

## **PRACTISING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

PRACTISING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION  
IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM:  
TEACHING SECONDARY LEVEL ENGLISH

By

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A Project

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts (Teaching)

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (TEACHING) 1995  
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Practising Multicultural Education in the English Classroom:  
Teaching Secondary Level English

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NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 85

## ABSTRACT

This project addresses the current need to change the content and delivery of secondary English curricula in order to reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity which makes up Canadian society. It gives a rationale for a multicultural education while suggesting content, concepts, learning outcomes, and strategies for achieving this goal. Analysis of sections of the Ministry of Education's guidelines, policies, and resources shows support for a multicultural approach in the English classroom.

The review of teacher resources from existing books provides staff development ideas to assist teachers in the delivery of an antiracist and ethnoculturally-equitable program. Analysis of anthologies and individual literary examples demonstrates material and classroom ideas to provide positive examples for the study of writers from diverse backgrounds. The suggested authors include Canadian immigrant writers, Canadian writers of diverse cultural or mixed-racial backgrounds, and international writers.

Suggested literature by Canadian Native writers along with relevant classroom ideas and discussion topics provides educators with the material and means to engage in discussion of Native experience and culture. A detailed analysis of Ruby Slipperjack's novel Silent Words (1992) discusses issues and strategies for a study of this novel in a grade nine English class.

The project provides the theoretical basis for and the practical application of a multicultural approach which can be used by English teachers in all Ontario boards.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Sylvia Bowerbank for her expertise, encouragement, and assistance throughout the project. Also, I thank Dr. John Ferns for his invaluable organizational and editorial help. I am grateful to Dolores Nawagesic Wawia for providing special assistance with my work on Native literature.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and my husband, Chris, for providing unending support and encouragement throughout my studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, educational curricula have centred upon the experiences and history of Western culture. However, as the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of Canadian students become increasingly diverse, and as we recognize that there is much educational value in the discovery of other cultures, a strictly Western representation becomes less appropriate. The minority students in our schools often are not served well by curricula based on the products of Western culture alone. For example, the Ministry of Education document Changing Perspectives (1992) argues that "young people with certain cultural backgrounds, some indigenous to Canada and some originating in other countries, are being streamed into inappropriate programs" (17). In a world of shrinking horizons, the co-operative and international nature of our world becomes increasingly important. Therefore, educators and students need to learn to appreciate this interconnected world where cultures do not exist in isolation if co-operative and non-judgemental attitudes are encouraged. If educators wish to develop the values of mutual understanding in both teachers and students, education should become a multicultural experience.

Although an ideal multicultural education will involve all subjects, this project will focus on multicultural literature within the intermediate/senior English classroom. English as a Second Language (ESL) education must deal with a host of additional issues, but this project will deal specifically with English courses in which English is the first language of instruction.

For the purposes of this discussion, "ethnic" and "culture" will be defined as they are in the Canadian version of Webster's Dictionary (1988):

ethnic: of or relating to a people whose unity rests on racial, linguistic, religious or cultural ties. (384)

culture: the social and religious structures and intellectual and artistic manifestations that characterize a society. (325)

There is some overlap when referring to "multiethnic" and "multicultural" literature, since the term "ethnic" encompasses the elements of "culture". Therefore, as Borovilos and Sugunasiri suggest in their booklet Multicultural Literature Within the English Curriculum (1987), "we are all ... 'ethnics' to the extent that each one of us belongs to one or the other ethnic community"(4). In this project, both multiethnic and multicultural literature will be discussed and supported as valuable for English curricula.

From my own personal experiences teaching in both an inner-city, multicultural setting in Toronto, and a rural, largely Anglo-Saxon setting in small town Central Ontario, my observations of students' and teachers' attitudes towards minority groups tell me that we must not limit multicultural education only to areas where a diverse ethnocultural population exists. Just because there are few "racial incidents" in a school does not mean that racist attitudes do not abound. In other words, just because the problem is not visible does not mean the problem does not exist.

If educators in the English secondary classroom assume that multicultural education is beneficial to all students, a number of issues, concepts, outcomes and strategies must be addressed. The suggestions in



this chapter for each of these four headings will be based on the Ontario Ministry of Education documents which will be discussed in detail in chapter one. Furthermore, the study of literature from various cultures should be accompanied by the study of the corresponding history, geography, and politics which apply to the particular time, culture and environment of the writer. However, even the most dedicated English teacher does not have the time, knowledge or experience to approach all of these areas; as a result, educators, community members and students can co-operatively teach each other in these areas in order to share expertise and experience. Therefore, both educators and students will undergo a multicultural education together, since good teachers are learners too. In this project, the term "learners" will then refer to both teachers and students.

Issues will include the following: first, learners will investigate and identify the linguistic factors in prejudice; second, readers will develop critical skills in detecting bias and stereotyping in literature ; third, the heritage of a variety of cultures will be incorporated into the curriculum in order to develop inclusiveness. In addressing these issues, learners will create a classroom atmosphere where self-esteem can be high for students of all cultures, where varied cultures can be studied and accepted, where a global perspective can be fostered, and where both universality of human experience and cultural identity can be found in the exploration of diverse literature.

Concepts will include the varying cultural points of view through which Canadians perceive society, similarities and differences between cultures, cultural stereotyping and discrimination, the influence of history upon cultural writing and behaviour, the status assigned to

different languages and cultures by Canadian society, and the universality of human experience as well as cultural identity.

As outcomes, learners will use bias-free language in both speaking and writing, will become familiar with a wide range of literature from a variety of cultures, will identify biases in media, and will explore similarities and differences between their own and other cultures.

Furthermore, learners will be able to describe the literary contributions by men and women of diverse backgrounds, demonstrate understanding of the ways in which family background, language and culture influence ideas and behaviour, and identify and challenge inequities in Canadian society.

In doing so, the following attitudes will be developed: esteem for a diversity of cultures, values for the common welfare of society, and a sense of personal responsibility in society.


Strategies will include the study of literature by women and men of various cultures, a study of the portrayal of cultural groups in the media, and discussions with and/or lectures by community members, educators and fellow students on cultural identity and customs. These strategies will provide exposure to various cultural points of view, and will allow learners to benefit from the wisdom that various cultures have to offer.

## LANGUAGE, STEREOTYPING AND AN INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

As Allport explains in "Linguistic Factors in Prejudice" (1974), people look for an "enemy" group upon whom to blame social problems such as high taxes, unemployment and threatened religious values. Allport

writes that it is common for people to use the pronoun "they" when referring to "out-groups" or the "enemy" -- reference to these "out-groups" usually serves the purpose of displaying displeasure or hostility (113). Often, learners, both teachers and students, fall into this habit when talking about other students or members of society. In this way, a "they", or a group of some kind serves as a scapegoat for current social (or educational) problems. People begin to ignore the concept of the individual, and stereotype by lumping individuals into groups. Allport suggests that, at the time his article was written, "they" were communists; but, today, "they" are often immigrants or members of a visible minority.

This kind of "us vs. them" attitude comes across regularly in everyday conversation in both large and small educational settings in Ontario. Special interest groups are often the scapegoat for current social problems. The following comment arose from a discussion of immigration in a grade 10 General English class:


 "It's *our* country, so if *they* come, *they* should be able to speak English and follow our way of doing things."

The use of the word "they" in this kind of statement indicates an "us vs. them" situation. There is much work that needs to be done to educate learners both to avoid forming uninformed stereotypes and also to overcome negative preconceptions about "them" -- whoever "they" may be. Through the study of literature written from different cultural perspectives, the study of stereotypes in the media, and conversations with others from various backgrounds, learners will be able to recognize and challenge stereotypes and their harmful effects.

Another example of the way in which language perpetuates stereotypes can be found in the classification of individuals by ethnic or

national origin. For example, the word "Indian" is a symbol or label that points to one quality of a person and overshadows other possible descriptors such as: a musician, an athlete, a lawyer. As Allport explains, "a noun abstracts from a concrete reality some one feature and assembles different concrete realities only with respect to this one feature"(108). It is impossible for one label to refer to a person's entire nature; therefore, learners need to refer to others with as many possible descriptors as possible when speaking of them.

Labels which refer in some way to ethnicity often carry along with them generalizations which people attribute to particular cultures. In this way, there are descriptions with which, once an individual is called, for example, "Chinese", he or she will, rightly or wrongly, be associated. Therefore, the labelled category 'Chinese', Allport contends, "includes indiscriminately the defining attribute, probable attributes, and wholly fanciful, nonexistent attributes" (109). Although ethnicity is important in defining an individual's identity, one must not make assumptions about an individual based on ethnic generalizations. Learners can engage in brainstorming activities which start with a cultural proper noun (i.e. "Chinese"). Once pre-conceived words that are associated with the culture have been listed, learners can go on to conduct interviews as well as media, history and literary research to determine how many of the descriptors are valid. In this way, learners will discover the real attributes of different cultural groups, but will also discover that individuals within each group will have individual qualities.

Similarly, proper names, if they have ethnic associations, may carry with them certain cultural stereotypes. Allport describes an experiment in which 150 students viewed 30 photos of college girls, and

the students ranked the girls with a scale of one to five on beauty, intelligence, character, ambition and general likeability. When the same students viewed the same photos two months later, five photos displayed Jewish surnames, five displayed Italian, five displayed Irish, and the rest displayed common American surnames. The results showed that the Jewish names brought about a rating decrease in liking, character and beauty, but a rating increase in intelligence and ambition. The Italian names brought about a rating decrease in all categories except ambition. The Irish names also brought about a decrease in general rating, but not one as severe as the Jews and Italians.

These results have important implications for teacher/student relationships. If teachers bring stereotypes to students of cultures which are stereotyped as being low achievers, low expectations of intelligence can have a negative effect on student performance. The concept of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" has been proved in research by individuals including Shapiro (1960), Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), and Braun (1976). According to Lefrancois' Psychology for Teaching (1991), Rolison and Medway (1985) found that "both the type of label applied to the students and the information the teacher has about the student's recent performance are important in determining teacher expectations"(269). Brophy and Good (1974) found that these "expectations are probably linked in important ways to such crucial things as the student's self-concept and self-esteem, as well as to achievement"(269). If educators are to remain objective, they will have high expectations for all students and consequently, will guard against the stereotypes that associate children of certain backgrounds, whether these backgrounds be social, economic or cultural, with lower achievement.

Learners will also avoid making similar stereotypical conclusions based on surface factors such as skin colour, dress, and language through the study of literature, media and interactive conversation. Based on these studies, through small and large group discussions, role play and questioning, students will examine their own biases, and apply this self-knowledge to their own actions and attitudes. Although awareness does not necessarily result in attitude change, awareness is the first step to transformation. Self-esteem for students is largely dependent on the treatment and acceptance they receive from fellow students and teachers; so, in order to foster self-esteem, learners will strive to avoid any cultural barriers which might prevent a positive self-concept in any person.

Ethnic proper names, as well as factors such as dress, food, and skin colour must not be defined as "absurd" or laughable to learners just because they are different from what we are used to. Through exposure to different cultural perspectives and teachings, learners will develop the understanding that what is familiar is not always the "best" way or the "only" way. Arrogance about one's own beliefs can shut doors to new understandings, to broadening of perspectives. Therefore, through cultural and literary study, learners will view others as individuals shaped by cultural groups. The differences will not be viewed as "wrong", but just as differences. Resources to help teachers in the pursuit of delivering an antiracist and ethnocultural-equity education will be discussed in chapter three.

The study of differences should not be confused with stereotyping. Commonly held biases and stereotypical attitudes permeate

students' experiences through their readings and in their own lives. Stotsky defines stereotypes as:

the consistent characterization of people from any ethnic, racial, religious or gender group in a way that is either unflattering, demeaning, or limited ... stereotypes are thus created either by consistent negative portraits of people in particular social groups, or by consistent portraits of people in particular social groups engaging in a restricted range of activities and achievements (29).

Stereotyping can be directed not only to ethnic groups, but also to other groups including women, homosexuals, the physically or mentally challenged, and the poor, as well as other marginalized groups. Through multicultural education, then, learners will discuss and investigate issues of prejudice and discrimination that touch many different minority groups. Teaching each other to recognize that people must not define "normal" or "good" in terms of what we are most familiar with helps us to view people as individuals, and also helps us to recognize cultural customs, traditions and beliefs which shape the individual. With increased literary exposure to names, customs, beliefs and places which initially seem foreign, learners will develop esteem for the diversity of cultures.

Literature that demonstrates cultural stereotypes can be studied, but with a focus on analysing inherent biases. Through the analysis of cultural portrayal in the kind of familiar literature that students often do not recognize as stereotypical, students will be able to better assess their own biases and be able to overcome stereotypes that they encounter in their own lives.

In order to practise multicultural education, learners will not only discuss linguistic factors and stereotypes involved in prejudice, but will also learn about the heritage of Western and non-Western groups in

the curriculum. As Stotsky writes in "Academic Guidelines for Selecting Multiethnic and Multicultural Literature" (1994), there are two major purposes for including a variety of ethnic and cultural literature in our English programs: "to develop our students' knowledge of and respect for the extraordinary religious, racial and ethnic diversity of [our country's] citizens, and to enhance their familiarity with and appreciation of the literary traditions of other peoples in countries around the world." (28).

In a secondary school English class, it is often difficult for teachers to attempt to work through and teach unfamiliar texts written from different cultural perspectives. Words and references from a particular culture might be unknown to the teacher, and as a result, this "fear of the unknown" might prevent the teacher from embracing works that do not fall within the "traditional" canon of literature which has been taught for years in schools.

If one takes the position that one must be a cultural "expert" in order to teach any literature which is not from one's own culture, we must come to the conclusion that the only literature we must teach is that of our own culture. Based upon the preceding philosophy for a multicultural education, this conclusion is not acceptable. Ideally, teachers expert in each field would teach particular literatures; for example, it would be ideal for a Native to teach Native literature, an African Canadian to teach African literature, and so on. However, currently, in the typical secondary school English classroom, one teacher teaches one entire course. This system is an obstacle to a multicultural approach.

Solutions to these problems can be found through the use of team-teaching, minority representation in teaching staff and use of student experts and community members. Team teaching is a worthwhile way to



use the expertise of many individuals in the teaching of one course, and this method is beginning to be used in some schools. As we become more aware of social barriers to the hiring of members of minority groups, the face of employees in positions of "authority" (such as teachers) in Ontario will change. Furthermore, involving individuals from within and outside the school who have "expertise" that the average teacher will not have will also minimize the problems of a single-teacher approach.

In his article "Teaching Multicultural Literature" (1991), Dasenbrock indicates that, as we slowly realize that the best writers in English today come from all over the world, we would be doing a disservice to our students, ourselves and the writers if we decide that we need to control the text and be authorities over it in order to tackle it. Dasenbrock writes, "We are never in complete command of the language produced by others, yet to live is to come to an understanding of others" (45). He goes on to suggest that the best writers recognize the difficulties of cross-cultural communication, and they give the readers assistance within their writing to help them to understand it. Some things we will not exactly understand, but if a student asks a question to which the teacher does not know, the answer, "I don't know, but I will try to find out" is perfectly legitimate. Dasenbrock encourages teachers to see the value in the development of curiosity about other cultures and claims that ideally, the experience of art leads from the initial response of excitement for the unknown, to a later expert response. This theory is one which removes some of the fear from attempting to add writers of diverse backgrounds to the traditional "canon".

However, although Dasenbrock's comments encourage teachers to approach unfamiliar texts, in teaching literature that is written

from a different cultural perspective than the teacher's own, the teacher will want to both learn and teach important aspects of the culture itself before falling into the trap of projecting a Western interpretation onto the text. It is in the stage of discovery that students, community members and other teachers can help each other to learn. Ethnic speakers can give learners first hand encounters with some of the cultural beliefs and philosophies which guide a particular literature.

In studying works from varied cultures, students will discover some of the elements that make cultures unique; however, finding connections among cultures can also serve to show that although we are all different, human beings have one thing in common: human experience. Emotions such as love, excitement, sadness and disappointment cross cultural boundaries, while experiences of childhood, parenthood and relationships often show few cultural distinctions. Therefore, rather than highlighting the differences between writers of different cultures and therefore isolating them from each other and from students' own experiences, in drawing parallels to significant experiences and emotions common to human experience, we, as Burton argues in his article "Talking Across Cultures" (1992), "might find out that we are not so much talking to 'the other' as we are to parts of ourselves that have lain undiscovered and unarticulated" (122).

From my personal experiences, secondary school students learn best when they are able to relate literature to their own lives. If we make multicultural curricula seem so "different" to students that they are unable to make personal connections to the texts, some educational opportunities will be lost. In teaching multicultural literature then, pieces should be chosen in which students can make personal connections. From

this point of entry, cultural customs and identities will be explored to discover the cultural lens through which these experiences are viewed. In this way, learners will not only discover valuable lessons about other cultures but also will discover that they have many things in common. By finding literary connections which transcend cultures, both collective identity and individualism will be valued.

In order to develop an inclusive literature curriculum, learners will read and analyse literature by authors of varied Canadian and international backgrounds. Included in this curriculum will be the experiences and writings of Canadian Natives and Canadian immigrants. This literature should address a variety of themes and topics, and whenever possible, should contain experiences to which students can find personal connections. Anthologies and novels which include writers of diverse backgrounds and writings on the customs, lifestyles, experiences and traditions of various cultures will be included in the curriculum. Examples of this kind of literature will be given in chapters two and three.

Because Canada is a multicultural country existing in an interdependent network of world nations, it is only reasonable to assume that the language we use, the values we impart, and the literature we study represent our ethnic groups. Therefore, educators should re-evaluate the curriculum and its approach in order to provide positive role-models and new cultural areas of discovery for all learners.

## CHAPTER ONE: MINISTRY AND BOARD GUIDELINES FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

In both content and perspective, the Ontario school system has -- in the past and at present -- primarily focused on Western culture. The system has not always recognized the educational potential of the diversity of the student population. This dated curriculum reflects the backgrounds of the original settlers of Ontario, but does not include the Native Canadian or non-Western population which currently comprises part of Ontario society and Ontario schools. As a result, some students of non-Western backgrounds have not seen themselves represented positively -- or represented at all -- in the curriculum. As Changing Perspectives (1992) discusses, "in our diverse society, schools increasingly need to offer programs and services that take into account the wide variety in student backgrounds" (2). The Ministry and Board documents discussed in this chapter provide a favourable framework for change toward an equitable and multicultural educational system. The Ministry's philosophy, as expressed in guidelines, policies and resources, promotes curricula which include the experiences and writings of varied ethnocultural groups. This chapter will review these documents to show how the Ministry publications can guide educators who are in the process of changing the content and delivery of programs to include a multicultural education. Later chapters will provide both resources and curriculum ideas to assist teachers in implementing these directives.

When planning a course, secondary English teachers must refer to the following Ministry documents:

-Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995.

-Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, The Common Curriculum: Provincial Standards - Language, Grades 1-9, 1995.

-Ontario Ministry of Education, Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions (Grades 7-12), 1984.

-Ontario Ministry of Education, English Curriculum Guideline: Intermediate and Senior Divisions (Grades 7-12), 1987.

In order to further assist teachers in the development of an ethnocultural and antiracist program, the following documents will provide valuable direction:

-Ontario Ministry of Education, Changing Perspectives: A Resource Guide for Antiracist and Ethnocultural-Equity Education, 1992.

-Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, 1993.

-Victoria County Board of Education, Policy 710: Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policy, 1995.<sup>1</sup>

Also, when choosing reading materials, teachers should refer to the following document which includes a checklist for the evaluation of racial, religious and cultural bias in learning materials:

-Ontario Ministry of Education, Appendix to Circular 14 Evaluation Forms, 1988.

Even if a particular school's student population is mainly Western in culture, education should be multicultural. Schools do not exist in isolation, and Ontario learners need to develop skills to help them grow and learn in the diverse society of Ontario. Furthermore, learners need to develop a global perspective since, again, Ontario does not exist in

isolation. Therefore, learners need to explore various cultural points of view to both understand other cultures, and learn valuable lessons from them. The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes grades 1-9 addresses these issues of multiculturalism in Ontario schools. Included in the six "Key Features" of this document are two headings which deal with issues of multicultural programs and curricula: "A Focus on All Students" and "A Focus on Excellence and Equity". "A Focus on All Students" includes the following statement on educational programs:

...programs must reflect the abilities, needs, interests, and learning styles of students of both genders and all racial, linguistic, and ethnocultural groups. (9)

"A Focus on Excellence and Equity" includes the following section on an inclusive curriculum:

Schools must take into account the diversity of society in Ontario in order to enhance students' achievement.

Exclusion of the experiences and viewpoints of some social groups, such as Aboriginal and other racial and ethnocultural groups, constitutes a systemic barrier to success for students from those groups and often produces inequitable results. Such inequities have been linked to students' low self-esteem, placement in inappropriate programs, and low career expectations. They have also resulted in a high dropout rate.

The intent of an inclusive curriculum is to ensure that all students -- regardless of gender, racial and ethnocultural background, social class, sexual orientation, or ability -- develop confidence and are motivated to succeed. Such a curriculum equips all students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to live and work in an increasingly diverse society. In addition, it encourages them to appreciate diversity and to challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. (11)

The "Principles of Education" from the same document stress the importance of a multicultural approach in each area of education:

learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment. Each category above contains five statements about the kind of principles educators should follow. The first statement in each category deals with diversity and equity. For example, under the "curriculum" category, the first of five statements is as follows:

**1. The curriculum must reflect the diversity of Canadian society.**

Curriculum must present an accurate picture of the world in which students live and work. Students' self-image and their attitudes to others are affected both by what is taught and by how it is taught. Students are entitled to have their personal experiences and their racial and ethnocultural heritage valued, and to live in a society that upholds the rights of the individual. Students will also learn that their society is enriched and strengthened by its diversity. (19)

Similarly, outcomes 4,5 and 6 of the "Ten Essential Outcomes" to guide programs to the end of grade nine recommend a philosophy of equity. According to these outcomes, by the end of grade nine, students will: "evaluate the interdependence of local, national, and global communities and their dependence on the environment", "describe the contributions to today's world of men and women of many races, historical periods, and cultures", "demonstrate understanding of the ways in which individuals' family background, language, and culture influence their ideas and behaviour", and "learn the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizens in Canada, including the responsibility of identifying and challenging inequities and improving the environment" (27-28).

Literature, both in oral and written forms, plays a primary role in developing language, literacy and values. Therefore, the literature used in the classroom should reflect the multicultural heritage of our country and our world. Specific outcomes for Language (and other subject

groupings) appear in this document. The heading "Language" includes what is now taught as grade 9 English. One of the "Principles of Language Learning" is as follows:

Language, culture, and identity are closely linked. A program that recognizes, respects, and values students' racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as varieties of language, helps them develop a positive sense of self and motivates them to learn. All students need opportunities to think critically about the social values and status assigned to different languages by various groups in our society and to explore issues of bias and stereotyping related to language and culture. (47)

This section on Language goes on to explore the "Role of Literature and Media Texts in Language Development". It goes on to outline the variety of literature teachers should be using:

Works by women and men from various places, historical periods, and racial and cultural backgrounds acquaint students with a range of traditions, values, and attitudes and allow them to see things from many different points of view.

Literature can be transmitted orally as well as in writing. The oral tradition is an integral part of many cultures represented in Canada, including Aboriginal cultures. Oral literature should, therefore, form part of the school language program.

Media texts are a major source of information about the world for many of us ... it is therefore essential for students to develop the ability to interpret and evaluate information presented visually and orally and to use the various media to communicate their own ideas and points of view. (48)

In terms of specific outcomes for Language with relation to a multicultural education, by the end of grade 9, students will: "restate meaning and supporting details...using bias-free language", "read a wide range of materials for a variety of purposes", "identify implicit as well as explicit messages and biases in media texts", "identify issues associated with



gender and with social, racial, and cultural stereotyping in the media", "communicate with people from a variety of cultures and communities to explore similarities and differences between their own and other cultures", and "develop and encourage language that is free from bias and stereotyping" (51-59).

The accompanying document to the "Policies and Outcomes" document of The Common Curriculum is the "Provincial Standards, Language". Repeated in this document are many of the same principles and outcomes listed in the Language section of the "Policies and Outcomes". However, included are some further recommendations as to how to achieve these policies and outcomes in the English classroom.

According to this document, the four strands of Language that English teachers should be teaching and evaluating are: 1) listening and speaking, 2) reading, 3) writing, and 4) viewing and representing. Within each of these headings, outcomes indicate what students will do by the end of Grade 9. For each language outcome, the document describes attributes of six separate levels, or standards, to determine how a student will be assessed.

By using students themselves as resources, the classroom can be enriched by the expert knowledge that students' own cultural and ethnic experiences have brought them. Also, if students are able to feel they are "teaching" others, then ideally, the students' self-esteem will benefit. In using language standards to measure listening and speaking skills, the document suggests that students:

may share stories or talk about customs from their own and other cultures, using materials from home or resources in the school. It is important for teachers and students to appreciate that, as languages

vary, so do culturally appropriate communication styles, such as body stance, vocal tone, and gesture. (18)

The "traditional canon" of school literature needs to be re-evaluated, and literature by authors of diverse backgrounds living in Canada and in the rest of the world needs to be explored. According to the document, in using language standards to measure reading:

[t]he selection of materials should reflect a commitment to equity: students need to understand and respect cultures and alternative ways of living, and they benefit from a knowledge of the experiences and contributions of people and cultures other than their own.

Materials written from a variety of points of view and by a range of authors from different cultures provide students with the benefit of a balanced perspective through which to view the world, its people, and events. (20)

In terms of measuring writing skills, the document does not indicate any standards that deal specifically with multicultural equity. However, because a listening and speaking outcome indicates that students will use "bias-free language", the same should be expected for students' writing.

The document requires that teachers also measure viewing and representing skills; viewing involves "the entire range of critical and analytic activities in which a class or an individual engages" while representing involves "the production of visual or audio texts, and involves the examination of the relationships among audiences and texts, and how those texts are constructed" (23). Viewing and representing can assist learners to address issues such as stereotyping, power, and accuracy in presentation. The document states that in using language standards to measure viewing and representing:

Some of the questions typically asked are: Who is being used to represent whom? with what intent? What view does the text present of the world? Who benefits from this portrayal? Who speaks for whom? Who is not represented? How does the representation influence those who see it? It is important that students have opportunities to view material that expresses different perspectives and to learn to analyse the bias that is inherent in each production. (23)

The words from The Common Curriculum set the groundwork for some positive changes with respect to the sharing of cultures and a curriculum representative of cultural diversity. Because this is the most recent Ministry curriculum guideline to be published, it would be safe to assume a similar philosophy when dealing with the Senior Divisions as well. However, even the existing document -- Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions (OSIS) -- which still applies to grades 10 to OAC, claims that as three of the thirteen "Goals of Education", teachers need to "develop esteem for the customs, cultures and beliefs of a wide variety of societal groups", "develop values related to personal, ethical, or religious beliefs and to the common welfare of society" and "develop a sense of personal responsibility in society at the local, national and international levels" (3-4).

The existing English Curriculum Guideline supports the use of literature by writers of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the secondary English classroom. Through the exposure to varied cultural points of view and the sympathetic experiences that literature can provide, positive relations between individuals of different backgrounds will be fostered. This document elaborates on the three provincial goals of education listed above by stating:

Literature and media programs portray the experiences of the Native and founding peoples of Canada, as well as those of the many other

cultural groups that make up contemporary Canadian society. Such material provides students with opportunities to observe and appreciate the cultural mosaic unique to Canada. The supportive environment of the classroom ... further encourages intercultural understanding and an appreciation of the strength in cultural and racial diversity. (7)

Exposure to various points of view leads to readier acceptance of persons from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, religious groups, and social classes and to enhanced respect for members of both sexes. (7)

The dynamic English classroom is a microcosm of society as well as a part of society. The vicarious experiences emanating from literature and media enhance growth in...values. (6)

Therefore, ideally, through the study of diverse literature and media within a classroom environment which is supportive and unbiased, the Ministry's goals will be met. In order to assist teachers in developing this kind of classroom environment, the Ministry's resource guide --

→ Changing Perspectives -- can help. It gives outcomes for system administration, school administration, support services personnel, teacher-librarian, and guidance counsellors, as well as outcomes for teachers and students. Ideally, all these levels of the system will work towards the same goal of creating an equitable learning environment. Teachers obviously cannot solve these problems themselves; however, since teachers are the ones who often have the most direct contact with students and parents, the teacher's role is crucial.

Because students are at the centre of the learning process, Changing Perspectives claims that students from all racial and ethnocultural groups should be able to expect:

- a welcoming learning environment, free from prejudice and racism and equipped to relieve the linguistic, social, and cultural disorientation faced by many students;

- opportunities to develop positive self-images that will enable them to transcend stereotypes and develop as individuals;

- opportunities to acquire the attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to live in a multicultural society (6)

The English class is, by its nature, well equipped to bring about these outcomes. Students can "develop positive self-images" and "acquire knowledge" about other cultures by both listening to and speaking about different cultures; they can "transcend stereotypes", "acquire attitudes" and "relieve cultural disorientation" by reading literature from various cultural perspectives; they can "acquire skills" by writing and reflecting on their readings; they can learn in an environment "free from prejudice and racism" by viewing and representing materials presented by peers, teachers and community members.

~~X~~ Changing Perspectives provides outcomes for teachers, since they are "well positioned to influence, through instruction, modelling, and intervention, the attitudes and behaviour of students" (9). In seeking to provide antiracist and ethnocultural-equity education, teachers will actively seek opportunities, classroom materials, new pedagogy and classroom practices to eradicate biased language and behaviour in fellow learners. Therefore, teachers need to be prepared to undergo professional development to provide an equitable learning environment. Co-operation between school administration, teachers, students, and the community will assist in carrying out many of these outcomes. As individuals, teachers themselves cannot be expected to be "experts" in all aspects of antiracist

and ethnocultural-equity education; therefore, collaboration with others who have diverse experiences and points of view can only be beneficial.

Collaboration and co-operation between the various levels of the educational system will help to create an equitable learning environment. In encouraging students to learn about and respect one another's languages, cultures, and religions for example, students themselves can act as teachers and share their own experience and expertise. In terms of "behaviour" in the classroom, Changing Perspectives lists six outcomes for teachers. They will:

- be sensitive to racial and cultural biases in classroom materials and the media;
- help students to be sensitive to racial or cultural bias and to accept responsibility for overcoming it;
- encourage students to learn about and respect one another's languages, cultures, and religions;
- develop and use teaching strategies to accommodate a variety of learning styles;
- provide a classroom in which values held in common and values that reflect diversity are both respected;
- encourage all students to participate in all aspects of classroom activity and school life. (9)

Changing Perspectives also includes outcomes for teachers with respect to involvement with parents. Again, parents themselves can serve as valuable resources for teachers. Parents obviously play a tremendous role in the education of their children. If parents and educational staff can work together, the learning opportunities for students will only be enriched. Teachers will:

- by creating rapport and a welcoming environment, encourage parents to take an interest in their children's school activities;
- communicate regularly and effectively with parents about their children's learning;
- involve parents/guardians in school and class-related activities (9)

The document also includes learning activities for elementary and secondary students which promote an appreciation of multiculturalism. Many of these described outcomes and activities can be easily adapted to the secondary English classroom. For example, in order to enable students to "learn about and respect cultures, races, religions, and languages other than their own":

classes receive visits from religious and cultural leaders, senior citizens, storytellers, [writers], etc., from the various racial and ethnocultural communities served by the school. Visitors act as resource persons from whom students can learn about their own and others' backgrounds (22-23).

Therefore, if learners are studying Native literature, a visit from a Native elder might serve to assist with background information, storytelling and cultural perspective.

As another activity, in order to enable students to "understand and develop the skills of initiation, negotiation, co-operation, and compromise needed to solve problems and to work together and learn from one another":

[s]tudents decide what information should be included in a handbook or presentations designed to help new students adjust to the school. Students then work in groups to provide the necessary material in the needed languages. (22, 26)

It is important for teachers and other educators to be familiar with the kind of misconceptions they are likely to encounter as well as to prepare themselves to express positive alternatives to these negative views. The final section of Changing Perspectives offers positive responses to misconceptions about antiracist and ethnocultural-equity education. Many of the misconceptions listed are ones which can be frequently found during staff discussions on the topic. One of these misconceptions is one which is frequently heard in rural educational settings:

Antiracist and ethnocultural-equity education is important only in large urban areas or in communities that are visibly diverse. It is a frill, to be added to the curriculum in certain parts of the province only. (30)

The document's suggested response to this misconception is:

Ontario's population is ethnically and racially diverse, as is Canada's. Schools do not exist in isolation; each is part of the wider society. Students go on to further education, to job training, and to employment. If students are to participate effectively in the broader society, they need antiracist and ethnocultural-equity education, whatever the composition of their immediate community. (30)

This Ministry booklet provides many practical suggestions and positive ideas for the implementation of an antiracist and ethnocultural-equity education. For further direction on this kind of learning environment, educators can refer to the appropriate school board's "Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policy". According to the Ministry's Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, every school board should currently have a policy which has, or is being, implemented. The Ministry recognizes that:

[t]here is growing recognition that educational structures, policies, and programs have been mainly European in perspective and have failed to take into account the viewpoints, experiences, and needs of



Aboriginal peoples and many racial and ethnocultural minorities. As a result, systemic inequities exist in the school system that limit the opportunities for Aboriginal and other students and staff members of racial and ethnocultural minorities to fulfil their potential.

Educators therefore need to identify and change institutional policies and procedures and individual behaviours and practices that are racist in their impact, if not in intent.

*from Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, July 13, 1993.*

According to Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards, the outcome of the school boards' policies on antiracism and ethnocultural equity is to:

ensure that all students achieve their potential and acquire accurate knowledge and information, as well as confidence in their cultural and racial identities. [Antiracist and ethnocultural equity education] should equip all students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to live and work effectively in an increasingly diverse world, and encourage them to appreciate diversity and reject discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. (5)

Therefore, educational programs must be designed with this policy in mind. As one of its ten policy statements, the Victoria County Board of Education's policy 710 indicates that the schools must "support a culturally and racially-balanced curriculum that enables all students to see themselves reflected in dynamic learning experiences...". Therefore, in terms of the secondary English class, educators must re-evaluate the literature and the method of instruction which has traditionally been used.

In this re-evaluation of curriculum, educators should also refer to Circular 14, where a summary of the elements of bias-free learning materials and a checklist for the evaluation of racial, religious, and cultural bias in learning materials can be found<sup>2</sup>. According to this document:

The material should provide strong role models for the students of the races, religions, and cultures presented, and should help them develop pride in their heritage and religious beliefs.

(In conclusion, according to the Ministry, educators must ensure that school environments and classrooms provide students of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds the opportunity to appreciate the diversity of other cultures as well as the opportunity to have their own culture appreciated by others.) In the secondary English classroom, these opportunities can be provided through listening and speaking, reading, writing, and viewing and representing: the four "strands" of English. Further chapters will present materials, resources and curriculum ideas to implement an antiracist and ethnocultural-equity education specifically in the English classroom.

<sup>1</sup> According to the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, all school boards were to submit antiracism and ethnocultural equity policies and implementation plans to the ministry by March 1995. Every Ontario school board must begin implementing these policies by September 1995. The Victoria County Board policy is one example of a board policy.

<sup>2</sup> These sections can be found in section E of the Circular 14 appendix, entitled: Guidelines for Evaluation of Texts for Racial, Ethnic, Religious, and Cultural Bias.

## CHAPTER TWO: TEACHER RESOURCES AND ANTHOLOGIES

Teachers must cope with continual change regarding curriculum development, new policies and changing Ministry directives. In addition to these kinds of items, teachers must keep on top of daily lesson plans, marking, discipline, extra-curricular activities and student interviews. Therefore, there must be resources and ideas for classroom activities available so that teachers can tackle the issue of a "multicultural education" with assistance. The first half of this chapter will review available teaching resources. The second half of this chapter will review recommended anthologies containing multicultural literature.

As I found from personal experience, teachers need to prepare in advance for classroom discussions on topics and issues of multiculturalism. In approaching the Toronto Star media unit "All Together Now" which will be described in this chapter, with a grade 10 English class, I was not prepared for the kinds of heated and controversial discussions which arose from the unit. As I learned (the hard way), it is important to anticipate student response and plan for teacher commentary before entering into discussions with students on ethnic or cultural topics. I was not prepared for the kind of differences in attitude between my own views and those of the students. I was faced with an uncomfortable situation where I felt that many students held racist and/or stereotypical views. Unfortunately, I had not thought ahead to determine how I would deal with this kind of situation. Therefore, a perfect learning opportunity was lost because my internal reaction was one of shock and anger rather than one of engagement. If teachers are prepared for difficult situations,

lessons can be organized and built around the non-racist outcomes for which the teacher is striving.

## TEACHER RESOURCES

The following resources are available either through the school, the boards or from the OISE library:

-Lee, Enid. Letters to Marcia: A Teacher's Guide to Anti-Racist Education. Toronto: Cross Cultural Communication Centre, 1989.

-Borovilos, John and Suwanda Sugunasiri. Pro-file: Multicultural Literature Within the English Curriculum. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1987.

-The Toronto Star. Teacher curriculum package: "All Together Now".

It is important for teachers to recognize and address the cultural barriers which can isolate both parents and students from the educational system. Therefore, teachers must prepare for the special needs and cultural differences of parents and students when planning for parent interviews, lesson plans, and class materials. Letters to Marcia, a teacher's guide to anti-racist education by Enid Lee, is a "quick-read" booklet that presents some important questions for teachers to ask themselves on these topics.

Parent interviews provide a valuable opportunity for parents, students and teachers to work together to improve education, so it is especially important for teachers to use these interviews productively. Lee's "Checklist for Parent Interviews" gives teachers a point of reference when trying to ensure that parents of all cultures feel comfortable in attending an

interview. For example, Lee presents the following questions for teachers to ask themselves:

- Have I telephoned those people for whom it would be more common to convey messages orally?
- Have I learned the correct last name and pronunciation of the parents' name?
- Am I giving the parent a chance to ask questions?
- Am I allowing time for the parent whose mother tongue is not English, or who speaks a variety of English different from mine to convey his or her meaning?
- Am I noting the parents' non-verbal clues?
- Am I inviting a parent to express dissatisfactions and explore conflicts which he or she has experienced with the school? (20-23)

Making uninformed cultural assumptions and generalizations can also prohibit understanding between parents, teachers and students. In order to become informed, learners need to evaluate and analyse these assumptions to determine whether cultural bias is involved. Lee cites one comment made by a teacher: "They can never agree on anything. You don't even know who their leader is. Who are their real representatives, anyway?"(26). The common assumption behind this comment is that people of racial and ethnic minorities are expected to agree on all issues. However, the fact is that when Anglo-Canadians disagree, it is considered a "diversity of opinion", while when other groups disagree, it is seen as "disunity and disorganization". Lee recommends that teachers try to critically explore any "assumptions" that they might have with reference to racial and ethnocultural groups.

It is important for teachers to anticipate class discussions on racism and evaluate the best responses for attitudes and comments which might arise. For example, Lee's questions for teacher self-assessment include the following:

1. How do I feel about discussing the issue of racism? Are there situations in which discussions on race have made me feel uncomfortable? What has been the source of my discomfort?
2. How far can I control myself and the situation if students express views which differ sharply from mine?
3. What do I say if students begin to make racist comments?
4. How will I deal with controversial topics arousing negative reactions? (44)

In order to answer these questions, teachers need to recognize that there will be some discomfort in discussions on racism. However, this initial discomfort can lead to positive discussions regarding solutions and approaches to racism. Also, teachers should talk with other educators to share approaches, and should also investigate the school and board policy on antiracism and ethnocultural equity.

If teachers don't recognize their own biases and stereotypical attitudes, students can not be expected to do the same. Teachers are often among the most influential adult role models in students' lives; students look to them for guidance, ethics and values. Therefore, a teacher who is not aware of his or her own bias can be a dangerous one.

Curriculum change goes hand in hand with attitude change in the development of a multicultural education. "Traditional" texts can be explored to discover stereotypes and cultural portrayal. For example, Lee describes a secondary level English unit on Shakespeare's Othello which

deals with some of the stereotypes which can be found in this text. Points for class discussion include the words used to describe Othello and Desdemona, the portrayal of Brabantio, the resolution of the play, and the role of Black actors in drama. In the final activity of the unit, the class writes a modern version of Othello with a new ending. The class examines reasons for attributing certain actions and words to different characters, and discusses the dangers of replacing old stereotypes with new ones.

This exercise on Othello can provide analysis and exploration of cultural bias in literature, but more contemporary literature by writers of various cultures should also be included to provide a balance of materials. For example, Lee includes a set of questions based on a passage entitled "That Ugly Indian" by Maria Campbell, from her autobiography Halfbreed (1973). The scene describes Campbell's experience as a young girl when her chaperon, dressed in "embarrassing" attire, accompanies her to a school dance. After the other students snicker and ask, "Is that woman your mother?", the young girl laughs and replies, "That old, ugly Indian?". The end of the passage ends with Maria's feelings of shame and hatred for herself, her chaperon and the people around her, and a quotation: "They make you hate what you are" (30).

Lee's questions on Campbell's passage include a class discussion of the last quotation as well as other questions which relate Maria's experiences to those common to all students:

- Have you ever felt ashamed of your relatives when you are in their company and you have been recognized by a friend? Explore the reasons why it did or did not happen.
- Why do you think Maria behaved and felt as she did?

-Do you think a school can make you hate what you are? If so, how?

-What are some of the ways in which schools help make people feel proud of who they are? (30)

Through this kind of questioning, students will find connections between their own experiences and Maria's, but will also explore the experiences unique to Metis culture.

In addition to the staff development and class activity suggestions that Lee makes, she includes annotated resource lists of suitable films that could be used at both the elementary and secondary levels. Overall, Lee's book is a valuable resource which is filled with curriculum and general-practice ideas for teachers of all levels and all subjects. Teachers concerned with assessing their own practice in terms of a multicultural approach should read this book.

Another excellent teacher resource made specifically for teachers of English is Multicultural Literature Within the English Curriculum by John Borovilos and Suwanda Sugunasiri. Along with a summary of the criteria and policies (from 1987) on multiculturalism, the booklet includes specific themes, teaching strategies, examples of Canadian literary works, and multicultural literature resources for teachers. Some of Borovilos and Sugunasiri's recommended themes for class exploration include themes which can apply to students of all backgrounds: survival, feelings and problems of alienation and isolation, the process of assimilation, acceptance and rejection, conflict and reconciliation, loss of innocence, and identity. These themes can be explored through teaching strategies including: brainstorming sessions, personal responses, group work, in-role writing sessions, analytical study of themes, and language use and literary technique study. As the writers point out, all the teaching



strategies that the effective English teacher uses in any literature classroom would be used in the multicultural literature classroom. However, they note that the teacher of multicultural literature needs to be sensitive to cultural variation and tradition, read up on the specific cultural background dealt with in the work of literature under discussion, and have an overall perspective of issues relating to xenophobia.

When teaching multicultural literature, materials should include the immigrant experience, the Native peoples' experience and the world experience. When starting the discussion of the immigrant experience for example, Borovilos and Sugunasiri describe a useful small group brainstorming exercise to increase students' awareness of the thought processes of an immigrant family and how or what they felt during their immigration and settlement. The exercise involves a series of questions that the students answer from an immigrant family's point of view. Questions include:

- What has prompted you to consider leaving your "old country"?
- What are your expectations of life in Canada?
- You have now lived in this country for several years. Your expectations have been met. Would you ever consider going back to your place of origin? For what reasons?
- You have now lived in this country for several years. Your expectations have not been met. Would you ever consider going back to your place of origin? For what reasons? (8)

This brainstorming exercise could be followed by a "non-judgemental" whole class discussion and then "both reading and writing activities which will extend the students' awareness of the struggles and triumphs of immigrant experience in Canada" (8). Borovilos and

Sugunasiri include these kinds of activities for literature including Obasan by Joy Kogawa, Foreigners by Barbara Sapergia, Fair Play by Paul Kropp and Rootless But Green are the Boulevard Trees by Uma Parameswaran.

The last section of this booklet includes lists of resources, kits and curriculum guides, short story and essay anthologies, short stories, non-fiction essays, novels, drama, poetry anthologies and poetry which represent a variety of multicultural literature. Borovilos and Sugunasiri wisely note that literature chosen for the high school classroom should still meet the high standards of quality which have been expected in the past. They write that:

no work should ever be chosen simply because it espouses a "multicultural" stance. The literature should stand on its own and evoke universal human experiences, both positive and negative. Similarities amongst all human beings should be stressed as well as pointing out differences. (16)

Since the printing of this Pro-File, there have been a number of new publications and anthologies which provide readings from writers representing a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These anthologies will be discussed later in this chapter. However, the themes and teaching strategies that Borovilos and Sugunasiri suggest can be applied to all titles.

The preceding Pro-File deals specifically with printed literature, but Media studies should also be addressed in the English classroom. The Toronto Star offers Media instructional units for teachers, and arrangements can be made to have a class set of papers delivered daily for a period of time. The cost is quite reasonable, and the packages provide a tremendous number of ideas for class activities, discussions and further research.

One such package, entitled "All Together Now", contains 57 activity sheets that focus on the theme of Canada and multiculturalism. The activities are suitable for grade 9 and 10 students, and they serve both the purpose of familiarizing students with the newspaper as well as presenting them with the multicultural society in which they live. For example, activity 13 begins with a discussion on an excerpt from the Constitution:

The Canadian Constitution guarantees that this is a country where every person is equal under the law and has the right to be himself or herself without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical ability.

The activity follows with instructions for students:

Explain in your own words what this section of the Constitution means.

From the newspaper, collect stories which will prove the above quotation to be correct.

Collect stories which may suggest that the above quotation may not always appear to be true.

Report your findings to the rest of your class.

Discuss why the realities of life may be different from those presented in the Constitution. (from activity 13)

In searching the newspapers for these stories, students learn about current events and also discover the biases in the portrayal of ethnic and cultural groups. Students can also explore the similarities and differences in ethnic and cultural portrayal between the editorial section and the rest of the paper. Frequently, the editorial pieces deal with issues of multiculturalism, immigration, and world issues. Students can also write their own editorial pieces on these kinds of issues.

Activity 38 from this package entitled, "I am an individual and I have many roles", instructs students to fill in the segments of a circle as they relate to the student. Categories include: interests / hobbies, position in family, community, age, race, religion, ethnic background, gender, and clubs. The centre of the circle is labelled "one person", and the above categories fan out from this centre. Students are to make a list of all the names their different roles could be given, for example: young, female, daughter, Chinese, sister, etc. Students then write a short story about which role or roles they like best. In this way, as discussed in chapter 1, students can appreciate that there are many descriptors which can apply to an individual.

Another excellent inclusion in "All Together Now" is an article written for The Star by Shyroose Jaffer, a fourth year psychology student at York University. In this article, Jaffer describes her transition from the Middle East to Canada; she recounts the varied incidents of racism she experienced in school as she was growing up. She describes the racist comments from classmates, the teacher and principal responses to these incidents and the frequently unsuccessful attempts she made to make friends. She ends the article with an outlook of hope:

My 10 years in Canada have taught me that racism will always haunt and follow you around because there is a lot that needs to be done to educate some people, even at university. The trick is to fight it. You can't let it swallow you and make you a part of itself so that you start viewing yourself like it views you. You have to believe in yourself. And you have to use it to make it into some sort of a positive experience so that you can grow from it. It's not easy at all, sometimes it's downright impossible ... but you have to keep fighting.

Because often enough, everything in your life depends on it.  
(from activity 32)

For students who have experienced any kind of racism or discrimination in school, these words can serve to bring encouragement and hope from an individual who is a "survivor". Not only would Jaffer's article help these students to feel as if they are not alone, but also it will help other students who hold racist attitudes to recognize the kind of unjustified pain racism causes.

The activities which follow the article in "All Together Now" can relate students' experiences to those of Shyrose. For example, in the article, Jaffer describes the way she attempted to make friends by letting them cheat from her paper on tests. Students can engage in discussion about this method and others that students use to try to make friends. Peer relations are especially important to students of this age, and students can easily relate to the importance of Shyrose's desire to make friends. The package "All Together Now" can provide endless ideas for lesson plans which focus on Media study and develop an appreciation for the experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

The sources for teaching ideas described above are only starting points for teachers who will embrace the Ministry's call for a multicultural education. The classroom activities in these sources can be used as they are, or modified to best address the needs of the students. Of course, teachers will adapt their own styles and techniques to suit the kind of approach they want to take in their classroom.

## ANTHOLOGIES

A number of anthologies are currently available which provide collections of writers from groups that have not traditionally found a voice in the "literary canon". When selecting good anthologies, educators should

look for material that is free from bias and stereotyping, includes both men and women writers from various cultures, includes women and men of various cultures portrayed in positive roles, provides strong role models for the students of the cultures presented, presents the customs, lifestyles and traditions of all cultures in a manner that explains their meaning in cultural context, shows respect for the language and culture of all people, represents people of all cultures as contributors to Canada's development, and shows people of all cultures sharing in a common human experience. The remainder of this chapter will describe and evaluate anthologies that meet these criteria, including:

Fanning, Peter and Maggie Goh, ed. Home and Homeland: The Canadian Immigrant Experience. Canada: Addison-Wesley Publishers Ltd. and Rubicon Publishing Inc., 1993.

Camper, Carol, ed. Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1994.

Barry, James and Joseph Griffen, ed. The Storyteller: Short Stories from Around the World. Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1992.

Jeroski, Sharon, ed. Tapestries: Short Stories from the Asian Pacific Rim. Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1991.

Borovilos, John, ed. Breaking Through: A Canadian Literary Mosaic. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1990.

The first four listed anthologies provide excellent examples of literature written by Canadian and international writers which, because of themes, topics, and experiences, is suitable for use in the secondary English class; however, the literature does not stand on its own and needs background support in terms of teacher assistance, cultural research and investigation into other related cultural and societal issues. The fifth anthology, edited

by Borovilos, does include a sophisticated section to help learners transform attitudes and identify with the narrators. Therefore, although all five anthologies contain good multicultural literature, learners need background guidance to help them develop esteem for the customs, cultures, and beliefs of a wide variety of societal groups.

Home and Homeland -- The Canadian Immigrant Experience includes fiction, non-fiction and poetry by Canadian immigrant writers. Some pieces present Canada as a welcoming place, and some recount the racism and prejudice that many newcomers to Canada face. If overloaded with literature recounting racism and prejudice in Canada, some students will react in a negative way and will feel under attack. Often, this kind of response can do more harm than good when trying to combat racism and stereotyping. This anthology contains an excellent balance of writings that provide both positive as well as negative sides of the "Canadian" point of view. Through the selections, the anthology demonstrates:

that our country has a rich history of immigration, that a great portion of our country's population has come from many diverse backgrounds, and that attitudes of settled Canadians towards immigrants and immigration have varied -- and continue to vary -- with time ... [R]eaders from immigrant families will appreciate that they are not alone, that many have had, and are having, the same doubts, concerns, hopes, and dreams as they are experiencing.  
(Introduction)

One non-fiction short story from Fanning and Goh's anthology which portrays Canada as a welcoming place is "Alone on the Ocean" by Donna Phung. Because most students are familiar with Canada's proud image of welcoming immigrants, this story would be a good one with which to start discussions of Canada's past and present policy on refugees and immigrants. The story provides a first person account of Phung's

escape from Vietnam in 1978. She describes the degrading conditions she and her family experience on the bus and boat rides en route to Malaysia. After arriving in Malaysia, Phung and her family are taken advantage of by the Malaysian soldiers and must endure poor living conditions. She writes, "Life was so hard that we had nothing to worry about but the next meal" (19).

Phung, then, describes the disbelief and relief when the Canadian High Commission accepts her proof of sponsorship from her aunt in Canada:

We could hardly believe it until our names were called again and again through the loudspeakers. We immediately packed up and left the evil island ... When I stepped onto the plane I knew that all the evil and hardship were left behind me forever and glorious days were waiting for me ahead ... I have been living now in Canada for two years and have grown to love this country (20).

After reading Phung's account of her pre-Canadian life, students would likely be proud that their country was able to help this individual and her family.

However, as Canadians, we cannot be completely proud of our treatment of immigrants and refugees. Hidden and outright incidents of prejudice often face these individuals when they reach our country. For example, from the same anthology, the non-fiction piece "Canadian Experience" by Meera Shastri tells of the author's experiences as an immigrant to Canada from India. Although she gives accounts of individuals who made her and her family feel welcome, she also describes her many difficulties in getting a job (despite her Master's degree), the telling message on her apartment entrance (PAKI GO HOME!), the comments from strangers ("I hate f---ing Pakis; they stink"), and her series



of nervous breakdowns. In the following passage, she sums up her personal experiences:

Therefore, this is the approach I have chosen for myself. At home I am almost entirely Indian, but outside I ape every Canadian mannerism possible. I must confess that since there is no definite Canadian identity, this is quite difficult. Of one thing I am convinced, and that is the "ethnic mosaic" is a myth. (175)

The hurtful effects of prejudice that Shastri endures carry a powerful message when the story is told from her point of view. In reading pieces such as this, students can come to recognize the barriers that immigrants and minorities face.

The works contained in Home and Homeland are intended for use in the secondary level English class, since many reflect the experiences and issues with which young people are familiar. The literature in this anthology can serve both the purpose of validating the experiences of students who have had similar experiences as well as encouraging other students to empathize with these experiences. "Settled" Canadians need to recognize the kinds of advantages we unknowingly possess. The anthology itself does not suggest any strategies for mediating students' responses to the stories. Therefore, educators would need to anticipate responses ahead of time, and plan the direction that class discussions take, as discussed with relation to Enid Lee's Letters to Marcia.

Issues of ethnic, cultural and racial background can be further complicated when individuals are of "mixed-race" and feel divided between two separate backgrounds. The anthology Miscegenation Blues contains poetry, fiction and non-fiction by Canadian women from mixed-racial backgrounds<sup>1</sup>. This kind of "duality" in cultural and racial background can result in the sense that one does not belong to either background.

Therefore, finding one's own cultural identity can be difficult. Many students can relate to these kinds of experiences of "not fitting in" to one particular group. Lisa Shuhair Majaj deals with issues of her dual background in the poem "Recognized Futures" in Miscegnation Blues. Her two names -- Lisa and Suhair -- represent two different people, and she is caught between the two cultures: "Throughout childhood this rending split: / continents moving slowly apart, / rift widening beneath taut limbs." (57). She finds that the one medium that bridges these two cultures is music, "some possible language / all our tongues can sing" (58).

Individuals of mixed-racial backgrounds, as well as many other marginalized groups, often share experiences of cruelty and discrimination. From the same anthology, Nona Saunders uses the rhythmic qualities of children's rhymes to portray a child's experiences of discrimination in the poem "children's games". As the speaker stands in the middle of the metaphoric "dodge ball" ring scrambling to avoid the ball, calls of "half-breed" and "nigger baby blackie" come from the ring of schoolmates. She goes home and combs her "favourite doll's / long blond hair", while calls of "eeny, meeny, miny mo ... / catch a nigger by the toe ..." echo in her head. The poem ends with a single wish: "i don't want to be me".

Most students can relate to childhood experiences of cruelty, and an entry point to this poem might be to have students write about an early school yard memory. Also, the use of rhythm in poetry can be explored, and students can create their own poetry based on different models. Discussion of prejudice would naturally become part of the discussion of this poem.

Some pieces in Miscegenation Blues deal with "mature" themes such as sexuality that might not be suitable for the Intermediate English student. Therefore, the anthology would be best used in senior grades of English. There is a focus on the experiences of women, so the selections would need to be balanced and some male writers from some of the other anthologies discussed.

Another valuable anthology which contains literature by writers of diverse backgrounds is The Storyteller -- Short Stories from Around the World. Although the anthology is published in Canada, the writers are from regions including Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America and Oceania. As students read these stories which originate in different parts of the world, geography, politics and history could be integrated into their studies. In this way, students could better understand the political, environmental and social conditions that exist in settings from around the world. In their preface, the editors write:

Sharing these stories from different cultures illustrates that the literary map of the world is the map of the human heart. Rejection and alienation wear the same face be it in Latin America or the Middle East. The loss of a loved one brings the same tears in Asia as in Africa. And no country has a monopoly on hardship, materialism, social conscience or the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.  
(Preface)

If a teacher wanted to focus on a theme such as "family", this anthology could provide writings from various parts of the world that deal with this common theme; therefore, students could explore the universality of human experience from different cultural perspectives. In this exploration, students will discover that even in different parts of the world, experiences of youth and the importance of family can be similar.

Common themes to which students of all backgrounds can relate include family, love and the search for identity. From The Storyteller, Alan Paton's story "Ha'penny" from South Africa includes these themes. It tells the story of a twelve-year-old boy named Ha'penny who resides in a reformatory. Although he tells the narrator, a teacher, that his mother worked in a white person's house and that he has two brothers and two sisters, in reality, he "was a waif, with no relatives at all. He had been taken in from one home to another, but he was naughty and uncontrollable, and eventually had taken to pilfering at the market" (P.38). The claimed family -- Mrs. Maarman and her children: Richard, Dickie, Anna and Mina -- was one that Ha'penny had stayed with and become attached to, although the feeling was not mutual. The connection between Ha'penny's family circumstances and his actions is one which can be explored in the classroom. Learners could discuss the question: What effect does one's environment/family have on behaviour and identity?

When Ha'penny falls sick with tuberculosis after learning that the teacher has discovered his lie, initially, Mrs. Maarman is not willing to take any responsibility for him because "for one thing, Ha'penny was Mosuto, and she was a coloured woman; for another, she had never had a child in trouble, and how could she take such a boy?" (40). However, when Ha'penny's situation becomes desperate, Mrs. Maarman comes to care for him, and when he dies shortly after, she is ashamed she wouldn't take him. The teacher consoles her by suggesting that the sickness would have come regardless, but she replies: "No ... it wouldn't have come. And if it had come at home, it would have been different" (41). The cultural and social differences between Ha'penny and Mrs. Maarman had prevented her from accepting the boy. Also, it is suggested that being

"home" could have prevented the boy's sickness. Students can relate to the feelings of comfort associated with home, and speculate on the effects of an absence of "home". This "home" does not necessarily mean a house, but a literal or metaphoric place where one can be one's self and feel loved.

Although "Ha'penny" is set in a different part of the world, students in Canada can relate their own knowledge and experiences to the story. Topics for class discussion could include the importance of family, nature vs. nurture, colour differences, feelings of shame and "the lie", while class activities could involve role playing or writing from Ha'penny's and Mrs. Maarman's points of view. Other studies of South Africa could also be incorporated into the study of this story to provide springboard topics for discussions of human rights and discrimination.

Universal themes of death, identity and the importance of love and family can be found in literature from all parts of the world. Students can find connections between these themes and their own lives through writing activities and small group discussions. From the same anthology, "A Son's Return" by Latvian Andris Jakubans addresses these themes. Kalnins, a mother on her deathbed, waits to go "to the next world" because she hopes to see her son one last time. Kalnins' son -- Arnolds -- had run away from home without finishing school and without saying goodbye to her; also, because he had neither written nor come to visit, she had no idea where he was.

Arnolds does return, and the reader witnesses the awkward expressions of love between mother and son. He leaves, promises to return in forty minutes, and does, bringing to Kalnins' yard a lively circus procession with which he has been travelling. The members of the circus each bow down to Arnolds' mother, "as if asking her pardon for something"

(109). Among the members of the circus is Arnolds' wife who goes "up to his mother, kisse[s] her, and thr[ows] a huge shawl, with silver ornaments, around the old woman's shoulders. She sa[ys] that she love[s] Kalnins' son very much, and that soon they would have a baby" (110). Kalnins cries for joy, and dies.

Like "Ha'penny", "A Son's Return" demonstrates the importance of family. In Ha'penny's case, the existence of a loving family might have prevented him from death; in Kalnins' case, the expression of love from her son allows her to face and accept death in peace. Students can relate the experiences of these characters to their own lives by writing or describing situations in which the love and support of others helped them through a difficult time.

From this kind of common ground, students can go on to explore further the cultures of the writers and the countries from which they came. Even though the anthology provides some author information, further resources would be necessary to conduct this additional research. These resources could include human, printed, and media sources. The Storyteller is suitable for providing valuable "world literature" for secondary level English classes, and a Teacher's Guide is also available.

The specific concerns of regional areas can be approached through the reading and study of stories from those particular areas. Tapestries -- Short Stories from the Asian Pacific Rim is a collection of contemporary short stories from the Asian Pacific that addresses themes such as economic and cultural change, exploitation, loss of innocence, technology and the shift from rural to urban society. These themes can teach readers about common concerns which face the individuals of this region. Geography and social studies of this area will help learners to

better understand the forces which shape the literature. Some stories were originally written in English, and some appear in translation.

One story which addresses the topic of economic and cultural change is "The Invader" written by Sachaporn Singhapalin and translated by Jennifer Draskau. In this story, the peasant becomes dispossessed by progress: a common result of development in all parts of the world. It is set in rural Thailand around the middle of this century, and follows the experiences of Old Uncle Chui, who could "read the patterns of natural phenomena as efficiently as a nurse reads a temperature" (235). Chui does not agree with the development going on around him, and can not understand the villagers' fascination with the fair and the theatres. The paddy where Chui has spent his life is sold, and about to be subdivided into lots. One day, as Chui uneasily anticipates change, he hears a thundering racket on the road:

[He] saw to his horror that the "thing" had left the road and was advancing towards him. It came relentlessly, horribly, with a slow clumsy creep like a giant lizard ... It came slowly, without hesitating, and its roar swelled deafeningly until he thought he would never get another sound into his ears again. (240-241)

Chui eventually realizes that this "thing" is a tractor, and "the paddy wouldn't stand a chance against it" (241). Singhapalin personifies the paddy itself, and concludes the story with Chui's haunting anticipation of destruction:

Here and there in the paddy little red flags he had not noticed till that moment fluttered anxiously. The patient had been prepared for the surgeon's knife. The bulldozer made its first plunge. It was nowhere near his hut. Yet...  
(241)

"The Invader" can be a starting point for various class discussions on themes concerned with technology and development. For example, students can discuss the concept of "development": is it a "good" thing? What are the advantages and disadvantages to development? What happens to people like Chui who do not officially "own" the land, but have been living there for their entire lives? How are these issues related to Canadian history and the Native people who first inhabited this land? These themes can be tied in with the experiences and knowledge of the Canadian high-school student. Based on the accessible language and relevant issues, this story, as well as others in the collection, is suitable for this level. Like The Storyteller, Tapestries does provide brief notes on each author; however, further research would be required to better understand the social, geographical and political forces which shape the writings.

The anthology Breaking Through -- A Canadian Literary Mosaic provides author information and a wide variety of short stories, poetry, essays and articles by Canadians (or writers who have lived in Canada) from diverse backgrounds. Unlike the other anthologies discussed, it also provides material to help learners better identify with the narrators, and consequently, to develop positive attitudes to others with cultural differences. This material includes entry points (questions), relevant historical information, and further resource lists for learners. Borovilos' questions and selections address the following themes: the Canadian immigrant experience, survival in an alien environment, the nature and consequences of prejudice, problems of identity, conflict and reconciliation, and the roles of men and women. Borovilos also includes "General Activities and Questions" that provide writing, small group, and debating activities for students which centre upon the above themes.



A good introduction to a classroom anthology should help the learners to orient themselves to the book's material. Borovilos' introduction does this by discussing the misunderstandings and distrust associated with cultural "walls". He suggests that good literature that evokes universal truths while acknowledging differences:

helps all of us to reach a greater understanding of human nature, motivation, and conflict, and thus helps us to break through those walls -- particularly as they might exist within the rich mosaic that is Canada. (Borovilos, xi)

This anthology provides learners with this kind of "good" literature, but also helps the learners to better connect it with their own experiences and values.

Topics of prejudice, discrimination and unequal treatment are common to multicultural literature, and learners can investigate the harmful effects of these concepts. From Breaking Through, the poem "equal opportunity" by Jim Wong-Chu provides a good illustration of these topics in an ironically humorous way. It tells of "early canada / when railways were highways" when the Chinese were only allowed to ride in the last two cars of the trains, "that is / until a train derailed / killing all those in front". After a new rule was made that the Chinese must ride in the front, "another accident / claimed everyone in the back". Finally, "common sense prevailed" and the Chinese are now able to sit anywhere on any train.

In the "Student Handbook" section of the anthology, Borovilos provides information on Wong-Chu (as well as all authors in the anthology) and also questions for students. The questions on "equal opportunity" address the history of prejudice the Chinese have endured in

Canada. Borovilos' questions provide students with background information as well as an opportunity to analyse the poem and explore issues of discrimination in the past and present. They include the following:

1. Although thousands of Chinese worked for far less than normal pay on the building of the tracks for the Canadian Pacific Railway, none was given any of the benefits of the non-Chinese workers -- for example, one of the 25 000 000 acres of C.P.R. lands to settle on. What point is Jim Wong-Chu trying to make in "equal opportunity"? Explain your response.
2. Explain the term "irony". How is the poet being ironic in this poem? Do you think the poet is correct in making the subject matter of this poem a near joke?
3. Research and summarize Canada's original Chinese Immigration Act.
4. To what extent is Canada *now* the land of equal opportunity? (268)

In working through these questions, learners will think critically about the status assigned to Chinese (and other non-European) immigrants and will explore issues of discrimination and injustice in Canadian society.

For young people, peer relations are usually one of the highest priorities. Students of all cultures can relate to the fear of not "fitting in" and the fear of ridicule by peers. From the same anthology, Joy Kogawa's "What Do I Remember of the Evacuation?" describes these kinds of fears and experiences of a young Japanese girl whose family, among others, was persecuted in Vancouver during World War II. She describes how, even after the war was over, her young "friends" still ridiculed her and spat on

her. At the end of the poem, the speaker "prayed to the God who loves / All the children in his sight / That [she] might be white".

In order to fully appreciate the circumstances surrounding this poem, learners should investigate the internment of the Japanese in British Columbia during World War II. Learners should also discuss the prejudiced behaviour of the young girl's peers, and relate this behaviour to any personal experiences. Borovilos provides this kind of analysis in his questions:

1. As a little girl, Canadian-born Joy Kogawa was interned along with her family in a British Columbia camp during World War II. What major details does she recollect of that experience?
2. In her mind, what role did her parents play during the evacuation out of Vancouver?
3. Why did Lorraine Life behave the way she did to Joy Kogawa and her brother, Tim? Explain. How would you have reacted to Lorraine's taunts in similar circumstances?
4. Why did the poet as a child pray to God to be "white"?
5. In letter form, write to Lorraine Life explaining to her why her behaviour towards Joy and Tim is hurtful.
6. Read Joy Kogawa's adult novel, Obasan, or her novel for young children, Naomi's Road, for her further views on the evacuation of her family and their internment. For another view, read Shizuye Takashima's A Child in Prison Camp, written as a diary including the author's watercolour illustrations. (271)

In learning about the history of discrimination in Canada and the harm that it causes, students will examine their own attitudes and values. These poems by Wong-Chu and Kogawa along with Borovilos' exercises can help learners to understand and identify with the people who have experienced this kind of treatment.

Overall, Borovilos' anthology satisfies all the requirements of an excellent anthology/resource. Not only do the literary selections reflect the experiences of young people of all cultures, but the study questions, author information and resource lists provide the kind of background and analysis which can help students to explore the literary contributions of men and women from many cultures while learning about varied cultural traditions and experiences. The anthology is an extremely valuable resource for all learners. Therefore, if only one of the preceding anthologies had to be selected for school use, Breaking Through would best fill the requirements for a recommended text.

Multicultural literature used in the secondary English class should cover literature by international writers, Canadian Native writers, and Canadian immigrant writers. The preceding examples of anthologies provide examples of literature by these groups, and because of the topical connections to the experiences of students, they are recommended for the secondary English class. A balanced multicultural curriculum integrated with studies in other subject areas including Geography, History, Social Studies and Political Science, will ensure that students are studying the kind of literature that is representative of our country and our world.

<sup>1</sup> Camper defines race as being closely linked to culture, but connected more specifically with experience, history, genetics, physicality, family and politics.

### CHAPTER THREE: NATIVE LITERATURE

In the past, the study of Canadian First Nations' literature has been neglected by the educational system and by literary scholars. According to Penny Petrone in Native Literature In Canada (1990), there are at least five reasons for this neglect:

- European cultural arrogance, and attitudes of cultural imperialism and paternalism that initiated and fostered patronizing stereotypes of the Indian.
- European antipathy and prejudice towards the oral literature of so-called primitive peoples.
- the European belief that the Indian was a vanishing race.
- the purist attitude of Western literary critics towards literature that does not conform totally to their aesthetic criteria.
- the difficult problems of translating native literature. (1)

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education's Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards (1993), regardless of the location of boards of education, schools "need to take into account the perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal people" (45). In order to address this need, in the secondary English class, concepts of discrimination, Native history and culture, identity, and reverence for nature would be taught through the study of First Nations' literature. There is a growing body of literature by Native and Metis writers which deals with these kinds of issues, and therefore, materials are becoming more readily available for school use. Through a study of this literature, students will see Canadian society from different points of view, explore similarities and differences between their own culture and Native culture, identify issues associated with cultural stereotyping and discrimination, and demonstrate understanding of the ways in which the history of Native

peoples influences their writing and behaviour. Strategies would include listening to and speaking with community members, students, and teachers who can share experiences and stories, reading literature by various Native writers, writing responses to the written and oral literature, and addressing issues such as stereotyping and power.

This examination of stereotyping in each culture is an important step in discussions with students. In Writing the Circle (1990), Native writer Emma LaRocque explains that there are many terms which "have been pejoratively used to specifically indicate the ranking of Indian peoples as inferior to Europeans, thus to perpetuate their dehumanization" (Preface, xx). These words include: savage, primitive, redskin, and buck. Through the exploration of the origins and meaning of these words, students will discover the European bias that has placed Native culture in a place of inferiority. Also, students are exposed to images of Indians as "grunting and bloodthirsty savages in the cowboy and Indian movies and comic books, both of which are amply available on late night shows, VCRs or comic book stands" (LaRocque, xxiv). If students are to use "bias-free" language in their speech (as the Ministry suggests), students need to be aware of this kind of language and these kinds of images which perpetuate the image of the "stereotypical" Indian. As Penny Petrone suggests, students also need to understand and explore the lasting effect that years of stereotyping and discrimination can have on a culture:

Although the stereotypes of the past are fading now, they are so deeply rooted that they continue to haunt us still. They have perpetuated, through the centuries, a negative psychological orientation that has erected a barrier to giving the intelligence of Indians, their culture, and their spiritual and aesthetic values the respect and understanding they deserve. (3)

Although, as Emma LaRocque explains, "there is no more a monolithic 'Native' world any more than there is a uniform 'white' world", there are some distinguishing features of many of the Native writings (xii). One of the unique features of Native literature is the influence of an oral tradition. Therefore, a unique style of incorporating old stories into new ones often emerges. For example, the transformation of the body form and the importance of visions and dreams are elements of Native myths and legends; as a result, evidence of these beliefs can often be found in modern stories.

Also, because the history of the relationship between European settlers and First Nations' people is clouded with racism, discrimination and prejudice, these themes often surface in contemporary Native literature. This kind of material is important for both Natives and non-Natives. For Natives, the writing helps individuals come to terms with the past and cope with the present. For non-Natives, the writing helps readers to better understand the hardships this culture has endured in the past and also in the present. As Sylvia Bowerbank and Dolores Wawia write in their article "Literature and Criticism by Native and Metis Women in Canada" (1994), Native writers share many of the same aims:

they seek both to preserve and to reclaim the stories and myths of their peoples; they seek to transform cultural and educational institutions so that Native ways of knowing are taught and respected by both Native and non-Native peoples; they seek to create a cultural space for all First Nations peoples, whether they are on reserves in northern Manitoba or on the streets of Vancouver. (566)

In addition to this common ground, as Emma LaRocque writes, Native writings, as well as writings from all cultures, can "link us all in a common humanity at the points where experiences of love, pain, fear, and

hope cut across differences" (xiii). In teaching Native literature, then, the universality of human experience can provide a stepping stone to the study of a different culture. Students' initial interest can be tapped by allowing them to find elements of the literature with which they can identify; then, the differences can be explored through conversation, storytelling and written literature to enhance knowledge of the Native culture. Ideals of both group identity as well as individualism can then be pursued.

This chapter will provide examples of Native and Metis literature suitable for the secondary English class, and will provide questions for consideration when teaching these selections. This literature will include myths and legends, autobiographies and interviews, poetry, short stories, and novels. The main sources for these pieces will be from four books:

Grant, Agnes, ed. Our Bit of Truth: An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1990.

Perreault, Jeanne and Sylvia Vance, eds. Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada. Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, 1990.

Johnson, Pauline. Flint and Feather: The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson. Toronto: The Musson Book Co., 1917.

Slipperjack, Ruby. Silent Words. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992.

Native myths and legends are histories which originate in the attempts of Native peoples to explain and understand their surroundings. Although similar themes from Native myths can be found in many cultures, these themes, including "mother Earth" and "rebirth", are developed in ways unique to Native culture. Many myths arise from dreams and visions, and are sacred, spiritual, and treated with respect. Native mythology is still



developed and transmitted orally in areas where story telling is still practised.

Many examples of "creation myths" can be found in Our Bit of Truth. One of these is "A Piegan Creation Myth" by Claude Melancon which tells of the time "long ago" when the "Spirits above sent the Great Water to flood the world" (12). The old man Napiwa creates the "floating island" from a grain of sand which the muskrat brings back from below the depths of water. Napiwa and Nanoss, the old woman, decide together that human beings will have:

round faces with the mouth horizontal, and an eye on either side of the nose. Their ears will be placed on either side of their head so they can hear their enemies coming...[Men and women will] die. Otherwise [the island] will have too many people, and there won't be enough food for everybody. (13)

Ideally, because the myths and legends come from an oral tradition, the telling of this or another creation myth by a Native elder in the classroom would be most effective. Also, students in the class might have their own cultural creation myths or stories which they can share. Students can also compare this particular creation myth to the creation stories of other cultures. In doing so, students can discuss similarities and differences between these variations. Questions to be asked can include: What role does nature play in each story? Who is seen as the "Divine" or "Spiritual" power in each story? What effect do these different representations have on the audience (listener/reader)? What are the roles of male and female in each? In analysing these myths, students will see different points of view, while exploring similarities and differences between their own culture and Native culture.

Autobiographies are another type of writing which can be used to explore the past experiences of Native people. Because past actions, speech, values and beliefs of people will change over time, readers of autobiography must be prepared to enter a time period where life was different from the present. Ideally, to prepare for readings from different time periods, a study of the relevant history will help to clarify some of these issues. A team-teaching situation between English and History teachers can help to address this situation. Through the reading and discussion of autobiographical Native literature, students will better understand the ways in which the history of Native people influences their writing and behaviour.

One autobiographical example from Our Bit of Truth is Emma LaRocque's "Personal essay on poverty" from Defeating the Indian (1975) which tells of the writer's experiences moving from her "one-roomed by well-managed log cabin", to school, where the "powerfully suggestive" pictures of Dick, Jane and Sally's suburban home, red-and-white striped toothpaste, and "trembling jello" changed her perception of home life. At school, although her teacher meant well, he failed to reinforce whatever world the students came from. As a result, her respect for her parents weakened, and she was no longer content to "sleep on the floor, eat rabbit stew and read and play cards by the kerosene lamp" (207). The values she learned at home were in conflict with those she learned in school; therefore, she felt that her "choices" were dictated to her by the educational system, and these "choices" did not include her Native culture.

In reading this excerpt, students would discuss and write on issues including identity, dislocation, and family/cultural values. Students can role-play in both writing and group activities the kinds of experiences

LaRocque had in school and can discuss what kind of effect this clash of cultural values would have on the self-esteem of young people. Also, students in the class might have similar experiences to share which deal with rifts between the culture of home and the culture valued at school. Furthermore, the history of Native education would be explored through research on the residential school system and the history of Native education. The study of sections of Vicki English-Currie's article, "The Need for Re-evaluation in Native Education", from Writing the Circle would provide information on this topic. She writes about similar educational experiences:

All of the people in the pictures in our textbooks were white and middle-class; nurses, doctors, dentists, lawyers, and nuns were depicted, creating the impression that those were the only worthwhile persons in life. Native traditional leaders were never used. As a result, the students' self-esteem, self-determination, self-worth, pride, and confidence slowly dwindled away to a desire to be white, because being brown was not made to seem right somehow. All authority was white. Indian culture taught us to have and to show respect for anyone in an authoritarian position. (53)

Again, the educational system dictated what cultural values were acceptable in society, and these values differed from the Native cultural values taught at home.

Native poetry also conveys Native values and experiences. Many of these experiences are ones to which all human beings can relate; however, the experiences are described in ways which reflect the Native culture. For example, as Agnes Grant writes:

Traditional Native poetry reveals the people's capacity to hear the voice of a supreme being. It demonstrates their capacity for introspection, their relationship with others, their profound belief in

the sacredness of nature and the importance of remaining in harmony with it. (126)

Grant also explains that recurring themes in Native poetry include self-determination, Native/European history, and nostalgia.(for traditional customs, religions and beliefs). Therefore, through studies of Native poetry, students will view human experiences from different points of view, and in doing so, learn about the history and values of Native culture.

From Writing the Circle, the poem "Where Eagles Soar" by Leonora Hayden McDowell discusses the anticipation of death. The reverence for nature and the spirituality of the soul appear as comforting to the speaker, who "wait[s] the day". Her "last request" is for her soul to "go back home / Where tall trees grow and eagles fly". She views her soul as separate from her "poor shell / Of shrivelled skin and aching bone" and hopes this soul will "soar with the eagles" after death. Through the study of this poem, students will answer questions such as: What is the speaker's attitude toward death? Where is "home" for the speaker? What images are used to create a sensuous effect? How is personification used? Is there "life" after death? Also, students can describe or write their own visions of death, and describe how different cultures view death.

From Our Bit of Truth, the poem "Sunset on Portage" (from the bus depot) by George Kenney reflects experiences in both Native and non-Native worlds by dealing with the destruction of the natural environment by human "development". The speaker watches the Winnipeg sunset "on the blue logo / of the Bank of Montreal" and observes the "Fluorescent and neon lights" which have supplanted "God's technology". In this way, the speaker laments the loss of the natural surroundings. Students can discuss the following questions: What two perspectives does this poem portray?

What is the speaker's attitude toward each perspective? What is the significance of the "double" title: "Sunset on Portage" and (from the bus depot)? What role does "nostalgia" play in the atmosphere of the poem? Topics of technology and development can also be explored through additional readings, writing and class discussion with relation to this poem. Through these activities, students will explore their own and others' attitudes towards change and technology.

The history of European settlement in Canada and its effect on the Native peoples can be explored and better understood through the reading and discussion of Pauline Johnson's poem "The Cattle Thief" from her collection of poems: Flint and Feather (1912). The poem tells the story of the "desperate English settlers" who seek and kill the "terror to all the settlers", the "monstrous, fearless Indian" who had come in the night to steal cattle from the English. Despite the evil and powerful characterization given to this Eagle Chief by the British, in reality, the Chief displays a "fleshless, hungry frame, starved to the bone and old", "wrinkled, tawny skin, unfed by the warmth of blood" and "hungry, hollow eyes that glared for the sight of food". When the British kill him with "a dozen balls of lead ... like a shower of metal rain", threaten to "cut the fiend up into inches" and "let the wolves eat the cursed Indian", the daughter of the Eagle Chief steps forward to save his body and vent her anger. She speaks with courage and bitterness as she faces the murderers as she blames the white society for "buying" the land and the game with "a book to save [Native] souls from the sins [the white people] brought in [their] other hand". She describes how Europeans tried to replace Native beliefs with Christianity and expropriate the land:

Go back with your new religion, we never have understood  
 Your robbing an Indian's body, and mocking his soul with food.  
 Go back with your new religion, and find -- if find you can --  
 The honest man you have ever made from out a starving man.  
 You say your cattle are not ours, your meat is not our meat;  
 When you pay for the land you live in, we'll pay for the meat we eat.  
 Give back our land and our country, give back our herds of  
 game;  
 Give back the furs and the forests that were ours before you came;  
 Give back the peace and the plenty. Then come with your new belief,  
 And blame, if you dare, the hunger that drove him to be a thief. (25-26)

This powerful passage forces readers to think about the pointed questions the girl asks. Who is in the wrong in this situation? Was the Chief justified in stealing the cattle? Since all the land and the game "belonged" to no one before the Europeans came, does the Chief really steal the cattle? Were the British men justified in killing the Chief?

The depiction of the Chief is quite different when considered from the two sides: British and Native. The British portrayal of the Chief is one of a powerful, destructive man who "thieved and raided and scouted", while the Native portrayal is one of a "wronged" man who, up until his death, demonstrated courage and inner strength. Also, the Chief is called both "Eagle Chief" and "Cattle Thief": what image does each name bring to mind, and why did the speaker use these two different names?

In discussion of this poem, the following questions could be asked: Would your opinion of the Eagle Chief differ if the last stanza had been left out of the poem? (Most of the last stanza is quoted above.) What is the view of the Indian from the English settlers' point of view? What is the view of the English from the Indian's point of view? What is your view of each culture as presented in this poem?

Class activities could include role-playing in groups of three (as Chief, daughter and English settler), researching the settling of

Canadian land by the English and the consequences to the resident Natives, writing the poem in script form and presenting it in a dramatic reading, or writing a letter from the Eagle Chief's point of view on the topic of European settlement. These class activities and discussions would help students see situations from different points of view, identify issues associated with discrimination, and understand the ways in which history has affected the current relationships between Natives and non-Natives.

The medium of the short story is being used more and more in Native writing to express ideas and concerns. These ideas and concerns can include historical anecdotes, commentary on social and political issues, or simply entertainment and instruction. From Our Bit of Truth, "The Serpent's Egg" by Gilbert Oskaboose gives an ironic allegory that addresses the issue of nuclear power. The author himself comes from the Serpent River Reserve in Ontario, where the residents suffered severely from radiological and chemical pollution of their water source as a result of uranium mining. Also, as the result of a sulphuric acid plant which was established on the reserve without their consent, the reserve has been left with 9000 truck loads of toxic wastes, including acidic soil, sulphur and iron pyrite.

"The Serpent's Egg" tells of the great Serpent who, long ago, laid millions of tiny eggs in the Northern Ontario bedrock to lie dormant for millions of years. The Serpent's passing "had created a river and the rains came and the river took on a life of its own" (247). Fish, insects and mammals found this place, and there made their homes. In time, "a wandering Ojibway scout found the sacred river and brought his people to live there in harmony with the land and its wild creatures" (248). Then, "The Others" came and trapped all the beaver, otter and muskrats, leaving

the People with only trees and rocks. Then The Others came again, and cut down all the pine, leaving the People with only rocks. The People thanked the Creator and burned tobacco in thanks because they thought The Others were gone for good. But then, The Others returned for a third time for the rocks: the uranium. Even though the elders warned the miners not to bother the Serpent's eggs and the workers became ill, they continued, and threw any excess into the rivers and lakes, and these waters died. The "sub-tribes known as the 'peace-niks' and the 'anti-nukes'" tried to stop the production of radium, but the "acceptable loss factor" made it "okay that a few people died from the medicines" (249). Then they made nuclear bombs from the "yellowcake" and dropped one on Japan.

When the other tribes saw this they became frightened and asked The Others not to make any more but they wouldn't listen and kept on building "bigger and better bombs".

When they wouldn't stop other tribes figured they had better make some too, and pretty soon there was a big race to see which tribe could make the biggest and most. Very soon many of the tribes had bombs, enough to destroy the Earth 30 or 40 times over, even if a powerful medicine man could bring it back each time it was destroyed. In all of their recorded history the Others had never invented a weapon that -- sooner or later -- they didn't use on each other. (249)

The story ends with the destruction of the Earth, which creates a white light that speeds across the "dark chasm" of a billion light years. In another galaxy, on another planet, "peaceful people" look up and see the light "and wonder what this great sign could mean" (250). In place of "THE END", the story finishes with "THE BEGINNING".

In the study of "The Serpent's Egg", issues would include environmentalism, the nuclear arms race, and war. Students would view these issues from the Native point of view through the reading and assess



the consequences Oskaboose sees for the damage we have done to our world and to each other. Questions for discussion could include: What is the relationship between The People and their natural surroundings? How does the Native portrayal of the earth, its elements, and its creatures in this story differ from a "European" portrayal? What are the effects of nuclear technology? What are some alternatives to nuclear energy? What is an allegory? Why does the story end with "THE BEGINNING"? Students could also write their own endings to the story and devise alternatives that could have prevented the destructive ending of Earth that Oskaboose presents. Through these discussions and activities, as suggested in The Common Curriculum, students will see Canadian society from a different point of view, will reflect on ideas to identify innovative solutions to problems, and will explore intellectual, moral and social issues relevant to Canada and the world.

The study of the preceding Native literature can serve as preliminary reading to Slipperjack's novel Silent Words. Some of the same themes and issues discussed can also apply to this novel: environmentalism, spirituality, Native values, and the importance of family. Danny Lynx, a young Ojibway boy from northwestern Ontario, is the narrator of the novel Silent Words by Ruby Slipperjack. Throughout the book, Danny experiences a metaphoric and literal journey in search of "home". Although his search for home originates as a search for his mother and an escape from an abusive home, this journey ends with a discovery of a new found and unexpected home of maturity, understanding of his own culture, and a new extended "family" of natural surroundings and people who care for him.

The study of this novel by grade nine English students can accomplish the following Ministry outcomes for Language identified in The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes: it will help to include "the experiences and viewpoints of ... Aboriginal ... groups" in the curriculum and will "encourage [students] to appreciate diversity" (11); it will "acquaint students with a range of traditions, values, and attitudes and allow them to see things from many different points of view", and will recognize "the oral tradition" which "is an integral part of many cultures in Canada" (48); it will help students to "explore similarities and differences between their own and other cultures" (51); it will help students to "evaluate ... [communities'] dependence on the environment", to "improve the environment" and to "demonstrate understanding of the ways in which individuals' family background, language, and culture influence their ideas and behaviour" (The Common Curriculum: Provincial Standards, Language, 27-28); it will help students to "understand and respect cultures and alternative ways of living" and "benefit from a knowledge of the experiences ... of people and cultures other than their own" (20). In order to accomplish these outcomes, a grade nine study of Silent Words would address issues of family, the environment, Native culture, and identity; these issues will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Silent Words is an "educating Danny" story which can appeal to young readers of all backgrounds. Grade nine readers of all cultures would easily identify with Danny because of his age, his place of residence (Ontario), and his difficult experiences in "growing up". The support of friendship, love and family is especially relevant to the lives of grade nine students; young readers will be able to appreciate the emotional support

that Danny finds from the people around him. Also relevant to the lives of the grade nine student is a search for identity. Young readers can empathize with and/or relate to Danny's initial feelings of isolation both at home and in his community. Reading about Danny's experiences will first, allow students to recognize that they are not alone in their insecurities, and second, will allow them to put themselves in the place of others who feel isolated in some way. The strength which results from Danny's journeys results in an understanding and acceptance of his culture and himself. This search for group and individual identity is one with which young people from all backgrounds can identify. Finally, as young readers travel with Danny, together, they will learn valuable ecological lessons that Native culture has to teach.

Split families and child abuse are topics with which, unfortunately, many secondary students have first-hand experience. Whether or not students have experience with a difficult family life, they could empathize with the horrible circumstances Danny faces at "home". At the beginning of the novel, Danny's home life consists of Sarah, his father's live-in (white) girlfriend who "hits [Danny] every chance she gets", and his abusive father, who won't let Danny talk about his mother and believes Sarah's lies over his own son's protests (5). Danny accepts that "the father [he] knew was gone" and mourns the happy days of the past:

I remembered how gentle and happy my father was when we were in the bush. Then when we moved to the reserve, he was never home. When he did come home, he was always irritable and angry, and then, when Mama left, he started hitting me. Then we moved to town. Things got worse. Most times I dodged the blows, but there were times when I got it good, from both him and the witch! After a while, I didn't think it was my own father any more. (95)

Because the memory of his mother is the only link to any happy memories of a past family life, Danny runs away, hoping to find the comfort he associates with her. At this early point in the novel, Danny is, both physically and mentally, a child who longs for his mother's embrace. When he stumbles off the train in Armstrong, he "curl[s] up into a ball", wipes his tears, blows his nose on his blanket, and "pretend[s] Mama was beside [him]" (35). Danny's journey will allow him to experience a rebirth, and move to adulthood with a new found family.

Questions addressing Danny's view of "family" at this point would include the following: What is Danny's attitude towards each of his parents? How does Danny deal with his abusive home life? What role does his mother play in his escape from Sarah and his father? How would you have reacted in similar circumstances? What support does your community offer for child abuse?

Both Native and non-Native learners can discover the environmental philosophy that Danny learns from Native elders. As Sylvia Bowerbank and Dolores Wawia write in their essay "Wild Lessons: Native Ecological Wisdom in Ruby Slipperjack's Fiction" (1995), "[t]o become an Ojibway adult, Danny must learn about the sacredness of animals and plants" (17). Early in the novel when he observes some local Native people cleaning and dividing the meat from a freshly killed moose, Danny hears both a man's voice saying, "What's the matter with him? A city Indian?", and the laughter of the others, directed at him (83). At this point, Danny is not yet "at home" with the traditions of his people. Even though he eats meat daily, he is not accustomed to the "smell of blood" and the sight of "a huge skinless thing" which is part of the community gathering to share in the gifts of the dead creature (83). However, Danny overcomes his unease,

and his killing of a duck, as Bowerbank and Wawia suggest, is a "significant moment in Danny's education" since it forces him to take "personal responsibility for killing for food" by recognizing that "the death of one creature is the life of another" (19).

Danny also learns more about the Native ecological perspective through his conversations and experiences with Mr. and Mrs. Old Indian. Mr. Old Indian speaks to Danny about the kind of respectful relationship between human beings and the earth to which he believes all should adhere. He suggests that the earth is alive, and that "[w]e are da chil'en of da Eart" (56). The old man goes on to say that the people who "poison da ribers an lakes ... who dig deep into da guts of our Mudder an slash an rip into 'er flesh an keep on poisonin' da air she breathes" have "gibin up da honour dat was giben .. by da Creator" (57). This vision of the Earth as a "mother" is one which promotes respectful relationships between human beings and the environment. It is a philosophy from which both Native and non-Native people can learn. Although at the time it does not seem that Danny absorbs these talks with Mr. Old Indian, he does retain some of the information, and later passes it on to Ol'Jim, who is pleased that Danny is learning the oral tradition characteristic of their culture.

Ol' Jim teaches Danny about methods of survival which do not impose on the environment. Together, they fish and catch their food, skin rabbits, travel by canoe and use natural materials for healing and comfort. As time passes, Ol' Jim comments that Danny is "getting better at noticing things" as he learns to see and hear the elements of nature more and more (143).

In discussing Native ecological beliefs, learners could discuss the following questions: What is the relationship between Ol' Jim and his

natural surroundings? How does the Native portrayal of the earth, its elements, and its creatures differ from a "European" portrayal? How is nature personified? How do Danny's perceptions of his natural environment change? How do Ol' Jim and Mr. Old Indian share their environmental beliefs with Danny? What does Danny learn about his natural surroundings?

Feelings of isolation and desires to "fit in" are experiences common to the early adolescent. Because of this, grade nine readers will be able to identify with Danny's awkward search for acceptance. Early in the novel, Danny does not seem to quite "fit in" with either the Native or the non-Native culture. Even though his background and appearance are Native, the "city Indian" is more familiar with non-Native ways. For example, when Danny meets the first set of Ojibway kids on his travels, the oldest girl says, "Don't you speak any Indian?", and Danny replies with his chest sticking out, "Yeah, I just haven't had much practice ... Why don't you speak English?" (30). Suddenly, probably for the first time in Danny's recent past, it becomes more acceptable to speak in the traditional Native language than it is to speak in English. In another situation, Danny does not appreciate the care that Bobby takes in carving a spoon by hand. This act represents the Native belief that the conveniences of pre-made and store-bought items are not necessarily better than what can be found, made or caught by the individual. Danny says in English, "Why don't you just go and buy a spoon and not have to go through such pain to make one? (32). Danny is then unfamiliar with the Native way of life and his attempts to fit in are often unsuitable and embarrassing. These feelings are common for young readers in grade nine, and journal entry topics could include the following: Describe an unfamiliar environment where you said or did

something inappropriate and/or embarrassing. How did you feel in this situation? How did others around you react?

Native spirituality can be compared and contrasted with the religious/spiritual beliefs with which students are familiar. This comparison can be carried out through small/large group discussions, charts, guest speakers, research, and analysis of spirituality in literature. In this way, students will explore similarities and differences between the beliefs of their own and other cultures. Ol' Jim teaches Danny about the spirituality of Native culture. He tells of the spiritual beings of the Memegwesiwag, who were able to communicate with them long ago, "when there were people who could see and understand them" (97). He also tells of "Magic Rock" which was a rock which "always watched people go by from the other side of the shore", but then moved one spring to the opposite shore (118). He tells of the "sacred rocks" which are not to be pointed at. He also tells of the "ghosts of ancient people" who live in the sandcliff and of the "souls who loved life so much" that they "may have refused to leave their bones to go to the other world" (172). Ol' Jim teaches him to pay respect to these animal and human spirits by leaving tobacco offerings .

Different means of communication can be explored through discussion of "silent words" which can represent both a literal non-verbal means of communication where all living things can speak in the same language as well as a deeper state of consciousness, where experience forms an unspoken language. As Mrs. Old Indian suggests, "silent words" means to "use your eyes an feel inside you wat da udder is feelin" (60). Ol' Jim doesn't "waste any breath with words like 'it, as, at, of'", but just gets "right down to saying what he want[s] to say"; therefore, no words are

"wasted" (103). Ol' Jim tells Danny to "let your eyes tell you all of what they see" when noticing the nature around him (143). Facial expressions of approval and disapproval also convey meaning, and Danny learns how to better interpret this kind of unspoken communication. The final paragraph of the novel explains the "silent words" which accumulate internally over the years and serve as inner strength:

You can't escape the silent words of your memory. They grow on you, layer after layer, year after year, documenting you from beginning to end, from the core to the surface. I built my cabin with silent words. (250)

Discussion questions on "silent words" can include the following: What are some different ways to communicate without words? How does Danny demonstrate that he learns the significance of "silent words"? How does memory and experience affect behaviour? How does Ol' Jim communicate with and teach Danny about Native culture?

A circle of support, whether the circle includes family, friends, or others, is a crucial network for the well-being of all people. Grade nine learners can easily identify with this need, since at this age, being part of a group is often perceived as being especially important. Danny finds this kind of identity in the Native community around him. Danny comes to discover that the entire Native community is, as his father says, "generally like one big family" (244). This growing family of people who unconditionally accept and care for Danny includes: Charlie, Jim, Henry, Billy, Ol'Jim, Mr. and Mrs. Old Indian, and eventually, Danny's father. It turns out that instead of running away from home, he is running to a new found home of community. As Ol' Jim tells Danny, "when you come home, you don't just find yourself, you already got yourself! What you find



are all the people who love you!" (225). Therefore, although Danny's response to the truth of his mother's death is one of despair as he says, "Now she's gone. I have no one to run to", he has unknowingly found not what he set out to find, but something even greater: his cultural identity, and a community of support (243). Students can write about their own "home" by describing the literal or metaphoric place where they feel comfortable.

Child/parent relationships can also cause a great deal of anguish for many grade nine students. Especially at this early adolescent stage, many students have experienced mixed emotions for and misunderstandings with their parents. In Danny's case, even though it is through tragedy, he finds and accepts the love of his father which, throughout the novel, he fears. For the bulk of the novel, as Danny runs from place to place, his greatest fear is that his father will arrive and take him away. When Danny learns that his father wants to come to see him, he forcefully replies: "No! No! I don't want him to come here, I don't want to see him!" (203). Even when it seems that Danny and his father will finally be happily reunited, Danny's mistrust surfaces, and he assumes he has been tricked. This bitterness climaxes as Danny thinks he sees "the witch" Sarah on shore, waiting for his father and him. Paranoia takes over, and Danny plans to scare his father and "the witch" with a gun, but shoots his father instead. It is only in the Epilogue that Danny finally accepts his father, and acts in a care-giving way himself by saying, "I will look after [my father] and take care of him for as long as I live" (250). Therefore, as a result of Danny's "journey", his perceptions eventually move from mistrust to acceptance. Discussion topics could include the following: How does Danny's father change from the beginning of the novel to the

end? How does Danny's relationship with his father change throughout the novel? Did Danny's father always love his son? What affect does the break-up of Danny's parents have upon him? How does Danny overcome his bitterness towards his father?

This same pattern of moving from mistrust to understanding applies to another part of Danny's new-found family: the natural world. Seeing Nature as a force to be revered rather than exploited or feared is a Native belief from which all readers can learn. Ol'Jim talks to Danny about the connection between human beings and animals, and both through these talks and through experience, Danny comes to change his perceptions of his environment. At the beginning of the book Danny perceives the natural environment as a threat: as Danny runs from place to place, he regularly describes the "stinging ache" of the mosquito and black fly bites which plague him whenever he is outside; he perceives the dog at the train station who wants so desperately to play with him as a nuisance; he fears the wolves, and thinks they will eat him when he is stranded alone in the stormy dark on the lake. However, Danny's perception shifts, and he finds that nature is part of his "family" who accepts him and can protect him. For example, the wolves' howling which had scared Danny so much had actually saved him by allowing Billy and Ned to find him: "They watched over him and let [Ned and Billy] know exactly where he was" (222). Also, the moon's shadow had allowed Ned and Billy to see him because "he was covered with white from head to foot" (222). Instead of viewing these creatures with fear, Danny's perception changes, and as he drifts off to sleep, he pictures the "tilt of [the wolf's] head and the glistening fur on the ridge of his nose in the moonlight, the ears laid back and the strong open jaws as its strength flowed out into the night" (222). Therefore, the forces

of nature had acted as "some pretty strong protectors" to save Danny's life and ensure that he wasn't alone (222). Learners can discuss the following question: How does Danny's perception of the natural environment change throughout the novel?

It is through this experience of being rescued by the wolves that Danny experiences a kind of "rebirth". As he prepares for this journey across the lake, Billy and Ned wrap him up "like a baby in a cradleboard" (219). Also, after the snowmobile returns to find him and brings him back to safety, he finds himself "rolled like a baby into a sleeping bag by the fire" (222). After he experiences this rebirth, he comes to a better understanding of his surroundings and the natural world. It is as if the wolves acted as his guardians, to bring him to the new existence of understanding. Through writing assignments and/or small group discussions, learners can describe events in their lives which brought them to a new understanding of themselves and/or the people or things around them.

Danny also discovers that he has never really been "alone" even though that is the way he felt throughout his journey. He says: "it's a weird feeling when you think you have been all alone and find that someone knew where you were all the time" (240). Danny's father had been aware of Danny's travels, and therefore, in a way, they travel together. Also, Danny's father makes his own journey, since he discovers that rather than being in the town, he also belongs among the natural surroundings:

Out here, I am myself. This is my world and I belong here, and I know that as hard as I try, I will never be happy anywhere else. I am strong, I am healthy, and I know I can take care of us now, you and me. (242)

Therefore, the four issues: family, ecology, culture and identity become interconnected throughout the novel. Danny's identity becomes shaped by the realization of the extended family around him which includes the natural environment and the cultural network. This natural and cultural web acts as his protector and helps him to survive. In the study of these issues and this novel, large and small group discussions, writing assignments, dramatization/role playing, complementary reading material, group assignments, and discussions with First Nations individuals will help students to question and re-evaluate their own experiences with these issues, and learn valuable lessons that the Native culture has to offer.

The study of Native literature, as well as literature of the other ethnic and cultural backgrounds of our country, is crucial for an investigation and understanding of the different values, customs and beliefs the people of Canada have. In terms of Native culture, and for example, the reverence for our natural environment, there is much that non-Native people can learn. Therefore, it is important for all Canadians to consider these values so that we can learn and re-assess what our own individual and collective ideals will and/or should be.

## CONCLUSION

Because the ethnic and cultural composition of Canadian society is diverse, educational programs should involve an inclusive curriculum so that all students become equipped with the knowledge and values needed to live as Canadians and as world citizens. Specifically, in the English classroom, literature should present an accurate picture of the world by including varied writings and experiences of individuals from different cultures. In studying this literature, learners will learn to appreciate diversity, to challenge discrimination, to explore issues of bias and stereotyping, to develop a positive sense of self, and to expand their knowledge of the experiences and contributions of people and cultures other than their own.

When choosing literature for classroom study, educators should ensure that materials provide a wide variety of cultural points of view. Therefore, teachers should choose literature which represents the Canadian immigrant experience, the Canadian Native experience, the Canadian multicultural experience, and the international experience. The anthologies and the varied literature described within this project provide a balanced sample of materials that would be suitable for study in the English secondary class. These examples were chosen because they provide themes and experiences to which students can relate and with which they can make personal connections. Also, they were chosen because they serve as a window to the customs, beliefs, and ways of life of the cultures presented. In this way, students can find universal human experiences which link cultures, but also discover the uniqueness and diversity that make up cultural identity. The inclusion of multicultural literature will ensure that

the material studied in schools does not present an exclusively Western point of view.

However, multicultural literature should also include the Western point of view, since this culture is a part of our society. A multicultural English curriculum does not mean discarding all "traditional" texts and replacing them with "multicultural" ones. The key to providing a balanced curriculum will be through the inclusion of many cultural points of view, including the Western one. Therefore, Shakespeare, for example, can certainly still find a place in English programs. This project primarily addresses non-Western points of view, since they have typically been neglected in school programs.

Many of the best sources of information about the cultures represented in multicultural literature can be found within the school and within the community. Therefore, a co-operative and collaborative approach between students, educators, and community members can provide much needed background and cultural information which will assist learners in multicultural study.

The ideas and materials outlined in this project will help educators work together with students, parents, and community members to offer the kind of educational system which addresses the needs of a multicultural society. With the removal of barriers which can isolate cultures and individuals, schools will accomplish their goal of providing a welcoming environment, where students of all backgrounds can expect learning opportunities free from prejudice and racism.

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