibilities in areas beyond her age so those around her, particularly her parents, uncle, and grandmother recognized her gifts of providing exceptional care to her younger siblings, and maintaining the household. Her close family members nurtured her gifts by taking the time to show her how to do various household chores and how to properly care for her younger siblings. The grandfather she mentioned at the beginning of her story left a profound impact on her because of the extra love, praise and attention he showed her until she was eighteen years old. He used to sing her Indian songs, tell her that she was his favourite grand-daughter and tell her that she would be strong like her dad someday. She in turn dedicated her life to the service of others. She shows her gifts of believing in the unseen by her strong beliefs in both the Roman Catholic religion and in the traditional Shuswap beliefs. She showed the gifts of warmth of spirit, purity, trust, hope, courage, illumination, guidance, leadership, watching over others, guiding others, devotion to the service of others, ability to focus attention on present time tasks and concentration through taking care of her younger siblings, maintaining the household and remembering and practising the traditional Shuswap teachings and by her devotion to her father and grandfather. Further to this, she told me later that when she was in the residential school she

used to sneak down to comfort her younger sisters at night because they were afraid and were crying. The nuns used to call on her to help them with any child who was difficult for them to handle because she had a way of calming even the most difficult child. In addition, she used to read books to the younger children during school hours. She showed the gifts of uncritical acceptance of others, love that does not question others and ability to see through complex situations by accepting that her mother had problems but still loved and missed her anyway and accepted the fact that she could no longer attend school but rather had to stay home to work and care for her younger siblings. In spite of this, because she is a very intelligent woman, she has been able to develop her reading and writing ability very well on her own.

The next Elder, who is in her seventies, is from the Kamloops Indian Band. She sits on the Kamloops Indian Band Elders' Committee and is a speaker at many gatherings, but particularly at Round Lake Alcohol Drug and Treatment Centre and has been someone many people seek for spiritual support and guidance for many years. It is in this manner that she dedicates her life to service for the people. In her second marriage, she works in partnership with her husband as they are both dedicated to passing on traditional First Nations teachings. Elder Number Four relates her childhood in this manner:

When I was taught when I was young...I learned from my granny. Early in the morning, she'd get me up first thing in the morning and get me to swim, at breaking daylight. She'd get me and (my cousins) to jump in the water every morning (and)...just when the sun was going down....(My granny) said someday I would be following in her footsteps to be a...medicine lady. But I didn't take those words seriously at that time. I probably was about the age of eight or nine ... she said all what she was going to teach me to pay attention even though she said that you are young because I have so little time ....

She told me how precious and spiritual and how strong the water was ... (and) to remember my dreams and that my name was going to be very important....I was running by one day...and I seen this little house, which is the sweathouse. I was still about eight or nine...and I was so taken in with it, it was so inviting...and I could smell...the fir boughs...and I fell asleep....My granny said 'let her sleep because she has got lots to learn in the sweat that is going to be good for her one day'.

This Elder tells the story of her traditional upbringing up from her mother, father and grandmother. It seems that her grandmother played a significant role in identifying her gifts and passing on knowledge that she would utilize in later years. She showed the gifts of innocence, guilelessness, spontaneity and joy through her story about sleeping in the sweat lodge. She shows the capacity to believe in the unseen by practising the traditional teachings of swimming in the water morning and night. She showed trust in her own vision by following in the footsteps of her grandmother and learning along the way all that she could regarding the traditional teachings of First Nations people.

The next Elder is in her eighties and is from the Neskainlith Indian Band. She has received a number of awards for her work in preserving, recording, and enhancing the Shuswap language, history and culture, including one from the B.C. Museum Association. She stated that for the last few decades she has done much research on her own regarding the Shuswap language, history and culture. Furthermore, many of the people whom she interviewed have since passed on. She has dedicated her life to the service of other people by raising her children and passing on her wealth of knowledge through publishing several books on the Shuswap people, making videotapes on the art of basketmaking, speaking at numerous gatherings, including the Okanagan College in Salmon Arm and

participating in the Secwepemc Cultural Educational Society's Elders Committee. She is also fighting to form their own reserve in Salmon Arm rather than being included with the Neskainlith Indian Band in Chase. Elder Number Five related her childhood memories as follows:

I remember my mother and father both working hard together clearing land so I had very little time with my own parents. I guess it was more with our grandparents that I can relate to as a growing child. My grandmother would go out to gather bull rush for her mats or the rope hemp for making her rope. We'd go with her and it seemed like we always just made a game of everything we did. My grandmother cut the bull rush, tied it with a piece of twine and then put it in a big bundle. We would grab it, throw it on our head, pretend we were a horse, gallop back and throw it in a pile and run back for another one. Right away the old people would recognize (your working abilities), I can hear my grandmother saying, 'you're ambitious' and they praised you for that. That's one of the beginnings of identifying what you're going to be. They can tell when you are just young. When they find that ambition in the child, right way the grandparents would spend more time with him or her. It wasn't through lectures (that they showed you how to work), it was by example. They did it and took part in (the work). It was mostly play, play, play but it was a part of a job. The training was happening already.

Another thing they were trained to be able to endure was the cold. They ate an awful lot of fish, and the fish oil was really good for you as it helps your body become immune to the cold. The children were told to swim morning and night. We got up early and our granny used to give us those little red buckets and tell us, 'Here go get some fresh water'. It was the idea that when you'd run you'd go and dip in that water you'd be wide awake after that.

My uncle (mentioned) another thing that was taught to be able to endure pain. He said that one of the Elders would be telling stories and all of a sudden one of the Elders would stand up and call out to the young men (Shuswap word), it means get the whipping stick. One of the young boys would go out and they'd get the buck brush (or) snow berry bush which has one main branch and then fine little branches on the end. My granny used to say, 'Make sure you go as one of the first ones because all you'd get is the soft ends, but if you are a coward and keep going to the last all them fine ones are broken and all you get is the big stick'.

As a young girl grew older and began to understand that she is changing from little doll games and jumping around and began to feel that she is growing up then they'd start talking about growing up through.... legends. (We) were taught in legend form about changes in your life. They would teach the young girl about different things to become a good wife and a good mother.

I remember when I must have been around about maybe ten or eleven years old and my cousin and I got called in by my grandfather, (Shuswap name), and he said, 'You pay attention when we talk to you, you two show the signs that one day you are going to carry alot of responsibility. There is a leadership quality in both of you'. But I never realized I guess it would be like a calling. Now I realize what my grandpa was telling me, if anybody calls me and says they need my help, I just can't say no, that feeling is so strong inside of me....Alot of other people have had the same kinds of things happen to them by their Elders. My grandma used to put alot of dried berries away and give us some when we were exceptionally good. As soon as we seen (it) .... ooh we'd run and kneel in front of her to get our treat.

(Granny) used to make us rag dolls and our little friends would come we'd all play together. We were taught to play and share what we had. Sharing and giving were taught at a very young age, that....was something that was valued. You always found alot of joy in giving. I can remember my mother saying, 'Oh, I'm going to go visit so and so' and she always carried a little bag of goodies and when she came back she always brought back a little bag of goodies.

When I was in the Kamloops residential school there was such a big gap in my life that seemed like a big dark pit. Things I guess I just don't want to remember. I want to put it out of my mind and not think about it. The humiliation, the pain, the loneliness, and everything that goes with it.

This Elder has such an abundance of knowledge regarding the traditional ways of the Shuswap people. She so willingly shares her teachings with those who want to learn. Clearly, many of the stories she related was documented in Teit (1909). She stated that the grandparents were the ones who identified the gifted and talented among the children. Her grandfather identified her leadership abilities and took her aside and told her to pay close attention to what was told to her. Her training was closely monitored and she was given extra love, affection,

attention. The wish to obey was instilled in her at an early age. She felt she was valued and important so she repaid this great love by listening and obeying what her Elders told her. Praise and extra attention seemed to be very significant factors in encouraging her potential to develop. It seemed to be important to their survival in earlier times to withstand pain of all kinds because of their harsh living conditions. This belief was related in the stories about swimming and whipping. She showed the gifts of innocence, guilelessness, spontaneity and joy through the story she related in helping her grandmother with the bull rushes. She showed the capacity to believe in the unseen by believing strongly in her traditional teachings and legends. She showed the gifts of warmth of spirit, purity, trust, and hope through her childhood memories of all the work and play she did and in the special treats her grandmother used to give them. She showed the gifts of illumination, guidance, leadership, seeing situations in perspective, trust in her own vision through following what her grandfather told her throughout her lifetime. She showed the gift of beautiful speech through her way of relating the stories which are so vivid. She showed the gift of the ability to see through complex situations by understanding what her grandfather told her about her gifts of leadership.

The following Elder, a former member of the Kamloops Indian Band, is in her seventies and has dedicated her life to the service of others by working as a medicine woman, and as a member of the Coqualeetza Elders' group where they meet regularly and work to preserve, record and enhance the language, history and culture. Her parents still lived a very traditional Shuswap life and held a wealth of knowledge about the Shuswap language, history and culture. Every day they used to start the day by drumming and singing and a sweat bath. During this period

every family had their own sweatlodge by the water. She is also a guest speaker at many gatherings and is an adopted Elder at the Fraser Valley College and does work in the prison system. She never had any formal schooling but while she was still a young woman she worked as an interpreter at the Coqualeetza Hospital. However, she refused to discuss the identification and nurturance of her gifts and talents because she said it was disrespectful, it was like doubting her abilities. In the story of her childhood, Elder Number Six relates it in this manner:

I was born on April 23rd, 1919 in Kamloops, B.C. I was born at home. My grandfathers are Skumwheels and the Eagle. They are on either side of me. Skumwheels means grizzly bear. Spooee means eagle. Where I was cured and come alive again was in Face Lake. My grandfather and grandmother took me there when I guess I was around nine years old. I got cured from my ailments. Many of our ancestors came there from all directions by pack horses. Our people went there to gather their food. The men dried the deer and moose meat and the fish. The women went out and got the roots and berries for the winter. The Elders did alot of teaching there at Face Lake. Our ancestors taught the songs and drumming. We were grateful. We'd sit by the fire as they told stories. They talked about the importance of the animals and the mountains. The way they tell us, one of those animals belong to us (guardian spirit). Our name gives us strength. Many medicines were taught. To the Shuswap people, the juniper is a sacred tree as it can be used for everything.

This Elder related some significant information to the young regarding some of the traditional activities the Kamloops people used to do long ago. Having a guardian spirit and having a traditional name from your ancestors were of great importance to the Shuswap people. She shows the gifts of innocence, guilelessness, spontaneity, warmth of spirit, purity, trust and hope through relating the story about joining in the activities of food gathering and preservation and learning the legends and songs at Face Lake with her people. She shows the gifts of believing in the unseen, rebirth, illumination, guidance and leadership by her

acceptance that she was reborn and had her health problems taken care of and accepting the responsibilities given to her. She showed the gifts of the ability to see through complex situations, watching over others, guiding others and devotion to the service of others through her life's work.

The last eminent Elder is in her mid-nineties and is a member of the Neskainlith Indian Band. She has dedicated her life to the service of the people through her work in preserving, recording and enhancing the Shuswap language, history and culture and in the Roman Catholic Church. She has assisted in writing books and has recorded some tapes for the Secwepemc Cultural Educational Society. She showed me pictures of the children of her community that she taught the Shuswap songs and dances to. She raised eleven children and is active in rearing her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She is a deacon and was instrumental in having the church built on the Neskainlith Indian Reserve. After my initial interview with her she showed my mother and me her letter of recognition from the Pope for her life's work in the Roman Catholic Church. Elder Number Seven relates her childhood memories as follows:

I was the oldest and had two younger sisters, one passed away. We worked in the fields helping our parents. Every evening my mother and dad, would say their rosary or evening prayer in Indian. I thought to myself, 'I'm going to help my mom and dad, they always get tired'. Gee, my dad (says), 'quit that', my mother, (Shuswap language) 'we don't need no help' (laughs).

Father LeJeune told my parents if you want your children to lead a good life you have to send them to the residential school. So I did. I was lost. Not even one word to quieten that Shema (white person), and lonely. The sisters told us, 'don't use your language too much because you won't learn how to speak English'. During that time there was only about thirty boys and girls in attendance at the school. At seven o'clock we go to church. About eight or nine we'd go have breakfast. Well after that everybody has a job to do. At nine o'clock

you'd go to the classroom. There was no electricity during my time there. Sometimes one of the sisters who was the teacher would tell me, 'Go to the summer home and take those little kids' She said you can teach them anything, anything at all, I didn't know 1,2,3, the seasons of the year. The teacher said, 'Gee you done something good for those little ones, they knew the seasons of the year' (laughs). Finally the spanish flu came after the First World War, gee, everybody was dying around here. My mother and dad came to visit us and the sisters would put medicine on the money, whatever we'd get. They used to put it in a pot of some disinfectants.

This Elder relates many stories about her childhood in the early part of this century. She lived through the First World War and the Spanish flu which had a great impact on her life. Many Shuswap people died from the flu and her father and her future husband served in the First World War. Her family was very religious and this became a significant part of her life. The nuns who were the teachers did not have a very structured academic program for the students which is exemplified by her story where she taught the younger children. However, the religious training and chores played an important part of the school. She showed the gift of believing in the unseen by her early devotion to the Roman Catholic church. She showed the gifts of warmth of spirit, purity, trust and hope through helping her parents work at home and in assisting the nuns take care of the younger children. She showed uncritical acceptance of others by her great love of her parents, sisters and other family members. She showed illumination, guidance, and leadership through accepting the responsibilities given to her at home and in school. She showed the gifts of watching over others, guiding others, devotion to the service of others through her life's work for the people culturally, socially, politically and spiritually. She told me later that she played a leadership role at home through her work in the fields and in the care of the garden and the animals.

### The Gifts of the South

The south is where you will find the gifts of youth, fullness, summer, the heart, generosity, sensitivity to the feelings of others, loyalty, noble passions, love (of one person for another), balanced development of the physical body, physical discipline, control of appetites, determination, goal setting, training senses such as sight, hearing, taste, musical development, gracefulness, appreciation, of the arts, discrimination in sight, hearing and taste, passionate involvement in the world, idealism, emotional attraction to good and repulsion to bad, compassion, kindness, anger at injustice, repulsion by senseless violence, feelings refined, developed, controlled, ability to express hurt and other bad feelings, ability to express joy and good feelings, and the ability to set aside strong feeling in order to serve others (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane, 1984, p.72).

The lesson of not trying to possess and control others is through the symbol of the beautiful rose bush, for hidden beneath her soft green leaves are piercing thorns that would tear the flesh of anyone who would size her beauty and try to own it (p. 48). The symbol that can be used to represent physical excellence and sensory acuteness is the cougar (p. 50). The capacity to express feelings openly and freely in ways that do not hurt other beings is symbolized through the red willow tree, for it is the strongest and most flexible in the forest (p. 52).

Not all of my informants talked about their adolescent years. However, the ones that did talked about the difficulties and the hard work necessary for the families' survival. In carrying out these tasks they are repaying their families' love by obeying their requests. Additionally they are showing they have developed into a valuable, contributing member of their family. In turn their parents recognized they were ready to become a valuable wife and good mother and made their marriage arrangements, thus, many of the Elders got married during this period. All have no regrets of their arranged marriages because things worked out for the best in the long run.

This eminent Elder did not relate any stories of her childhood, so I will introduce her here. She is in her seventies and is a member of the Canim Lake

Band. She sits on the Secwepemc Sundance Society and is actively involved in teaching the younger generation about the Shuswap language, history and culture through her attendance at numerous sweat lodges, sundances and ceremonies. She raised seven children and is assisting in rearing some of her grandchildren.

Elder Number Two relates her adolescence in this way:

I never forgot our language....The teachings of my grandparents were drilled into my head. The teachings like making herbs and praying before you used them. Mom was a medicine lady and she knew lots about herbs. We used to swim in all kinds of different medicines made of red willow, rose bush, and fir boughs. I was given pitch in a spoon, then given fat and a drink afterwards, it purifies you and gives you energy. To make good sweats we used wild rhubarb roots...or other herbs on top of the rocks. Fir boughs were used on the bottom of the sweat. We would sing Indian songs while we were in the sweat and take a herbal drink.

I was taught when I got my first period that during this time I shouldn't walk around others (because) women were powerful at that time. My mother took me up in the mountains and talked to me and showed me some things. When my first period was over, she brought me to a waterfall where the water was swift, and she instructed me to wash myself everyday. She told me that while I was swimming that I should pray in my own way and that I should continue to swim every day at home....My grandparents told me that you'll never get anywhere in life if you don't swim. The translation from Indian to English is that it gives you energy, strength and it is stimulating. We used to swim every night too, even in the winter. Mom used to swim with me. My mother also taught me to find a smooth rock from the mountains and rub it all over my body as it would give me energy. She told me things about taking care of my body with medicines, like washing with fir boughs and rubbing the mint plant all over your body daily as it clears whatever ails you. I was also taught to rub sand on my body and feet so that I would have no troubles.

One time when I was home my mother sent me with some old ladies to pick berries. I asked, 'Why me?', she said, 'Never mind, you go, learn from the old ladies'. I was taught that before you go up high in the mountains you must pray so that the mountain doesn't get mad. The old ladies blackened their faces before they went up. They also used to sing and drum. We would help one another, that is what I liked about the old ladies, they would pick berries for me while I looked after the horses and dried the berries. The nine old ladies each

sang their own song and I learned mom's song. When they were ready to move, the old ladies would blacken their faces again. We'd stay two weeks at a time. Every night the old ladies would sit around the fire and tell different stories every night. I always wish now that I paid more attention and learned things from them, but I was young and wasn't interested then. Every night too, the old ladies would pray that they would have a good night and a good day. The old ladies would sing and demonstrate how they danced for certain things. It wasn't in me then. It was real interesting being with the old people. Funny, they'd make a sweat anywhere there was water.

One old man was dying of T.B., he used to stay home and look after the ladies. One day some of the ladies were outside watching the deer come in. They told the old man so he got his rifle and killed three deer. The old ladies skinned, cleaned and divided it up amongst the people. That was always done in those days....Every morning the people used to drink coffee and visit all over. Even when there was eight feet of snow there were trails to the homes so you could go visit. Always give your visitors something to eat, but if you have nothing then at least give them some water. You should never let your visitors go without giving them something. That's the old Indian tradition....Everybody used to help one another.

Everybody used to have an Indian name. They used to have a ceremony to give you your name. The next time you got your name, you had to go up into the mountains. Some of the animal helpers were eagles, hawks, robins and hummingbirds.

I missed out on lots of things that she was trying to teach me because I wasn't in the mood to listen then. At the Indian school they called us pagans, and our ways of curing diseases was a mortal sin. They said using charms was a sin. The church pounded that into our heads from the time we got up until we went to bed....This was during the depression time. I would just start picking up at home and it would be time to go back to school. I missed too much time with my grandparents.

I lost nine years of my grandparents' teachings (because I had to attend the residential school). When I was sixteen years old, I went home. Every morning I used to swim, feed the stock, milk the cows then I would have breakfast. At haying time, I would harness the team and leave by 7 a.m. Sometimes I used to think Papa was trying to kill me because we'd work until 11 p.m. or 1 a.m., if it was going to rain. When I got married in 1942, my mother quit telling me things. My marriage was arranged, but I am not sorry, things worked out okay.

In this Elder's story of her adolescent years, many of the traditional teachings were still practised on her reserve, unlike some of the reserves who were in close contact with the non-First Nations societies. She learned many of the traditions of her culture which were taught to the young girls, such as the ceremonies necessary after your first menstruation, food gathering methods, preservation and places, generosity, legends, songs, and stories. However, as she stated she was "not in the mood for listening," this, I believe, is due to the conflicts regarding the traditional Shuswap teaching with those from the residential school. She learned the gifts of youth, fullness, the heart, generosity, sensitivity to the feelings of others, loyalty, balanced development of the physical body, physical discipline, and control of appetites through her hard work in the farm and fields, swimming every morning, and dedication in helping her family to the best of her abilities. She learned the love of one person for another through her arranged marriage because her husband was good to her and things worked out well between them. She learned the gifts of determination, goal setting, and training the senses through raising her family. She learned the gifts of discrimination in sight, hearing and taste by learning the differences between the plants which are good medicine. She learned emotional attraction to the good and repulsion to bad and compassion and kindness through her services to others. She learned the gifts of having her feelings refined, developed and controlled through her positive communication with her husband, children and extended family.

Elder Number Three tells of her adolescent years this way:

We stayed up at Strawberry Heights with my (parents), my older brother, his wife, their kids and my step-brother. When my brother got hurt with a log falling on him, my younger sister, my step-brother and

I used to have to go out in the bush and (work). My step-brother would get stubborn and not want to go out so I'd smarten him up and make him do the housework. My older brother seen that and said that I knew how to deal with him better than him and daddy did. It was pretty hard up there. (Sometimes) we, wanted to come down the mountain, but whenever we did I seen how the people drinking so I preferred to stay up in the mountain.

It seemed more safe up there, except for that one time that my mom came down to look after her brother's kids because their mother left. Later on my dad came down. It's not a very happy time, but that's one of the things we went through. It was (about) two weeks (that we were left) and we ended up using all the groceries we had. We had some stale bread for bread pudding, and that's what I used to cut them up in fancy designs, put bacon grease on it, (baked it) and told the kids that they were cookies. We had some boiled over coffee, and then after awhile we saved that for my baby sister (as a milk substitute). When mom and daddy finally came back, I guess she didn't know enough that we should have soup or something. (We ate lots of food) and we all got sick that night. I guess we just about starved up there. We could have all walked out of the bush, but with our training we were supposed to listen to our mom and daddy. They told us just to stay right there and that's what we did. But I guess they did the best they could.

Because (my dad) didn't have many sons, we had to work out in the bush and in the fields to help him. Afterwards I'd help my auntie cut up all the fruit and put it in my dad's hot house and dry it for winter. Also we had alot of chickens and pigs and calves that I'd help with too.

When we grew up my mom, my grannies and our older brother, told us alot of things that were expected of girls. They used to say first and foremost, be careful when you pick your friends because you are judged by your friends, how you talk, dress and (your hygiene).

When I got married they told me that I was to be married to that man for life. He's going to be the father of your kids...We learned to trust and respect each other's wishes. You have to be your own individual person. You sort of learn. Like with my kid too we had to sort of grow up together because I was just sixteen when I got married....my marriage was the last sort of arranged marriage.

This Elder had to work hard, along with her other family members helping her family both in logging and in working in the fields. The underlying principles of

traditional educational practices were still evident in her upbringing. Due to the seasonal work of logging, they had two homes, one in the mountains and one on the main reserve. She mentioned that alcoholism was evident amongst the people of her community and was affecting her parents, thus, they nearly starved once. However, she saved her younger siblings from certain death through improvising with what little food they had left. Her parents seen that she was a valuable, contributing member of the family and was ready to become a valuable wife and mother so they arranged her marriage. She did literally grow up with her children, but during this period it was not uncommon for girls to marry young. She learned the gifts of youth, fullness, the heart, generosity, sensitivity to the feelings of other, loyalty, balanced development of the physical body, physical discipline, control of appetites, compassion and kindness through helping her dad work hard in logging, farming, the hay fields, the garden and later in raising her own family. She learned the love of one person for another through her arranged marriage because things worked out for them for over four decades. She learned determination, goal setting, passionate involvement in the world, idealism, emotional attraction to good and repulsion to bad, anger at injustice, and repulsion by senseless violence through raising her family up to her high standards. She learned the gifts of having her feelings refined, developed and controlled with the way she communicated to her husband, children and extended family members.

Elder Number Seven recounts her adolescence this way:

I wanted to be a nun, but mother and dad wanted me to get married....(They) said you going to have an arranged marriage. My husband went to the First World War and when came back (his first wife and baby died). When my mother told me I was getting married to a man (I remembered) seeing when he came to visit his sister at the

school. (My husband) didn't know which sister he was going to marry until we went to the altar, that's the time (he knew). 7

In those days there were still many arranged marriages. Even though this Elder wanted to become a nun her parents said she was going to have an arranged marriage. The girls did not usually object to their parents wishes because of their upbringing. It was interesting to find that her husband did know which sister he was going to marry. Since he had served in the war he was quite a bit older than she was. However, this was also not an uncommon factor in arranged marriages, the husband was usually older than his wife as he had to be able to provide well for his wife. She learned the gifts of youth, fullness, the heart, generosity, sensitivity to the feelings of others, loyalty, balanced development of the physical body, physical discipline, control of appetites, determination and goal setting through helping her parents in the hay fields then later helping her husband with his hay fields and in rearing her children to high standards. She learned the gifts of discrimination in sight, hearing and taste by the medicines she used in helping her children and others. She learned the love of one person for another through her arranged marriage because things worked out for them for over five decades. She learned the emotional attraction to good and repulsion to bad, compassion and kindness, anger at injustice, repulsion by senseless violence, and developing her feeling to be refined, developed and controlled through her communication with her husband, children, and extended family members.

### **The Gifts of the West**

The west is the direction of the gifts of darkness, the unknown, going within, dreams, deep inner thoughts, testing of the will, perseverance,

stick-to-it-iveness, consolidating of personal power, management of power, spiritual insight, daily prayer, meditation, fasting, reflection, contemplation, silence, being alone with one's self, respect for Elders, respect for the spiritual struggles of others, respect for others' beliefs, awareness of our spiritual nature, sacrifice, humility, love for the Creator, commitment to the path of personal development, commitment to universal life values and a high moral code, commitment to struggle to assist the development of the people, ceremony, clear self-knowledge, and vision (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane, 1984, p.73).

Two teachers of the west (symbolically) are the black bear and the turtle. A person who has travelled to the west and received the gifts that await her there will, like the black bear, possess great strengths. But the source of that strength will come from deep within the person. Like the bear who retires to a dark, private place in the face of winter's coldness, a person who has learned the lessons of the west balances the passionate loyalty of the south with deep spiritual insight. This insight is gained by shutting out the clamour of the world, and by going alone to pray and be tested. One of the guides on this inner journey can be pictured (symbolically) as the turtle, who not only teaches to go within, but also grants the gift of perseverance to those who learn his ways (pp. 53-54).

Only four of the Elders told of their lives as an adult. The Elders had to work hard in maintaining their household and rearing their children. Often times they had the help of their extended family to assist them because their husbands worked outside the home. They are still in utilizing the Shuswap traditional teachings because the women were valuable wives, good mothers, and were contributing members of their communities. Additionally, the grandparents are still actively involved in rearing their grandchildren and hold a significant role in their family.

Elder Number Two tells of her adulthood as follows:

When I got married I learned from my husband, who knew lots of traditions. When I was pregnant I bathed and drank medicines made from bark. I walked three miles per day. I had sweatbaths regularly. I had five children at home but I had two by cesarean. While I was pregnant I took Indian medicine in the last two weeks of my pregnancy. This medicine was supposed to enable your baby to just slide out. With my last two pregnancies I didn't take the medicine

properly. When I felt the labor coming on I'd tell my mom that I wanted a sweat. I'd sweat as soon as I went into labor. Often times when she finished fixing the bed on the floor the baby was on his or her way out.

During this period I lost two children, my husband, my parents, my brother and my grandmother. It was hard to lose so many loved ones.

My oldest son was the only one who went in the mountains for one year. He was just 13 years old. All he gave him was a knife. I really cried and my grandfather asked me, 'What are you crying for, he's going to be okay....I'm going to make a man out of your son.' My son told me before he went up into the mountains, 'When you hear an owl you know I'm okay'. The day he came back my heart was jumping out of my chest. He didn't lose weight. He said that he saw all kinds of places, saw caves, learned how to live on whatever he got, and said he experienced lots of things in that year. He wouldn't talk much about it.

This Elder had nearly all of her children at home with her mother serving as the mid-wife. Most of her children were born in the traditional manner of the Shuswap people. Her oldest son even went up into the mountains by himself for one year. With all of the deaths occurring over such a short period of time, it left a deep scar on her for a number of years. She learned the gifts of darkness, the unknown, going within, dreams, deep inner thoughts, testing of the will, perseverance, stick-to-it-iveness, consolidating person power, management of power, spiritual insight, daily prayer, mediation, fasting, reflection, contemplation and respect for Elders through overcoming the many hardships she endured in raising her children and in losing so many loved ones. She showed the respect for the spiritual struggles of others, respect for others' beliefs, awareness of our spiritual nature, sacrifice, humility, love for the Creator, commitment to the path of personal development, commitment to universal life values and a high moral code, commitment to struggle to assist the development of people, ceremony, clear self

knowledge, and vision through allowing her son to go up into the mountains alone for one year and through her daily struggles to live up to high standards as a good mother and wife.

Elder Number Three relates her adulthood in this manner:

My mother-in-law brought me up too and showed me a lot of medicines, what berries to pick and how it used to be long time ago. She helped me with the kids when they were growing up. My aunt who used to tell me stories of long ago, show me how to make quilts and she'd make quilts and clothes for the kids also.

My uncle wanted to take both of my older sons up into the mountains, where they could see their own power, (their guardian spirits), have their own name and song and that they be stronger people to receive that training. At the time I was scared to let my boys up there. I always regret that I didn't let them go up in the bush as it was in our old Indian culture to do that.

I tell my kids that everybody has to have something to believe in. If they don't have any goals or anything to believe in that you really don't have anything. You have to love yourself to start with and love your family and your parents. Since I didn't have much education I wanted my kids to have all the education they could. My mother-in-law, she never went to school, she wanted all our kids to go to school. My dad, mother, father-in-law, and uncle also wanted my kids to get a good education. They said now it's important that they all get to know as much as they can about the shemas (Shuswap word for white people). We need (education) more than we did a long time ago anyway. I believe myself that all the girls had to have their education too because what if their husband's just left them, died or got sick. They'd need an education to get a good job to provide for their children. I didn't want my girls to have a hard time like I did because it was hard (being pregnant) and having to chop wood.

I used to always try to tell and teach my children how they should be. Manny helped to show them how to house clean, do the dishes, cook, do the laundry, bring the wood and water in and take care of the chickens and garden. My kids were a big help to me. I had to go to work and I wouldn't have been able to work if they didn't work like a team. I guess that's where my oldest son got his being a leader, he was being a leader all his brothers and sisters. I never told them that this is boy's work or girl's work.

My mother-in-law, father-in-law, and my parent loved all their grandchildren, but they had their special favourites and they seen what was their special talents. I guess all the Elders did that with their grandchildren, they picked out the ones they could see were stronger (and had exceptional qualities).

For example, my parents, my mother-in-law and my father-in-law, my uncle and grandpa too used to see in my oldest son that he'd be a great leader someday. They used to all help him in their own ways. My mother-in-law thought so highly of him, she said that he was going to go far and that she didn't want any harm to come to him. She never thought he ever did anything wrong either. My dad used to always take him aside and talk to him. He didn't expect second best from Manny, he always expected the best from him while he was going to school. He expected him to be strong and someday he'd be a leader of our community like he was and his father and his grandfathers. My aunt, (who was a very distinguished Elder) was saying too, that when she was listening to him speak, she said that he was the only chief that she ever heard speaking that compared with Louis the Chief. She said that he is able to relate to the older people, the people that don't have much education, and he said he can talk right eye-to-eye with the lawyers and all those that have really high education. To talk in their language so that they can understand and yet he never forgets us littler people. She said that Manny is one in lots and that he'll go a long ways. She was telling him too that being a chief and a leader, that you're just like the father of them all the people, that you have to go see them. Some are just like children, some of them react in different ways, and may be mad and do mean things so you have to be patient with them. Correct them at times if you have to, but never forget that you're like their father image. She said it won't be easy at times, that's a part of being a leader, having a sympathetic ear.

This Elder, with the support of her many extended family members, raised her nine children and over a dozen foster children. As she stated both she and her children had to work as a team to get the household chores done and take care of the garden and the chickens. Their food was also supplemented by the berries and other fruits canned for the winter months. Since her mother died when she was fairly young, it was her mother-in-law and aunt who helped obtain clothing and other essentials needed to provide their basic needs. Her husband was a logger for

many years and they stayed up in the mountains for most of their early years of marriage, then they moved down to the main reserve and he became a councillor, then a chief for over a decade. He also worked at another job to provide food for his family, so he was gone from the home quite frequently. But with the help of her children, her father, her mother-in-law, uncle and aunt they survived the hard times quite well. She learned the gifts of darkness, the unknown, going within, dreams, deep inner thoughts, testing of the will, perseverance, stick-to-it-iveness, consolidating of personal power, management of power, spiritual insight, daily prayer, meditation, reflection, contemplation and respect for Elders by living her life as a very devote Roman Catholic and still believing in the traditional teachings of the Shuswap people. She helped to instill some of these beliefs along with her mother-in-law and aunt to her children. She showed the gifts of awareness of our spiritual nature, sacrifice, humility, love for the Creator, commitment to the path of personal development, commitment to universal life values and a high moral code, commitment to struggle to assist the development of people, ceremony, clear self knowledge and vision by living the life of a spiritual person and trying to instill a spiritual belief in her children and grandchildren and encouraging them to live bi-culturally. She also discusses how her oldest son was identified as a leader and nurtured as a child. She helped her own family and raised her younger brothers and sisters after her mother passed away. She was involved in many women's groups and assisted her children in becoming involved in recreational, social, educational and cultural activities.

Elder Number Four told the story of her adulthood in this way:

My grandfather said 'okay I want you to get up early with me and bring your two children'. My son wasn't even a year old. He said 'okay so here is my namesake' and he took my son and he dunked him in the water. That's where he said (Shuswap language) is your (Indian) name. He said when he grows up he's going to follow my ways and you're going to continue teaching him. I'll forever look after him from here until the next world.

We stayed the whole summer with him and he showed me different roots, how to pick berries and the differences between the plants. He showed me how you can use the red willow, for bathing or eating and eating the rose bush. Each day was a learning. He told me never to be ashamed of who I was, be a proud Native. Well I wrote alot of these medicines down on paper. (She related many medicines and their uses but it is too numerous to mention them all here).

My uncle, who was a helper of the people, taught me alot of things. He said I was going to be going to be a great leader one day. He said you think you will be talking to one hundred, you will be talking to many times one hundred. One day because, like him I used to talk and to laugh, he said that one day I'd be using my precious gift, talking. (He said) that I would be talking and even healing with the mind and through the heart.

This Elder continued obtaining her traditional teachings over her lifetime. Her story showed how her son was given an Indian name. She learned many medicines and has recorded it so that she can share her teachings with others. Many people go to see her to get spiritual help. She showed the gifts of darkness, the unknown, going within, dreams, deep inner thoughts, testing of the will, perseverance, stick-to-it-iveness, consolidating of personal power, management of power, spiritual insight, daily prayer meditation, reflection, contemplation and respect for Elders by living her life as a traditional women in her later adult years. She had gone through many hardships before she reached that period of comfort to her. She showed the gifts of respect for the spiritual struggle of others, respect for other's beliefs, awareness of our spiritual nature, sacrifice, humility, love for the Creator, commitment to the path of personal development, commitment to universal life

values and a high moral code, commitment to struggle to assist the development of people, ceremony, clear self knowledge, and vision by actually doing ceremonies to help people in need. This again was done in later years with the help of her second husband.

Elder Number Seven relates her adult life this way:

When I used to have children, the first one, my mother delivered it, and the second one, I had by myself. I made fire in the heater and I laid on the side and Dora was born, Oh, I guess that's the way my mother taught me how to (deliver the baby) and I watched how my mother done it. I doctored some of the kids too....My mother came over the house, and she told me why don't you put some medicine on your son's face. I said I've got some medicine from the doctor. She told me to get some of the sunflower leaves or roots, boil it and put it on his face. One, two, three treatments it was all dried up. That's a real good medicine for the sore. My mother showed me this medicine, this is where (my husband) burned me (with the medicine). My hand was getting stiff, and there was a lump here. He used that (Shuswap word) I still have one....Oh they say you get it from birch, (Shuswap language).

(My husband) had a big field. We used to cut the alfalfa three times. It was so much for him sometimes I'd help him at night when the kids were sleeping. I'd help him stoking the grain, wheat, or whatever. Gee when you are young you can do anything....Sometime I'd be alone when he's out working. I made wood myself, fed the horses and all that. Gees that's hard times.

This Elder's story relates many of the difficult times for people during this period. Although she had her household, garden, and children to look after she still helped her husband in the evenings with haying. She delivered many of her children by herself. She was a very strong woman and never complained. She is a very devoted Roman Catholic and she also used to teach the traditional songs and dances to the young people before her health got to be a problem. She is a woman adored by her extended family and by the surrounding communities for her work both in the church and in assisting in teaching the traditional Shuswap culture,

language and history through helping to write several books. She learned the gifts of darkness, the unknown, going within, dreams, deep inner thoughts, testing of the will, perseverance, stick-to-it-iveness, consolidating of personal power, management of power, spiritual insight, daily prayer, meditation, reflection, contemplation, and respect for elders through her work at home in raising her children and maintaining the household and helping her husband in the hay fields and living the life of a truly devote catholic. She learned the gifts of respect for the spiritual struggles of others, respect for others' beliefs, awareness of our spiritual nature, sacrifice, humility, love for the Creator, commitment to the path of personal development, commitment to universal life values, a high moral code, commitment to struggle to assist the development of people, ceremony, clear self knowledge, and vision by her life's work in the church and in passing on the traditional history, culture and language to the young people.

### **The Gifts of the North**

The north is where you will find the gifts of elders, wisdom, thinking, analyzing, speculating, calculation, prediction, organizing, categorizing, discriminating, criticizing, problem solving, imagining, interpreting, integrating all, intellectual capacities, completion, fulfilment, lessons of things that end, capacity to finish what we begin, detachment, freedom from fear, hate, love and knowledge, seeing how all things fit together, insight, intuition made conscious, sense of how to live a balanced life, capacity to dwell in the centre of things, to see and take the middle way, moderation and justice (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane, 1984, p. 73).

Here dwells the teachers of intellectual gifts symbolized by the great mountain and the sacred lake (p. 62).

Not all of the Elders related stories of their years as an Elder, however, the ones that did followed their grandparents' lead in passing on the Shuswap

traditional teachings. These Elders have in turn identified and nurtured the gifts that they see in their own children or grandchildren or other loved ones.

Additionally, they have remained valuable, contributing members of their communities by preserving, recording and enhancing the Shuswap language, history and culture.

Elder Number Four relates her story in this way:

The younger generation doesn't respect the older people like when I was brought up. I was taught the importance of respecting Elders because what the Elders said was what they lived through. When you get older you start thinking you are going to be gone and you want to teach the young kids all you can before you leave. You want to teach them all what your parents and grandparents have taught you. I wish this wouldn't die out because that's a great thing for the younger ones to know.

The Elders used to say always try to keep the family together, and always have love in the home. Worship in which ever way you do as long as you have something to look up to. This (spiritual belief) will help you all along the way.

My sisters still call on me when they have problems and I try to help them all I can. They depend on me too much I guess because mom died when we were quite young. When I realized that she was just a human being, I finally forgave mom and asked her to forgive me too because I was resentful for having to look after her children and for not going to school very long. (However), I've learned other things along the way that has helped me carry on.

At times I get mad at my own grandchildren (but) I just (want) the best for them and for them to show respect for their grandparents and parents and (other relatives) so they in turn will receive respect from others. I tell them, 'Your parents had a hard time to raise you up this far and are striving to help you'. My grandchildren all have their own personalities like their parents do. My mother-in-law used to tell me, 'With your children, you love them and are proud of them, but then when it comes to your grandchildren, you really love them and are even more proud of them, you even love them because they're your grandchildren. When your great-grandchildren come along you're really overjoyed with them, that you went through three generations to get down to them'. Mom used to say that you have to let them out, that they try their own wings.

There is one other I think that's really important, you have to know that you have approval from others once in awhile. Just say, 'Oh, you're doing a good job and you're doing the best you can, and I love you no matter what'. I never got that very much, so I always make sure and tell my children and grandchildren that I'm really proud of them and that they should be proud of themselves too. I want them to achieve what they are striving for even if its hard and I want them to know that I'm there to help and support them.

Another thing I always say is that we have to learn to live by the time and the rules because that's what everybody has to do. Even in the old days, the Elders used to put down rules for the people in order to keep everything running smoothly. They all had to work and help each other. Working hard for what is right and good pays off in the end. I know that with my own self, all the hard work and everything, has all paid off because I've got all my beautiful children and grandchildren have their love and respect. Like my auntie was saying, 'You have the love and respect of them, nobody can take that away'. I hope that I've done a good job and taught them something that they can in turn teach their kids and their grandchildren too.

I always pray to my late grandparents and my late parents, and I'm sure they're by me alot of times when I get scared. Even though my (ancestors) who have gone before us, I think they are still praying for us and are still helping us where ever they are. I'm sure of it because I can feel their presence at times. I don't feel really all alone. I pray to them always and I pray for them to help with the kids. Every morning I pray for my kids and grandchildren, for their health and their happiness and their safety. I have lost two little girls who I always miss and my granddaughter too. I pray that we will meet them someday.

This Elder has dedicated her life towards helping other people. Through her life's work she has gained the love and respect of most of the community members and on many surrounding First Nations communities as well. She firmly believes in passing on the traditional knowledge of her ancestors. With her own children and grandchildren she always relates stories of her traditional knowledge gained from the many Elders that she visited and worked with. She lives the life of a truly traditional and spiritual person. She is an adopted mom and grandmother to many of the community and non-community members. When she enters the room

she is shown love and respect by the affection shown to her by many people. She shows her gifts in thinking, analyzing, understanding, speculating, calculation, prediction, organizing, categorizing, criticizing, problem solving, imagining, and integrating all intellectual capacities through the two decade she worked in the Kamloops Indian Band housing committee and then as the coordinator, and in being the president for a number of years of the Shuswap Brothers and Sisters who host the Kamloopa Indian Pow Wow. She shows her gifts of completion, fulfilment, lessons of things that end and the capacity to finish what she began through her life's work and in wanting to pass on the traditional teachings of the Shuswap people to the younger generation. She shows the gifts of detachment, freedom from fear, hate, love, and knowledge through teaching the underlying principles of traditional education and ethical conduct to the younger generation through her example and her talks with them. She shows her gifts of seeing how all things fit together, insight, and intuition by being able to explain the "why's" behind ceremonies and other traditional teachings. She shows the gifts of a sense of how to live a balanced life and capacity to dwell in the centre of things, moderation and justice through showing emotional and spiritual support to others, knowing what her limitations are in terms of her health and being politically involved in the social, economic and educational problems of the community as a concerned Elder. Elder Number Four tells her story as an Elder in this manner:

I had many teachers along the way, but I learned about the sweat lodges, blessing yourself with sage before the sweat, praying while you are in the sweat, and dunking into the water in the four directions after the sweat.

When you (want) something (from a spiritual person) or when you pray alone, you offer tobacco, and I thank you for tobacco. The

eagles and the hawks (should be) treated with respect because they are close to the creator. When you pray from your heart, the eagle is the one that takes our prayers up to the creator. When you see the cotton wood or popular trees, put your arm around the tree, and pray. The wind in the four directions will come and be listening and entice the leaves to hear and answer your prayers.

My uncle said, you're Shuswap, you always say that when you're addressing a crowd. I am now a speaker at the Round Lake Drug and Alcohol (treatment centre). I tell them many things not strictly on drugs and alcohol. I have many eyes watching me because I have my kids, many nieces and nephews, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren now. Someday they will hear of my teachings, and (hopefully) they will not drink. My goals (at Round Lake) are to speak on an Elder's viewpoint on spirituality and life experiences. My (workshops) are open informal discussions because the (clients) like to ask questions.

Don't make fun of people in this life, because some day when you pass on you've got to face them. Always do things from your heart. Speak good of people and pray for them.

What calls thousands of people to a pow wow? What is so important that makes your heart beat, do you know what it is? The drum. The most sacred thing is the drum. Going into the pow wow grounds you'll hear the drums and get the excitement of being a Native. Your heart will start to pound and you'll feel a happiness inside because the drum is calling you. It is calling the dancers to put on their regalia and show off all the feathers that is so sacred to us and are another form of blessing. You feel so happy. You all become like brothers and sisters. The fancy dances and the sneak-up dances, I love it because the Elders are in there. They've got the hoop dances. I'm so proud and I say that my (Shuswap word for grandchild) is a hoop dancer. I'm proud seeing my nephew out there (dancing), I'm proud watching my blood being out there. So I get out there and (dance) and enjoy every bit of it myself. When I get out there I want the young ones to see me out there, so they cannot sit down. They too should get up and be proud and show off what they are.

I too am an Elder now, I'm pretty proud of it, there's lots coming after me but we Elders we learn from the young who are practising their traditions. I wish they'd learn and really stay with it. I'm proud to say we have medicine people in our family. There's alot of good medicine people out there. I am a teacher (of the traditions now) and (maybe) you'll be a teacher of the traditions one day too, to let it keep flowing like the river. I was brought up as an RC (Roman Catholic), and the Indian School tried to steal my Shuswap language, but I still know

how to speak my language. I'd like everyone to learn the Shuswap language, and traditions. and really stick with it, then maybe they'd quit fighting with each other and being power hungry and jealous. Well, it took them generations to get like that so it'll take another decade to clear it up.

This Elder has received recognition for her work in helping people with her traditional knowledge by being invited to speak at the Round Lake Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centre and by the numerous people who come to see her for spiritual help. She is so willing to share the knowledge she gained over her lifetime with anyone who wants to learn. She has a good sense of humour and lives in the traditional Shuswap cultural manner. She is loved and respected by her extended family and numerous community and non-community members from many regions. She shows the gifts of thinking, analyzing, understanding, speculating, criticizing, problem solving, imagining and integrating all intellectual capacities through being a spiritual healer of the numerous people who come to see her. She shows the gifts of completion, fulfilment, lessons of things that end and the capacity to finish what we begin by willingly sharing her knowledge with whoever wants to learn about the traditional teachings. She shows the gifts of seeing how all things fit together, insight, and intuition by her abilities to help heal people physically and spiritually. She shows the gifts of a sense of how to live a balanced life, capacity to dwell in the centre of things, moderation, and justice by the example of being a traditional person, her desire to help others in need, and knowing her own health limitations.

Elder Number Five relates her life as an Elder in this way:

It was the praise that was given to children. We don't hear that too much nowadays. There's not enough praise. That's what (I give) my

grandchildren. I always have a little treat and I guess that's something that I treasured as a child.

I don't know what they would do if there is a gifted and talented Native person. What can they offer you that's realistic? They can give you a bursary and certificate because you got A's. On one hand am saying it's no good, but yet on the other hand, I'm telling the young people, 'Go for it'. But you should be able to make decisions and compare what's going on because (that's) the way we were taught when I was growing up. A woman had to have a lot of pride as a woman (know) your body is the giver of life and is sacred. If you're going to do use your talent, do it for a good purpose. A purpose (where) you won't harm yourself (or) people around you.

We are not teaching our children the sense of value because of the type of lifestyle that we are going through. I think that's where the difference in the teaching is. I don't like what I'm seeing. I guess I'm to the point now where I'm not afraid to even tell them at the college level that I don't like what you are teaching the young people; it's the dollar signs. Reach for as much as you can without any really social values attached to it. You don't care who you step on as long as you can accumulate any amount of dollars. That's what the whole system is doing to our young people. There is no healing power in what they are teaching. It is just destruction. That's the attitude they give you now. It makes it very hard for a lot of people, not just the Native people, a lot of white people are out there suffering too on account of that.

I'm really scared after that first heart attack I had. It really worried me. All the knowledge that I've accumulated is going to get lost if I don't do something with it so I'm trying to (record everything) on tape, things like pit cooking, meat drying, fish and Native food preparation and most importantly, the philosophy of our culture. (For example) in teaching basketmaking and the values (behind it) you work a whole day gathering material and another day preparing it. Maybe you spend another couple of days in forming it and finishing your basket. You know you put a lot of yourself and you'll really value it. (On the other hand) you compare that with what is happening today. If I told you let's go pick huckleberries, you'd probably be running around for a plastic bucket. When you come home you don't value that plastic bucket. (Whereas I, on the other hand, will) take my basket I wash it and I hang it up so next year when I'm going to pick berries and my baskets are still there.

I noticed that within my own family, (my son) is one of them. He's got the potentials, the leadership qualities. Two or three years before my aunt died she took him (aside) and told him, 'You're going to

become a great leader one day and I'm going to name you right now, and she named him Perrish, that was her father's baptismal name.' And in Indian she said you'll be (Shuswap name), that means the great father. I myself have chosen from my own children is (the same son) and the youngest girl. She will not side with anybody, she will stick up for the people to her boss. This is her number one issue for the people as a whole not just for the individual group. (My daughter) plays with her little boy and lays down with him until he falls asleep. That's when she goes in her room where she has her computer and does her homework. She makes sure that little boy gets first attention before she does her homework and finishes it. So it is really important, some people might not think that, as long as they are putting food on the table and making sure their kids have the best toys and you can't buy love and affection.

With my grandchildren, my (grand-daughter) is the one with the talent that should be pushed. I keep encouraging her to go ahead and learn more about anthropology. I thought she as going into medicine. That was always her wish ever since she was a little girl that she'd like to heal people. Maybe that healing power was a different thing that she was chosen for. We talked about it for quite a long time when she told me that she wanted to become an anthropologist. I told her well through that anthropology you'd be healing people because that's a healing process too. Instead of using medicine to heal them bodily maybe her calling was to heal them internally. It will (also) be teaching her the values of our culture that she in turn can pass down. It can be used as a tool to spread that good feeling among other people, not just the Native people, because we've got to learn to live together as one people.

But I thank God that I overcame the residential school experience and it is because of my Elders that I came back and I'm stronger for it. Sometimes I look at it this way too, maybe because of all the hurts and humiliation that I went through it made me a stronger person today. I'm able to cope with alot. I know what it is like to be humiliated and I know what it is like to go through a lot of pain. When I see others my age, and I know they are going through alot of suffering, I feel for them. I just feel I could put my arms around them and give them the strength to live up to it.

I look at Manny, my God, that young fellow is just on the road every day. That's all he thinks about is how do we pave that road. Many of times when I go to the gatherings, I encourage these young people I tell them with that little education that we got, my age group, we never let them close that door. We were able to go and say, 'Look we are the first people here'. It was just like as if we put our foot in there and never let it close tight. Now that door is thrown wide open and it

was because of Manny and all these young people that are not afraid to go up and fight the government for what they know is right for their people.

This Elder spent a great part of her life teaching and preserving the traditional Shuswap language, history and culture. She was recognized by many organizations and communities for her work, one of them being the B.C. Museum Society. She willingly shares all that she can with anyone who wants to learn. She is a very articulate and wise Elder. She has rightfully gained the love and respect of people throughout the province. She shows her gifts of thinking, analyzing, understanding, speculating, calculation, prediction, organizing, categorizing, criticizing, problem solving, imagining, and integrating all intellectual capacities through her work in interviewing other Elders regarding the traditional Shuswap language, history and culture, giving lectures or seminars at the Okanagan College and many more numerous places, making books on the Shuswap traditional knowledge, making films recording traditional ways of making baskets, tanning hides and so on. She shows her gifts of completion, fulfilment, lessons of things that end and the capacity to finish what she began through her work now as an Elder who is concerned with passing on her knowledge to the younger generation. She shows the gifts of detachment, freedom from fear and hate, love, and knowledge through teaching the young people and others the underlying principles of traditional teachings and ethical conduct. She shows her gifts of seeing how all things fit together, insight, and intuition by knowing the "why's" behind the ceremonies and relating this knowledge to others. She shows the gifts of a sense of how to live a balanced life, capacity to dwell in the centre of things, moderation

and justice by her example of living traditionally, her political involvement in all First Nations affairs and knowing the limitations of her health.

Elder Number Six recounts her life as an Elder in this way:

You should learn the culture from the Elders (because) they are willing to share their knowledge with you. If you learned your culture you wouldn't be lost. It is important that the young people today should learn to respect their Elders. When the Elders speak, the young people should listen. When we have a circle meeting, the Elders share with the young people the good things, our traditional ways. When you learn your culture, you feel good about yourself. There is so much to learn, like the drums and the songs, and the sweat lodge, they have meanings.

The names from our grandparents are important because it's from your ancestors and could go down several generations. It is important for your strength. Before the children were given their Native name at birth and kept it throughout their lifetime. Sometimes if you're ill, an Elder can lend you a name, when you get your own name, then give the Elder back their name. There is a name-giving ceremony and a dinner is called. A gift is always given and you thank the person who lent you their name. It is announced that you have found your name now and you do not neglect your Elders. This is why it's important for the young people to know their family tree. Discuss this matter with your mother, she's still here and she's your mom. She can give you one of your ancestor's names, then call a dinner and announce that you're getting a Native name so that all the Indian people will know your Indian name. In turn you can pass the name on to your children. At the dinner the oldest people are thanked with a little gift. Show that you're glad by thanking the spirits.

This wise Elder is highly respected and is asked to speak at numerous celebrations and at Fraser Valley College. She is an active member of the Elder's group in Sardis. The first time I met her she had come down with this group of Elders to the Native Indian Teacher Education Program hut to give small group discussions to the students in the program. I was very impressed with what this group of Elders were doing, and even more impressed with this great lady. She shows the gifts of thinking, analyzing, understanding, speculating, calculation,

prediction, organizing, categorizing, criticizing, problem solving, imagining and integrating all intellectual capacities through her work as a healer, a guest speaker at the Fraser Valley College and being a member of the Elders group in the Sto:lo area. She has also participated in the making of some books regarding traditional teachings. She shows her gifts of completion, fulfilment, lessons of things that end and the capacity to finish what she began by having her knowledge recorded so her knowledge can be passed on to others. She shows the gifts of detachment, freedom from fear, hate, love and knowledge through teaching the underlying principles of traditional education and ethical conduct. She shows the gifts of seeing how all things fit together, insight, and intuition through understanding the "why's" behind the ceremonies and being a healer. She shows the gifts of a sense of how to live a balanced life, capacity to dwell in the centre of things, moderation and justice by her spiritual and emotional support to others and her political involvement in making positive changes in First Nations affairs.

Elder Number Seven recounts her life as an Elder in this way:

I was with him fifty, maybe fifty-two, fifty-three years, my husband. (When) he was dying, I stayed with him. (My husband) asked 'why didn't you tell me it was time for you', so many times I had my baby by myself.....I think he was glad to have me, without arrangements and when he was dying he said whatever I said to you I was in the army and I was taught to be mean. If I hurt your feelings forgive me. Six weeks and we used to get a priest every morning. The priest came that morning and told me he left about half an hour ago. I had nine girls, two boys and lots of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren. I'm really blessed to see five generations.

This Elder is over ninety years old and has been a deacon of the Roman Catholic church for a number of years. She has been recognized by the pope for her life's work in the church. She had an Indian dancing and singing group of

young people from the Chase area at one time. She has shown her gifts of thinking, analyzing, understanding, speculating, calculation, prediction, organizing, categorizing, criticizing, problem solving, imagining, and integrating all intellectual capacities by being a deacon for the church, recording her knowledge in taped interviews, and assisting in writing a book about the legends of the Shuswap people. She showed the gifts of completion, fulfilment, lessons of things that end and the capacity to finish what she began through her life's work in preserving the culture of the Shuswap people and ensuring that they had a church on the Neskainlith reserve for the people. She has shown the gifts of detachment, freedom from fear, hate, love and knowledge by teaching the underlying principles of tractional education and ethical conduct. She has shown the gifts of seeing how all things fit together, insight and intuition through her work as a deacon and in helping her large extended family and community members. She has shown the gifts of a sense of how to live a balanced life, capacity to dwell in the centre of things, moderation and justice through her spiritual and emotional support to others and her political involvement in the social, economic and educational problems of her community and knows the limitations of her health.

At the beginning of this chapter Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane (1984) says that the essence of what it is to be a leader and a human being is to be found in service to others. Further to this they say that there is no end to our symbolic journey around the medicine wheel and our development. The first principles and the traditional code of ethics were instilled in them at a young age, thus, when their grandparents identified their gifts and talents they recognized the great responsibilities bestowed upon them. They in turn always listened to the guidance

of their Elders. These women's main goal throughout their life, was service for the good of people. They proved to be good mothers, valuable wives and members of their communities.

As Elders, these eminent women are continuing identifying and nurturing the gifts and talents they see in their children and grandchildren. Moreover, they are ensuring that future generations will know of the great wisdom of their Shuswap ancestors by preserving, recording and enhancing the Shuswap language, history and culture. I feel blessed that these great ladies shared their stories with me. More of this qualitative research needs to be done as there are many other women stories who are in dire need of being told.

**CHAPTER VI - CONCLUSION**

A Nation is not conquered  
Until the hearts of its women  
Are on the ground.  
Then it is done, no matter  
How brave its warriors  
Nor how strong its weapons.  
Traditional Cheyenne saying  
(Bataille & Sands, 1984, p. v)

The recurring themes which emerge from these stories of how the Shuswap people traditionally identified and nurtured the gifts and talents of the girls are the underlying principles of traditional educational practices. In particular, the grandparents observed the children while at work and play, how they interacted with other children and how they obeyed their requests and listened to their guidance. The girls recognized the great honour and responsibilities bestowed upon them for the recognition of their gifts and were thankful of the extra attention and praise lavished on them for doing their tasks well. In many ways the girls did their best to live up their responsibilities of their gifts through daily prayer and their grandparents' expectations by serving others while keeping a strong sense of self, family and a member of the community and the Shuswap Nation.

The struggles these girls had, and then later as women were their inner conflicts as their societies were affected by the epidemics, the World Wars and the missionaries. All around them were social problems evident in alcohol, wife and child abuse. However, they struggled to raise their families in the traditional manner with the help of some close family members despite the cultural erosion around them. Although it would have been easier to give into the social problems,

they chose to remain on the path that was paved for them by their grandparents. Each day they prayed that they could carry out their grandparents' expectations and utilize their gifts for the benefit of those around them.

How the Shuswap people identified and nurtured their gifted and talented girls, as discussed in this thesis and as revealed in the stories were the basic underlying principles of traditional Shuswap education and ethical conduct. In the basic underlying principles, the Elders held significant roles in their societies. They were honoured and respected for their help and their wisdom. The extended family took part in ensuring that the gifted and talented girls' gifts unfolded by lavishing them with love, attention, praise and recognition. The girls, in return for the love and affections given to them, listened and obeyed the requests of their loved ones. They were held back from going down the wrong path by the principles and ethical conduct instilled in them at an early age.

Old Coyote (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) asserts on ethical conduct and the underlying principles of traditional teaching that:

We Indians are taught to take into consideration the less fortunate members of our tribe. We believe that if you help a pauper...you will get a reward, not from him but from a great force looking down on you .... Our women are trained to do that....It goes right back to some of our beliefs. The white man's world teaches us that we are supposed to economize, to save. To an Indian, to save is just like buying oats for a dead horse.

Where the white man says, 'Faith, Hope and Charity,' the Plains Indian says 'Love, Faith, Hope, and Charity'. So the things the Indian does are controlled by love, the love he has in his beliefs, and by the hope he has for his people. And charity began during the old days of warfare when any war booty was shared with the people....To show faith, I grew up and performed certain services without complaint. So I neglect my own duties because I want to be of service to my people....But I am willing to do things at my own expense for the betterment of my people....I am willing to share everything I have

with my people....The only things people will remember you by when you leave this world is how you conducted yourself in life (pp. 181-182).

Since Confederation, First Nations people have been fighting for their aboriginal rights. Presently, First Nations people are still fighting for Indian Control of Indian Education, self-determination and self-government. The Shuswap Nation, as mentioned earlier, have had all 17 Shuswap bands sign the Shuswap Declaration in 1982, where they have sworn to preserve, record and enhance their Shuswap language, history and culture. The mandate of the Secwepemc Cultural Educational Society is to carry out this task. They have established the Secwepemc Museum and Heritage Park, library and archives and write curriculum materials for Shuswap language development and social studies texts which accurately portray the Shuswap people's history and culture. Many of my informants have participated in this process.

Additionally, the annual Shuswap Cultural Gathering, which was based on the idea of the annual traditional Shuswap gathering at Green Lake, is hosted by a different band each year. Here much feasting, traditional dancing and singing and playing lehal games are done along with other recreational and social activities.

Shuswap bands host annual pow wows where First Nations people can come from all over to participate and share in the joy of practising a part of our rich heritage. Further to this, the Kamloops Indian Band in conjunction with the Shuswap Brothers and Sisters, host the annual Kamloopa Pow Wow, which one of my Elder informants started in 1980 as a dedication to her mother. Moreover, she wanted to ensure that her grandchildren and other loved ones, not only had the opportunity to feel proud of the rich heritage, but to develop in them the desire to

want to learn more about their history and culture and to participate in relevant cultural activities. At the pow wow thousands of people, both First Nations and non-First Nations come from all parts of the world to watch and partake in the pow wow dancing and singing.

Quetone (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) states this of First Nations gatherings:

(Traditionalists) are the people who hold onto and perpetuate our customs and traditions. They provide...an opportunity to come back and participate. In other words, any time I want to charge my battery, I can go back and enjoy many of these Indian ways: I can participate in them, I can regain a feeling for our traditional values....it's the greatest feeling there is....There will be many camps and visitations, and dancing and talking. You will see the things we have talked about, such as generosity, practised by people...where it's just a way of life (p. 183).

In light of the traditional Shuswap forms of identifying and nurturing their gifted and talented girls, the necessity of adopting similar models implemented in the United States, such as the one developed by George (1987), must be addressed. It is only through meaningful discussions between the people, the band representatives, school representatives and government officials that positive changes can come about. First Nations people have made changes come about already by insisting on discussing the problems our children are facing in the present school system. The National Indian Brotherhood's statement on *Indian Control of Indian Education* and the *Shuswap Declaration* have made a strong impact in the educational system. The present educational system must change if our gifted and talented First Nations children, especially the girls, are to be identified and nurtured both within the home and at school. Parents must insist on having meaningful discussions with the elected officials for this change to happen.

However, as George (1987) argues for the identification and nurturance of gifted and talented First Nations students:

There are....students who....cannot YET, do not YET, or will not YET manifest their high intellectual and creative abilities in academically accepted manners but who have the potential to do so....these students deserve the right to be afforded the opportunity for enhancement of their gifts--an opportunity that comes only with the discovery and nurturance of their special abilities....we all (must) continue in our efforts to understand and improve educational opportunities for gifted students. (p. 81).

In order for this change to come about the First Nations family must again become their child's main teacher. We must again utilize the underlying traditional educational practices. The Elders need to play a meaningful role in the education of First Nations children in the Shuswap language, history and culture. This education must be done at home, in the school and in the community. Successful First Nations gifted programs like Christensen's (1991), George's (1987), Kirschenbaum (1988), Tonemah's (1987), could be established here, particularly in band-operated schools where the people would have more say in implementing changes where needed. Benedict (Morey & Gilliam, 1974) says this of returning the parents as the child's main teacher:

I plead for the return of children to their parents, so that parents can be the ones to influence the future of their young. The old traditional roles of uncles, aunt, grandmothers and grandfathers should be resumed and recognized as determining factors in the education of a child. If the present-day society won't give this to us, we will have to find some to plead, to negotiate, and perhaps to drop out of the system and take back to ourselves the education of our children and the solidity of our family (p. 176).

Moreover, as stated in Bradley (1989), Brooks (1989), George, (1989), Kirschenbaum (1989), Montgomery (1989), Pfeiffer (1989) and Sisk (1989) in order for First Nations gifted and talented programs to be successful, extensive

family involvement is essential. Their concerns are that the extended family in First Nation cultures play a role in their children's education, the parents should work in partnership with the school personnel to better enable them to support their children, the parents should be consulted during the identification process of gifted students, there are family differences between the mainstream and First Nations culture that should be noted. The school personnel should have their goals set on eliminating obstacles that prevent parental involvement, and the school should establish a parental advisory committee.

The other concerns of most of the authors in the *Contemporary Gifted First Nations Educational Programs* Chapter were concerns expressed that generalizations about First Nations students should be used with caution as there are different levels of acculturation (traditional, bi-cultural, or close to the mainstream culture) that affected the students' performance. Most First Nations people place value on group cohesiveness so individuals are usually not set apart from the group but are recognized for their gifts and talents. The concept of giftedness must reflect the students cultural values and needs. The identification tools used to measure the First Nations students intelligence and abilities should be viewed from a cultural and experiential perspective. The program purpose should enable the student to live bi-culturally so they can survive successfully in their own culture and in the mainstream culture. The program should build on the strengths of the students and develop necessary skills. Positive role models from the community should be utilized. girls particularly need role models. Cooperative learning should be capitalized on since it is most First Nations students desire to for group membership. First Nations gifted and talented students need a

counselling component in the gifted programs as many struggle with the conflicts of being different culturally and intellectually. A conceptually based approach to study other cultures would serve to strengthen the program. The teacher of the gifted and talented program for First Nations students plays a pivotal role in the students development as the teacher must have an understanding of their students differences.

The strength of the Shuswap culture is evident in the way my informants were able to continue developing their gifts and talents throughout their lifetime while successfully resisting the negative social problems in their communities. By maintaining the traditional Shuswap educational practices instead of adopting the negative social problems, these women have clearly led the life their grandparents expected of them when they identified and began to nurture their gifts. My informants have adapted the European way of life into their own way of living. The teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and Shuswap Spiritualism were combined and the English language was accepted but the Shuswap language was never completely abandoned. Shuswap traditions and customs are still passed on. Today, the culture is still alive and people are calling for changes to the present educational system to meet the needs of their children.

As Coffey, Goldstrom, Gottfriedson, Matthew & Walton (1990) state that Shuswap people are still alive and well today despite the disruption of our traditional ways of life. They say:

The government of the last century firmly believed in assimilation. The men in power believed that Indians must not practice any of their own, culture, but instead must adopt the whiteman's way. This was best done by separating the children from their parents and putting them into Christian boarding schools, one at Williams Lake and one in

Kamloops. Physical punishment was used to force Indians to take on the whiteman's customs, beliefs and religion. Both schools were open for over 75 years. Although the Shuswap culture was suppressed, it survived. With the closure of the schools, children were returned to their parents. Communities are only beginning the task of rebuilding their culture, and their communities.....The early history of the Shuswap must be studied if answer for today's dilemmas are to be found....Like the mythical coyote, the Shuswap have survived many disasters and hardships and continue to move forward (p. 52).

These Elders are survivors. Even though they may have and continue to be affected by the social problems of the negative impacts on our culture for the last 150 years, they are continuing to be very influential leaders of their communities. They are all held in high esteem by their children, grandchildren, relatives and friends for their lives work.

Implications for further research revealed by this study include traditional forms of identifying and nurturing gifted and talented Shuswap boys; traditional forms of identifying and nurturing gifted and talented children from another First Nations group; and traditional forms of identifying and nurturing gifted and talented children using Tonemah's (1987) study at a national level should be used to verify or extend my findings.

The substance of this thesis also holds implications for historical and educational researchers who address First Nation issues. Too often Euro-Canadians have studied documents written by other Euro-Canadians about First Nations people. Historical documents may serve as an aid in understanding the cultural history but the people whom the researcher is studying should be involved in that research in some way. To fully understand a people's history, research should begin with the people of that culture whose life experiences and stories can enlighten their history much better than any "outsider" documents can. The people

and the researchers must work together in gathering and analyzing the data and in forming an accurate theory.

To arrive at a common understanding of the people's life experiences can help to develop the positive action necessary to make relevant changes in the present educational system. Only in understanding our past can we truly have meaningful discussions about making a brighter future for our children. The strength of the underlying traditional educational practices and ethical conduct has helped the Shuswap people to survive and continue to grow as a people and Nation.

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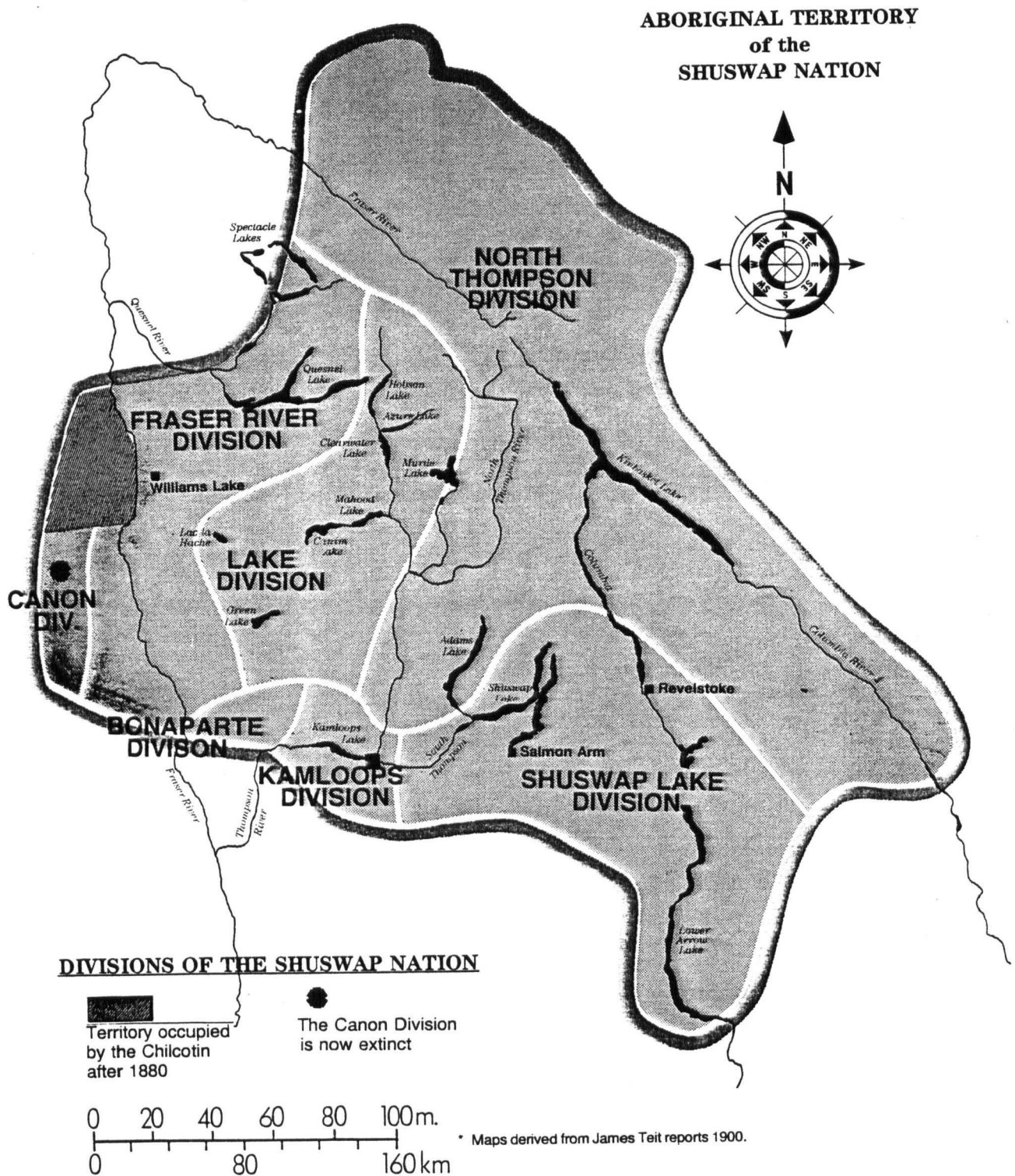
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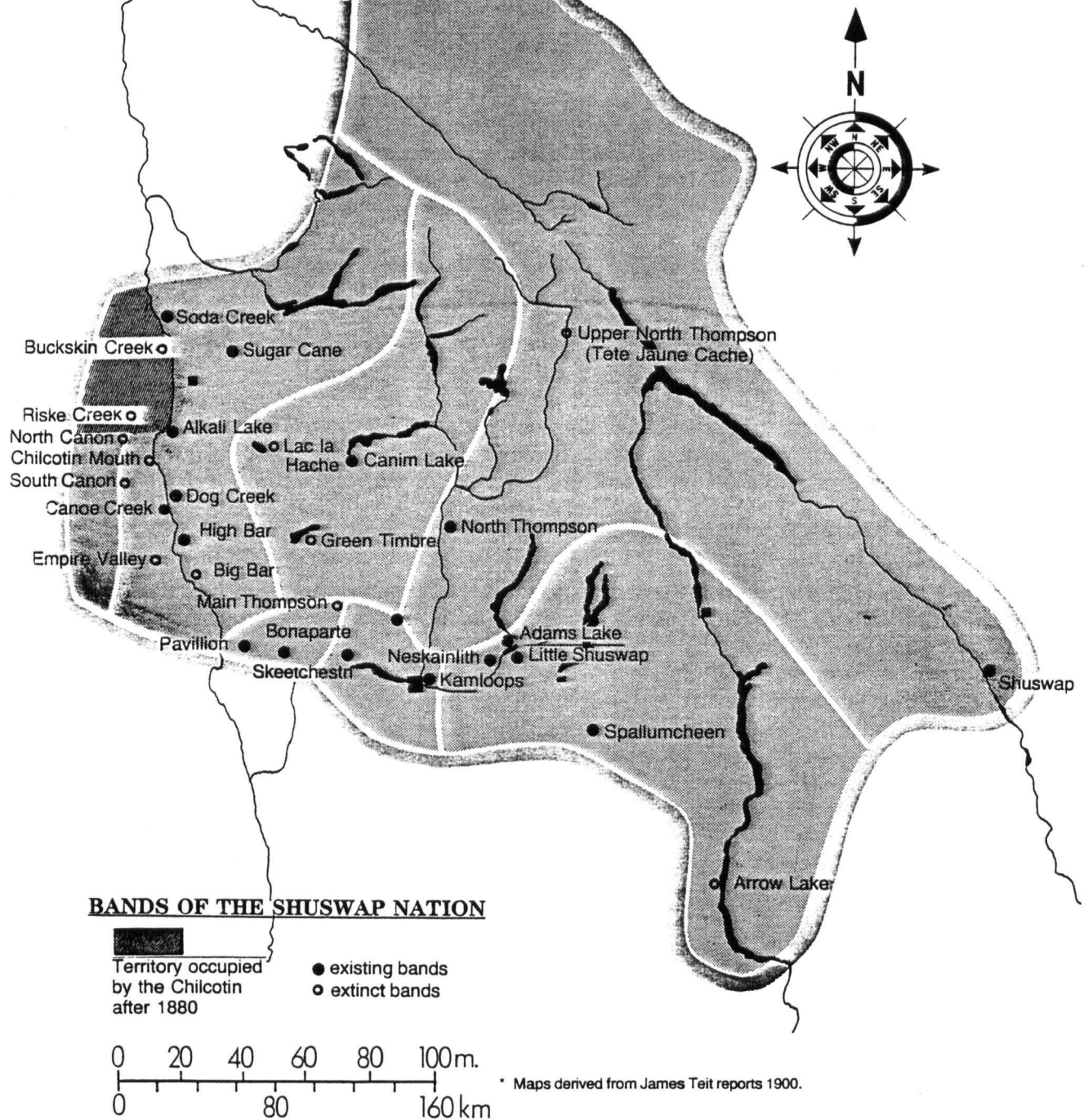
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**APPENDICES**



# **ABORIGINAL TERRITORY of the SHUSWAP NATION**



The following are the questions to be asked:

1. What can you tell me about your childhood, can you tell me about your relationship with your parents and grandparents, what did they teach you?
2. Who identified you as gifted and talented? How did they discover and nurture your gifts?
3. What do you and/or your tribal group consider as valuable behavioral characteristics that your gifted and talented girls must possess? What are the most important, and why?
4. Traditionally, all cultural groups had ways of identifying and grooming certain individuals for various leadership positions. What type of characteristics do you think the community elders looked for? How were these individuals helped to develop their gifts?
5. The definition offered by Europeans for gifted and talented students indicates that they should be (1) diverse in their interests (2) enjoy abstract and complex concepts (3) enjoy variety ... are ideas about being gifted and talented, as a Shuswap person, different? If so, how?