

GRADE 12 CANADIAN HISTORY:  
A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS.

A Thesis Submitted to the College of

Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Masters of Education

in the Department of Educational Foundations

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

by

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Spring 2004

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## ABSTRACT

The *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* and the *History 30: Canadian Studies A Teacher's Activity Guide* provide teachers of grade twelve Canadian history direction and instruction. This thesis analysis how these guides function as sources of historical information to maintain and create an Euro-Canadian national identity which normalises and naturalises the dominant position of Euro-Canadians within the historical narrative of Canada's development from a colony to a modern nation. The purpose of this thesis is to identify how this teaching of history alienates Aboriginal students whose culture, values, and history are not validated by this historical narrative, but instead are marginalized. Saskatchewan Learning, the government department responsible for education in Saskatchewan has attempted to avoid this marginalizing by including Aboriginal content and perspective into the content and teaching strategies of the guides. However, by using a postcolonial analysis this thesis demonstrates that the inclusion of Aboriginal content and perspective does not change the narrative structure of Euro-Canadian history and as a result the efforts of Saskatchewan Learning are not successful. This analysis exposes how the language, structure and logic found in the guides maintain a colonised dichotomy between Aboriginal peoples and Euro-Canadians. Nevertheless, the goal of this research is not to attack or blame, but to add to the discussion amongst educators about how to improve the educational experiences of Aboriginal youth.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I need to thank for the support and encouragement I received while writing this thesis. Bob Lindsay of the Department of Native Studies, Marie Battiste, Bob Regnier, Howard Woodhouse, Don Cochrane and Dianne Hallman of the Department of Educational Foundations provided me with their ideas and encouragement during classes when I was their student and in many casual but enlightening conversations. I thank them for their time and enthusiasm. I am indebted to the members of my committee for their patience, efforts and insights. I would like to thank Michael Cottrell who served as the external examiner and offered insights that I had not yet thought of. I extend my appreciation and thanks to Lynn Lemisko who also offered new ideas I incorporated into this thesis. Sam Robinson not only served as a committee member but also as a volunteer mentor and editor. His influence and help were invaluable. I could not have completed this thesis without the help and guidance of my supervisor Verna St. Denis. She has given me the direction, focus and confidence needed to write this thesis. Last but certainly not least I need to extend thanks to all my family and friends for their help and support. To my wife Layra and my children Michael, Brady and Katie I thank you for your love, support and patience. The kids can have their computer back!

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# CHAPTER I

## PURPOSE AND SETTING

### 1.1 The Problem

In the rise of the West, the achievement of superiority has been accomplished not only by the sword and cross, but also by a philosophy of history that has used time and place as conceptual tools for dividing the world according to the interests of imperialism. (Willinsky, 1998, p. 134)

As this quotation indicates, the telling of history in the Western world functions not only as a record and an analysis of past events, but also as a tool to justify and rationalise the practices of colonialism. Like other western countries Canada's history is integrally linked with the practice of imperialism and colonialism, with large parts of it being arguably nothing but the story of Canada's creation as a colonial state and its relationships with other imperial powers (Owram, 1998). This thesis argues that sources of historical information and analysis, such as the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* and the *History 30: Canadian Studies A Teacher's Activity Guide* function, as Wilinsky has suggested, by telling the story of Canada's colonial past while validating its colonial practices as normal and natural occurrences. Because the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* and the *History 30: Canadian Studies A Teacher's Activity Guide* (hereafter referred to as the guides unless specified

separately) are key resources for grade twelve teachers they significantly influence how Saskatchewan students understand colonialism and the impact of colonialism in shaping their understanding of Canada. By rationalising and justifying Canada's colonial practices the guides fail to address one of the most important goals of the Department of Education in Saskatchewan that being the positive representation of Aboriginal peoples, cultures and history (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b).

The failure of the curriculum and activity guides to positively represent Aboriginal people, cultures and history occurs for several reasons. First, the narrative structure of Canadian history, which as a product of European culture in the first place, inherently supports the story of Euro-Canadians by validating and promoting such concepts as the inevitable march of technological and economic progress. Secondly, the guides subtly and sometimes not so subtly, continue to maintain the colonial dichotomy between Euro-Canadians and Aboriginal peoples. Within this dichotomy the guides maintain Euro-Canadian culture as the dominant culture in relation to Aboriginal culture. The guides further enhance this dichotomy through a variety of words, concepts, images and metaphors whose origins are linked with colonial practices (Furniss, 1999). The unequal relationship between Euro-Canadians and Aboriginal peoples continues to express itself regardless of the inclusion of Aboriginal content and perspective in the two guides because the guides do not address colonialism as the source of that dichotomy. As a result of these factors the guides present a normalised and naturalised historical and contemporary Canadian national identity, which is predominately White and Euro-Canadian, providing the “lens” through which students understand the nation



(Heathorn, 2000). Therefore, the Aboriginal content and perspective not only fails to enhance the education of Aboriginal youth, but ironically, becomes part of the larger Canadian story and serves to authenticate and validate Canada's past, present, and future, which was and is dominated by a Euro-Canadian interpretation of history.

Understanding the conundrum of failing with good intentions, which in this case means failing to eliminate racism regardless of how much Aboriginal content and perspective are included in the guides, can best be expressed by borrowing Audre Lorde's quote, "...the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1979, p.98). Though Lorde was referring specifically to feminist issues, her analogy provides a theme for my analysis of Canadian history. Can true change, and reform, against oppression and domination occur if the vehicle used for that change, and reform, serves a source or tool of the original oppression and domination? In other words, if the language, logic, metaphors and narrative of Canadian history are a source of the marginalizing of Aboriginal peoples, then how can Canadian history as represented in the curriculum and activity guides not do the same thing if the guides use the same language and structure. How this failure occurs and how that failure impacts the education of Saskatchewan students is the focus of this study.

## **1.2 My background, position, models and inspirations**

In 1979 at the University of Saskatchewan all history majors and Education students, like myself, majoring in history, were required to take a full credit in

Canadian history at the second year level. The rationale, if I recall, was that students studying history, especially those who were planning to teach history, needed a solid grounding in Canadian history to facilitate the development of good citizenship. The text for that class was *Canada: A Political and Social History* and was written by a York University Professor named Edgar McInnis (1969). I enjoyed reading the book, and as recently as ten years ago, I still used it as a source of information for my teaching. For many students, myself included, this book served as a source of knowledge about Canadian history. In the opening chapter of the book, in a section called the "Aborigines" McInnis provides the following explanation:

The Europeans who came to the shores of North America regarded it as a vacant continent, which lay completely open to settlement from the Old World. In the final analysis this assumption was justified. It is true that the continent was already inhabited by tribes who claimed the land as their own. But in the whole of Canada there were probably no more than 220,000 Indians, and in neither numbers nor culture nor political organisation were they strong enough to hold their vast hunting grounds against the pressure of land-hungry Europeans.

The aborigines made no major contribution to the culture that developed in the settled communities of Canada. . . . Even when the advance of settlement pushed them out of their accustomed hunting grounds, the Indians failed to adapt themselves to the new situation and resisted absorption into the new society. They remained a primitive remnant clinging to their tribal organisation long after it had become obsolete. (McInnis, 1969, pp. 10-11)

The above quotation from Edgar McInnis is an example of how a source of Canadian history justifies and rationalises the practices of colonialism. According to McInnis Aboriginal land was effectively empty which means that it was open for occupation, and that once that land was occupied Aboriginal peoples remained a "primitive" people and who did not contribute to the creation or development of

Canada. I provide this example as a contrast between past educational practices and contemporary initiatives. In my opinion, McInnis' words are, by contemporary standards, racist and offensive, and would not be accepted in any classroom in Saskatchewan. However, I argue in this thesis that the language in the curriculum and activity guides, though neither racist nor purposely hostile continues, as does the words of McInnis, to marginalize Aboriginal peoples, cultures and history.

While the above paragraph indicates a level of pessimism the purpose of this study is not to be negative but to create a point of discussion and debate concerning the improvement of education for Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Learning has placed the improvement of Aboriginal education as one of its most pressing priorities. Most teachers I have met in my twenty years of teaching have shared this priority. As a teacher of social studies/history and of Canadian Studies specifically, I believe that my colleagues and I have a critical role to play in reaching out to Aboriginal students by providing social studies/history classrooms that represent and respect their history and cultural heritage, as well as that of the majority Euro-Canadians. Although my analysis has often criticised the efforts of Saskatchewan Learning, the purpose nevertheless, is to support its long-term goals for Aboriginal education and those teachers who support Aboriginal education in Saskatchewan.

A concern I had while working on this thesis is that I may be perceived as claiming the right to speak on behalf of Aboriginal peoples as some sort of spokesperson or expert, which I neither am, nor desire to be. Fortunately I have found, in the writings of scholars, useful guidelines for providing methodology,

structure of analysis, inspiration, and ideas about where I can position myself in this study. Edward Said (1979) in his book *Orientalism* has provided me with a location to work from. Though Said is originally from the Middle East he stresses that his study of "Orientalism" has little to "contribute" to the real struggles, lives and history of the people who live in the Middle East and Asia, because his study is not about the Orient, but is instead about the Europeans who created the idea of "Orientalism" (Said, 1979, pp. 3-5). "Orientalism" as a European concept served as a vehicle for the West to exercise power over both the Middle East and Asia, by defining for the Europeans, and for the East, what the East was, and in so doing, helped to define themselves through the apparent contrast between the two civilisations (Said, 1979). In much the same way, the West has defined the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, through the original European explorers and settlers and in the last one hundred fifty years by those who created Euro-Canadian society. Therefore, in this thesis I have provided not so much an analysis of Aboriginal peoples, but an analysis of the Euro-Canadians, who, through vehicles such as the *History 30 Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* and the *History 30: Canadian Studies A Teacher's Activity Guide*, exercise power by defining within a non-Aboriginal history who and what Aboriginal people are and have been.

I have also borrowed ideas from John Willinsky (1998). His goals, which he articulates in his book *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empires End* provide a rationale and example of the contribution that my research can play in the education of Saskatchewan youth. "I seek to achieve with this book a degree of educational accountability. Although this phrase typically refers to holding teachers

responsible for student achievement scores on standardised tests, what I have in mind is that educators owe those they teach some *account*-if always partial-of what we have taught them about the world" (Willinsky, 1998, p. 16). Willinsky's list of concepts and items to be accountable for reflect a list that for the most part I applied to this study. He suggests teachers must give an account of how sources of history have constructed the world to accept some and not others; to examine how the world has been divided between "East and West, primitive and civilised" and to show how history teachers have played a significant part in its perpetuation (Willinsky, 1998, p. 16). To do this, teachers will have to understand how historians have constructed the story or narrative of history and acquire, for the benefit of their students, new and different ways to interpret the narrative accounts of how Canada came to be.

*The History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum and Activity Guides*

represent part of the larger grand narrative of Canadian history. As Lyotard has indicated "narratives allow the society in which they are told, on the one hand, to define its criteria of competence and, on the other, to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it. (Lyotard, 1979, p. 20). By narratives Lyotard is referring to the grand narratives which people and societies have created to explain their world and how it functions and at the same time deny the validity of other narratives (Sim, 1998). Slattery drawing on Lyotard defines the grand narrative or metanarrative as "any theory that attempts to provide a universal, all-encompassing narrative of the way that the world works, people

should behave, texts should be interpreted, governments should be structured, [and] schools should be organised... (Slattery, 2000, p. 133).

In response to this I have borrowed the term counternarratives from the book *Counternarratives: Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Postmodern Spaces* (Giroux, 1996). In this book the authors refer to counternarratives as a challenge to the Western metanarrative that is linked with stories of evolutionary progress and achievement. They also imply that the counternarrative can specifically challenge grand narratives which have specific political purposes involving the exercise of power (Giroux, 1996). Like Willinsky's definition of accountability, I have found that searching and developing a counternarrative to the historical narrative found in the curriculum and activity guides can expose how Aboriginal peoples have been, and are represented to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. While my analysis deals with how the grand narrative operates as a colonial tool the purpose of that analysis is to create opportunities for the building of a counternarrative that can provide an alternative way of understanding the relationship between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian history.

### **1.3 The Goals of Saskatchewan Learning**

Beginning in 1982 Saskatchewan Learning established a series of initiatives to "improve the educational experience of Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan schools from kindergarten to grade twelve" (Saskatchewan Education, 1998, p. 1). Better education for Aboriginal youth in Saskatchewan would mean, first and foremost, that Aboriginal students should be as successful, and have the same opportunities for success as non-Aboriginal students in the classroom

(Saskatchewan Education, 2000). Success, however, would not be measured only in terms of marks and grades achieved. Along with these traditional indicators, Saskatchewan Learning established goals to create an educational environment where Aboriginal students would feel a sense of belonging and worth. This would occur when Aboriginal students recognised that the educational environment included their cultural values and heritage. As was stated in the *Aboriginal Education Initiatives in Saskatchewan Education Report*, "Students need a learning environment in which they are at ease; they need to be taught in a manner compatible with their backgrounds and learning styles; they need to see their world reflected in subject matter and content; they need to feel that they are a part of a learning community" (p. 3).

One of the strategies implemented for achieving this objective was to seek the advice of Aboriginal elders and support groups within the Aboriginal community, while at the same time accessing other community and government agencies and resources within the provinces to ensure the total development of each student (Saskatchewan Education, 2000). Another critical strategy involved the inclusion of Aboriginal topics, ideas and perspectives in all subjects to ensure that Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students would learn that Aboriginal culture and history have made up an integral part of the history of Saskatchewan and Canadian society (Saskatchewan Education, 1998). By becoming aware of, and appreciating the role of Aboriginal culture and history, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students would learn that Aboriginal culture and peoples must play a valuable role in the future of Saskatchewan and Canada (Saskatchewan Education,

1998; Saskatchewan Education, 2000). This view has recently been reiterated in the *Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee: Action Plan 2000-2005*, which states:

There is an urgent need for action at the school level. Previous action plans have resulted in the development of policies, partnerships, and structures essential to the development and implementation of programs. We now want to see the effects of Aboriginal education initiatives reflected in the successes of Aboriginal students, in increased knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and their history in the general population, and in harmonious relations among all people in Saskatchewan communities. (p. 3)

One of the most important strategies for meeting the above goals is in curriculum development. Because teachers use curriculum guides as daily and long term-planners, and as resources, incorporating Aboriginal content and perspectives in them plays a critical role in allowing teachers to build a classroom environment conducive to Saskatchewan's Learning's goal for Aboriginal education (Saskatchewan Education, 1998) . Beginning in the 1980's Saskatchewan Learning began a series of reforms for social studies and history education. As part of these reforms the 1990's saw a revamping of how and what students were learning in grade twelve Canadian social studies and history. As a result of these reforms Canadian history became known as Canadian Studies and grade twelve students could complete their history requirement by taking either *History 30: Canadian Studies*; *Social Studies 30: Canadian Studies*; or *Native Studies 30: Canadian Studies*. Regardless of which option students choose common themes, concepts, and values about Canada and about being a Canadian are covered, though each course has a different focus in terms of specific content (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b). Aboriginal content and perspective are key concepts incorporated into



these guides with the intention that all students completing grade twelve have a solid understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and history and a sense of a common future (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b).

Of these curricula, the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* and its accompanying activity guide are the most traditional in their format and context in covering the chronological development of Canada. As a result, the guides provide an educational opportunity to bring the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stories of Canada together to meet Saskatchewan Learning's Aboriginal education objectives. The intent is that Aboriginal students will feel that their history is a part of the history of Canada and non-Aboriginal students, especially those who are Euro-Canadian, can broaden their perspective on a history that perhaps many thought involved only people of European descent. While I agree with Saskatchewan Learning's goals I argue in this thesis that the inclusion of Aboriginal content and perspective in the guides is not enough to change the negative representation of Aboriginal peoples that is inherently part of the Euro-Canadian historical narrative.

#### **1.4 The History 30 Curriculum and Activity Guides**

To introduce this Guide I have identified its place within the structure of curriculum development. *The History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* contains five chronological units which are defined in terms of time and subject. Though the units deal with different topics they have the same structure. Each unit is subdivided and each lesson within a subsection clearly identifies learning objectives and ideas on teaching and evaluation strategies. To many people this

structure may seem quite normal because most curriculum guides have followed this orderly pattern. The key for my analysis was that a counternarrative to this curriculum guide required, not only a retelling and understanding of the history found in the guide, but also a challenge to the structure of the guide. This became necessary because of the connection between the Tyler Rational and the curriculum guide. Though the Guide was published in 1997, it owed a lot of its structure to Ralph Tyler who first developed this curriculum in the 1940's.

The Tyler Rational, as Tyler's principles are known, has guided the education of generations of students in Saskatchewan schools because of the influence of his ideas in curriculum development. Based on the principle that curriculum guides should be learning plans, Tyler called for clearly defined learning, behaviour, and evaluation objectives (Behar-Horenstein, 2000; Hlebowitsh, 2000; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995). Even with the reassessment of education and curriculum in the 1980's Saskatchewan Education in *Directions* called for a co-ordinated and cohesive curriculum from kindergarten to grade twelve (Robinson, n.d. ). Although the Tyler Rational has had a strong impact on curriculum development, people interested in developing counternarratives have contested it because curricula designed on his principles fall within a modernist narrative tradition which has been opposed to postmodern counternarratives. This opposition is significant because postmodernist curriculum developers, who have provided me, as will be demonstrated below, with a system of analysis, point to the Tyler Rational as an expression of education which does

not challenge the social and political status quo, but in fact maintains it (Behar-Horenstein, 2000; Henderson, 2000; Slattery, 2000).

Though the curriculum guide wittingly or unwittingly supports the status quo of modernity, it is an improvement over older models. As mentioned above, attempts to include Aboriginal content and perspective are commendable. This is combined with other attempts at innovation which include using resource-based learning, concept attainment, dialectic thinking, challenging students with controversial issues and values, while always being aware of gender equity and multiculturalism (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b). Although this curriculum is a break from the past it nevertheless clearly maintains its roots in traditional practices established by Tyler. The curriculum guide defines intellectual skills and even abstract concepts like values within a frame work of sequenced objectives, evaluation strategies and goals (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b). Of these skills and evaluations, dialectic thinking, which the curriculum guide identifies as the most important intellectual skill, provides an example of how an attempt to offer a vehicle of exploration, and empowerment for students functions to maintain the status quo. As I have discussed in much greater detail in a latter part of this thesis, the dialectic applied to controversial issues only confirms Euro-Canadian dominance. Dialectic thinking along with the other innovations in the curriculum guide plays a secondary role to the outline of the content which directs students to the conclusion that the Euro-Canadian story is one of progress and achievement.

From the first unit to the last the curriculum guide presents the content and skills in an orderly and coherent plan. The content of the course, is divided into five

chronological units, and is then further subdivided. The first unit "Relationships: People and Paradigms" deals with pre-European contact to the end of the 1800's. As with the other four units, the curriculum guide defines core content and concepts, and gives specific recommended time allotments ranging from one to four hours. Along with these the guide also highlights foundational objectives which students should know by the time they are finish the unit. For example, each student should "Know that assimilation is the belief that when a weaker and supposedly inferior culture comes into contact with a superior culture, people from the inferior culture can be educated to understand and practise the norms of the superior culture" (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b, p. 108). This statement will draw a lot of attention in the analysis section of this thesis. Once teachers has familiarised themselves with the foundational objectives they can move on to the unit in which every page further identifies content, concepts, skills, values and evaluation strategies.

Once students finish exploring the first unit, which covers the period from "Precolonial times" to Lord Durham's Report they move on to the second unit "The Nineteenth Century: The Road to Democracy" which covers the time period from the early 1800's up to the start of the First World War. The next three units respectively called "External Forces and Domestic Realities", "The Forces of Nationalism", and "Challenges and Opportunities" examine in chronological order a vast array of topics, such as the World Wars, Free Trade, and issues including Quebec separatism, women's rights and Aboriginal self-government. Although the guide has replaced the once common memorising of facts with a wide range of

concepts, skills and values, it nevertheless, sticks to a Tyler-like plan, which as this description might indicate, draws upon traditional Euro-Canadian historical references to provide its structure. Within this tradition lies the problem of why the goals of Saskatchewan Learning's Aboriginal programs will be undermined through the teaching of the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide*. A sense of this can be ascertained by the guide's definition of assimilation. Although new emphasises can be made, and Aboriginal content becomes part of the course, the narrative of Canadian history, as offered in this guide, is not fundamentally different from older sources of Canadian history such as McInnis' *Canada: A Political and Social History*, and as a result the guide maintains and reinforces the dominant position of Euro-Canadians within that story.

## **1.5 Methodology**

### **1.5.1 Defining Curriculum as Discourse**

The methodology used to expose how colonialism still functions in the narrative of Canadian history was a discourse analysis. A discourse analysis of the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* and the *History 30: Canadian Studies Activity Guide* requires that the guides be defined as a discourse. The argument presented in this thesis reflects the definitions provided in sources on discourse analysis. Discourse can be viewed as an entity which is built by the social and political context in which it exists, and at the same time also builds or contributes to the building of that context (Wodak, 1996). Discourse is a practice that produces identity and at the same time is productive of the identities. In this sense the guides reflects the values and beliefs of the dominant group in Canadian

society, and also “helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo...” which keeps that same group dominant (Wodak, 1996, p. 15). Discourses, in this case can “produce and reproduce unequal power relations... through the ways in which they represents things and position people” (Wodak, 1996, p. 15). The guides like other discourses are “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event (or person or class of persons), a particular way of representing it or them in a certain light” (Burr, 1995, p. 48). Therefore engaging in discourse analysis brings attention to how language and meaning participate in the production of social identities and relations, and in my case how the guides not only fail to represent Aboriginal people in a positive image, but also continue to create a dominant identity for Euro-Canadians.

The discourse analysis that I will be applying has its roots in postmodernism. Although scholars disagree as to a specific definitions of postmodernism and its related fields I have applied a combination of postmodern, deconstruction and postcolonial approaches to this discourse analysis (Alba, 2000; Pinar, 1995; Young, 1990). Robert Young provides an example of the relationship among these concepts in his reference to the work of Jacques Derrida.

If deconstruction forms part of a more widespread attempt to decolonize the forms of European thought, from this perspective Derrida's work can be understood as characteristically postmodern. Postmodernism can best be defined as European culture's awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world.... Postmodernism, therefore, becomes a certain self-consciousness about a culture's own historical relativity-which begins to explain why, as its critics complain, it

also involves the loss of the sense of an absoluteness of any Western account of History. (Young, 1990, p. 19)

As established in the previous section, the curriculum and activity guides are part of the Western historical tradition that contain certain defining values and beliefs that are accepted within that tradition as permanent and natural expressions. Therefore this analysis shares the common purpose of any variety of discourse analyses in that, as Young's quote would indicate, it seeks to expose contradictions, inconsistencies, and ulterior motives in sources of knowledge that would be offered as objective forms of social and material conditions. The function of discourse analysis then is to acknowledge that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore the goal is to examine how the construction of knowledge is achieved and whose and what purpose it serves. In the case of the guides the argument presented is that, as a discourse, they constructs a reality of Euro-Canadian dominance which is in contradiction to Saskatchewan Learning's philosophical goals of educational instruction without racial bias.

To those who might, as Young suggests, fear “ the loss of sense of an absoluteness of any Western account of History" (Young, 1990, p. 19), I once again turn towards Edward Said for guidance. In the *Afterword* to the 1994 republication of *Orientalism*, Said defends his work from those who accuse him of being too politically extreme and of pitting one culture against another. His purpose is not to prove that one culture is better than another, but instead to expose the fallacies behind Western identity that have been built on “the construction of opposites and ‘others’” (Said, 1994, p. 332). Like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Said believes that

history, which humans write, has as one of its purposes the exercise of power. Power, not only to control such things as territory, but also to describe and to define other peoples and cultures. This exercise of power results in a struggle for “historical and social meaning”(Said, 1979, p. 331), which not only exists in the abstract world of ideas and language, but is also found in the physical world that was touched by colonialism, and is still present in many struggles, both global and domestic, around the world . Engaging in discourse analysis provides a method for the classroom teacher to show how the two types of struggles, abstract and concrete, are not only related, but are one and the same thing. “The task for the critical scholar is not to separate one struggle from another, but to connect them, despite the contrast between the overpowering materiality of the former and the apparent other worldly refinement of the latter” (Said, 1994, p. 331). Therefore, exposing how and why Euro-Canadians have been, and still are, part of the practices of colonialism is the first step in creating a counternarrative.

### **1.5.2 Post-modernism, Post colonialism and Curricula**

As mentioned above discourse analysis is part of the movement of postmodernism and postmodernist scholars have also worked within the discipline of curriculum studies and have used postmodern, and postcolonial perspectives to re-evaluate the assumed meaning and significance of traditional curriculum (Pinar et al. ,1995; Slattery, 2000). Their efforts have been similar in nature and intent to other post-modern analyses in non-curricular areas, and at times overlap, as in the case of John Willinsky who critiques many sources of information, or discourses, of which one type is curriculum materials. As with the terms above, I have used



both the terms postmodern and postcolonial in full knowledge of the inaccuracies inherent in any oversimplification of complicated terms. Scholars within the curriculum field also provide some justification for grouping these forms of analyses together.

To understand curriculum as poststructuralist, deconstructed, and postmodern text is to engage modes of cognition, methods of critique and analysis, and versions of contemporary culture and history, which challenge and subvert not only the central themes, organising metaphors, and discursive strategies constituting Western thought and informing the Enlightenment project, but all that is modernism itself, including those perspectives and cultural structures associated with modernism. (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 450)

Applying this type of analysis has significant educational implications for a curriculum document that purports to represent the history of a nation and all the peoples who make up that nation. As Pinar indicates in his book on curriculum, if we use the guidelines provided by Derrida then history is merely “the agreed-upon meaning we give to past experience”, and in this way “becomes the re-presentation of the present disguised as the past” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 467). In this sense the history offered in the curriculum and activity guides functions to create and support a Canadian national identity that the majority have accepted as reality. To build a counternarrative, a teacher working from a postmodern perspective needs to "challenge singular interpretations of data and singular methodologies for curriculum organisation..." (Slattery, 2000, p. 133). For example, this thesis shows how the guides' portrayal of events in Canada's colonial past, though often described as regrettable, are also portrayed as necessary stepping stones to the successful creation of a preconceived idea of Canada. Teacher's looking to start a

counternarrative need to question and confront interpretations of Canada's history that assume an agreed upon understanding of past and present events.

John Willinsky provides examples of how a counternarrative might function within a Canadian curriculum setting by demonstrating a specific and practical model of curriculum analysis. In his article, "After 1492-1992: a post-colonial supplement for the Canadian curriculum" he asks how much of the imperial agenda for education can still be found in modern curriculum guides (Willinsky, 1994)? Willinsky claims that his analysis is post-colonial, which although indebted to postmodernism has the advantage of being more practical and to the point for the educator in the classroom, and therefore, as Said has recommended, helps to connect the struggle between theory and practice (Willinsky, 1994). In his opinion postcolonialism is not distracted by, or tied into the vast array of other subjects, or discourses associated with postmodern discourse analyses. (Apple, 1999; Blades, 1997; Giroux, 1996; Willinsky, 1994). "As I would cultivate it within the educational setting, the post-colonial supplement is intended to develop critical and historically on how the curriculum and its textbooks continue to work within global structures of thought" (Willinsky, 1994, p. 615).

These global structures of thought are part of an imperial agenda by which Willinsky is referring to the European system of classifying and organising knowledge with the purpose of "constructing" the world "in their own [European] image" based on "racial differences" that "amounted to a convulsion of knowledge and power that incorporated educational interests within an assumed mandate for global domination" (Willinsky, 1994, p. 613-614). In the same sense that Pinar

suggests above, Willinsky offers a supplement to curriculum as an attempt to "disrupt" the colonial practices that can be found in curriculum today.(Willinsky, 1994).

I want to introduce the pedagogical device of a post-colonial supplement designed to create a little space in the curriculum for thinking about the implications of five centuries of a global imperialism. The idea of a supplement is to take hold of the opportunities within the curriculum for asking after, and learning more about, the long-standing colonial gaze of the inveterate educational tourist who is inspired to take in the world without reflecting on what disposition has come to mean after five centuries of inquiry.(Willinsky, 1994, p. 614).

Some examples given by Willinsky apply directly to those in the analysis section of this thesis and have already been used in my own classroom, as I have tried to implement a counternarrative. Willinsky asks that teachers show the connection between the struggles within Canada for national identity and recognition with other struggles around the world that are connected by the legacy and present reality of colonialism. The attempts and desires of French nationalism and the battles being waged by First Nations for land claims, self-government and other grievances are not isolate occurrences by people who "hate" Canada, but instead are part of a global movement that seek to address who they are as a people after 500 years of imperialism (Willinsky, 1994). That the Quebecois' who struggle to find and define their place within the English world appear to disclaim the same rights of the First Nations within Quebec is not a contradiction of the above point, but instead is a further example of the reach and complexity of imperialism. So although the French in Quebec may still be battling the impact of British imperialism, they must also be seen as practitioners of the same imperialism that is

reflected in their resistance to the suggestion by Aboriginal peoples living in Quebec that if Quebec can become independent of Canada then the Northern Cree of Quebec can become independent of Quebec (Willinsky, 1994). What is being suggested then is that students need to be exposed to the perspective that imperialism and colonialism are not just things of the past, but are the forces which construct much of our present reality.

### **1.6 The Framework of Analysis**

The methodology of a postcolonial discourse analysis will fall within a three-step framework. The first part of the analysis specifically explores how the language of the guides, expressed through words, statements, concepts, objectives, student exercises, summaries and conclusions, functions as a tool of colonialism to “divide the world” between those who were colonized and those who did the colonizing (Memmi, 1967; Willinsky, 1998). The goal is to expose how the language of colonialism is “encoded” within the Guide and by so doing open the possibility of a counternarrative (Green, 1995, p. 7). The second part of that framework examines how the concept of teleology and the application of dialectic reasoning function as colonial tools to rationalize and justify the dominant positioning of Euro-Canadian in the guides. Together they help to make the history of Canada into an Euro-Canadian grand narrative that by its nature excludes and manipulates other understandings of the past and present. In this sense the guides are not just recording and analysing the past, but are working as forces of colonialism in formulating a specific Canadian national identity and sense of nationhood. In the third part of the analysis I have summarised those analyses and

offered suggestions as to how this might impact the development of a counternarrative for teaching Canadian history in Saskatchewan high schools.

### **1.7 Use and Explanation of Terms**

Euro-Canadian: I borrowed the term Euro-Canadian from Elizabeth Furniss' book *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (1999). She uses the term "to specify the dominant population of Williams Lake and the term 'non-Aboriginal' to designate the broader range of city residents, which includes a significant number of individuals of East Indian ancestry" (xi). I have chosen to use the word in a broader sense to indicate an understanding of the world more than a specific ethnic population. I am referring to those Canadians who are the descendants of Europeans, but I also mean those Canadians who have accepted and celebrated the Euro-centric Canadian history that I critique in this thesis. As an idea this type of history is specifically associated with the Whig tradition of history which celebrates and believes in the achievements and progress of the former British Empire.

Discourse: When I use the term discourse I am referring to a body of knowledge, such as a curriculum guide, that provides information, but while providing that information builds and validates itself and the views it expresses. In this sense a discourse is not an impartial source of knowledge but serves a cause or a larger idea such as the building of a Canadian national identity.

Postmodern: I have used the term postmodern as starting point by placing my analysis within its range of meanings. By a postmodern analysis I am suggesting that the Western tradition of knowledge, values and logic can and should be

challenged for inconsistencies. One of those inconsistencies is how the Western belief in progress covers over practices such as colonialism. I also use the term to refer to the method of exposing how a discourse such as Euro-Canadian history not only transmits knowledge, but also uses that knowledge to construct a reality which revalidates the original discourse.

Postcolonialism: I use this term specifically to analyse how colonisation is not just a physical manifestation of explorers, soldiers, clergy and administrators that played a role in Canada's past. Instead postcolonialism studies how colonialism functions as an idea both in the past and most importantly in the present. Exposing how colonialism continues to marginalise Aboriginal peoples and construct a Euro-Canadian identity of progress and achievement is the purpose of this thesis.

## Chapter II

### Postcolonial Analyses

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I have analyzed the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* and its accompanying activity guide with the purpose of finding some “educational accountability.” Accountability in this sense refers to John Willinsky vision of teachers being able to explain how history "divides the world" between those who were colonized and those who did the colonizing (Memmi, 1967; Willinsky, 1998, pp. 3-17). How exactly does the Guide marginalize and "other," Aboriginal peoples and their collective experiences, while validating the role of Euro-Canadians in the formation of the historical and contemporary construction of Canada (Macintosh, 1998). In this sense "othering" operates to produce identity, by naming, defining and classifying as a means of control over groups of people or cultures which are separated from the group doing the naming, which, as a function of its power considers itself the 'norm' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000; Walia, 2001). To answer that question, in the first part of this analysis I have applied a post-colonial critique to demonstrate how the language of colonialism creates and maintains the grand narrative of Euro-Canadian dominance.

A post-colonial analysis looks at the way colonialism functioned in the past as both a physical manifestation of explorers, soldiers, clergymen, and administrators and as an idea, or concept, which through language and symbols, provided the intellectual foundation necessary to explain, rationalize, and justify the practice of imperialism (Adams, 1989; Ashcroft et al., 2000). Colonialism has always required an intellectual basis to accompany its related physical manifestations. For example Dickason in *The Myth of the Savage* states that "By classifying the Amerindians as savages, Europeans were able to create the ideology that helped to make it possible to launch one of the great movements in the history of western civilisation: the colonisation of overseas empires" (Dickason, 1984, p.xiii). This classification occurred and continued to occur regardless of how it might have conflicted with the reality that confronted Europeans in their encounters with First Nations (Dickason, 1984). That a colonial ideology existed, detached from reality, and yet could serve, as the basis for the physical reality of colonialism is the point of a postcolonial analysis.

What is added to the postcolonial analysis is the exposing of how colonialism, and the rationalising of it, still functions within the Western world as it did in the past by creating definitions and classifications that continue to serve those who have benefited from colonisation. What makes the postcolonial analysis challenging is that the means by which colonialism functions is not always as outwardly apparent as it was in past centuries. Nevertheless, one of the strategies of postcolonialism, as indicated by postcolonial writers such as Smith, Willinsky, Said, Green, and Adams, is to identify how the telling of history has been and still



is one of the main tools to define, rationalise and practise colonialism. Language expressed as words, statements, concepts, objectives, student exercises, summaries, and conclusions works as a colonial tool, building the grand narrative of Euro-Canadian history. Exposing how the tools of colonialism function within the guides provides the groundwork for a counternarrative, because it challenges and "disrupts" the assumption that colonialism is a chapter in the history of Canada that has long since passed.

## **2.2 History as a Vehicle for Colonialism**

As discussed in Chapter I history is a discourse, a grand narrative, which has as its purpose more than the recounting of past facts, events and stories. The history of the West is Euro-Centric and therefore not only supports the story of European civilisation, but continues to build it, because the history is not an independent account of that civilisation but is in fact part of it (Adams, 2000). So Western history which Canadian history is part of cannot escape this pattern because as Smith indicates history is not an innocent discipline which "simply" allows "the facts to speak for themselves" (Smith, 1999, p. 31). This idea of truth is also supported by Jenkins who states that " History is a discourse, a language game; within it 'truth' and similar expressions are devices to open, regulate and shut down interpretations" (Jenkins, 1991, p. 32). Therefore, history along with words such as imperialism, writing and theory brings "attention to the thousands of ways in which indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures have been silenced or misrepresented, ridiculed or condemned in academic and popular discourses" (Smith, 1999, p. 20). Smith questions whether Western history even has the

capability to reverse this process. Although some may support the idea that history is about “truth” and “justice” and therefore the damage done to Aboriginal peoples and their cultures will be repaired when a true version of history is made, Smith argues that this will not happen because history is not about justice, but about power: “It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others” (Smith, 1999, p. 34). And because Aboriginal peoples are still marginalized by that system of representation, a “thousand accounts of the truth” will not change their position in the Western hierarchy of knowledge (Smith, 1999, p. 34).

Joyce Green provides an example of how ideas and language are manipulated to avoid acknowledging the history of colonialism and what that means in contemporary Canada. She states " Canada has established racist, exploitative and coercive colonial relationships... [that] ...are perpetuated by a mythologized history..." (Green, 1995, p. 2). She specifically focuses on how this "mythologized history" along with the legal and political structures of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture serve to reinforce, justify and legitimise such things as the colonial “land theft” which occurred in Canada. Colonialism in this instance functions not just in the physical manifestations of treaties, reserves, unresolved land claims, and the centuries old history of the displacement of entire populations, but most importantly in perpetuating, within the minds of many Canadians, the denial of Canada's responsibility for this (Green, 1995). Without this acknowledgement Green believes that real progress will be hindered and an

"insurmountable divide between" the "coloniser and colonised" will be maintained, and in the case of land rights it "prevents scholars and legislatures from grappling with the consequences of that initial relationship" (Green, 1995, pp. 4&7). This analysis can be extended, as Green indicates, to all aspects of Canada's past, present and future relationship with Aboriginal people.

The obscured reality of Canada's colonial foundation contributes to a contemporary Canadian psychosis as we struggle to account for and deal with the consequences of that same colonialism while generally denying its reality. This illness is evident in the repetition of historical accounts that are partial and exclusionary; in the carefully maintained incomprehension at indigenous nations' resistance to assimilation and struggle for self-determination; in policies that purport to respond to indigenous problems while failing to conceptualise the role of settler populations in creating or solving those problems, No reconciliation will grow from such dishonest and partial remedies. (Green, 1995, p. 7)

I refer to this example because the curriculum and activity guides are examples of the problem Green identifies. The guides are not only part of the colonial phenomenon, which Green speaks of, but also contribute to it by ignoring the connection between the colonial actions of the past and their immediate and contemporary implications.

The manipulation and rationalising of historical interpretation begins on the first pages of the curriculum guide and continues by developing themes or concepts that serve to minimise the impact of colonialism. In the example provided below the curriculum guide shifts responsibility for colonialism away from Euro-Canadians settlers. This occurs not only in reference to the present, but also in descriptions and analyses dealing with the earliest periods of European contact. On the first page of the curriculum guide, the Unit Overview identifies three groups of people who interacted to create Canada: "First Nations, European colonisers, and

the peoples residing in the colonies” (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b, p. 103).

Even though this statement appears to be a straightforward it nevertheless operates as colonial tool by rationalisation the Euro-Canadian right to colonise.

Distinctions made between those Europeans who colonise the Americas and live in Europe and those who colonise but reside in the colonies is significant. This statement says that once a European and, or their descendants becomes a resident in the colony they are no longer operating as colonisers, and therefore the Euro-Canadian "settler" becomes absolved of the sins of the coloniser. The separation of the settler from the coloniser occurs even though the people residing in the colonies and their descendants could not have come to reside in that land without the colonisation of First Nations. This classification also implies that the settlers are no longer operating as agents of colonialism, and are not exercising power over the original colonised peoples.

This distinction paves the way for a present understanding of Canada to exist without acknowledging the contemporary presence of colonialism. At an early point in the narrative the presence of European colonisers becomes an accepted outcome by converting them to settlers who now not only share the land with First Nations, but at times, according to the guides share a similar experiences of oppression. The result is that the ongoing tragedy of colonialism is depreciated. Instead of examining how colonialism functioned and continues to function in Canada students learn that colonialism is something that occurred in the past and involved only explorers, fur traders, Jesuits and soldiers.

The association between the colonised and the coloniser which negates the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people by implying that the settlers who have occupied Aboriginal land and are no longer called colonisers, suffer the same plight as First Nations occurs in several places in the guide. In the section "Concepts Knowledge Objectives" the curriculum guide states:

Know that colonial decision making was the prerogative of the governing European power rather than either the residents of the colonies or the First Nations. Decision making within the colony was aligned with the priorities/agendas of the controlling European parties.

Those parties established their authority within the colony to ensure that their agendas were fulfilled.

The agendas of the First Nations peoples and the European residents in the colonies were not a priority. (p. 122).

Later in the same unit the French of New France who were colonisers are now grouped with First Nations in discussions concerning British policy after the Seven Years War. There is also a reference on pages 138 and 204 to the fact that women, certain non-Aboriginal males, and First Nations were not allowed to vote even after election reforms were established in the 1830's. In these examples the residents of the colonies role as colonists were ignored as though their experience with colonial oppression exempts them from being accountable for their continued exercise of colonial power and privilege. Willinsky (1994) provides a contemporary example of this type of dynamic interplay in the refusal of the Quebec separatist to acknowledge the validity of the similar aspirations of First Nations residing in Quebec.

The interplay of words continues in other parts of the curriculum guide. The first part of Unit One does acknowledge the destructive and "catastrophic" impact

of colonialism on First Nations (p. 110) but at the same time chooses other words to provide a justification for colonialism. On the same page that discusses the catastrophic nature of colonialism the curriculum guide states that, "It was necessary to find new sources of valuable resources and new markets for the expanding [European] manufacturing sector" (p. 110). This theme is repeated in several other parts of both the curriculum and activity guides. The key question is who or what has decided that colonisation was necessary? What does the word necessary imply and how does it function to nullify the catastrophic impact of colonialism? This example demonstrates how the grand narrative is promoted, and the rationalisation colonialism is encoded in the language of the guides. The choice of words gives the event described, in this case the search for new markets, a sense of inevitability. From the students perspective the message told is that colonialism had some bad aspects, but it could not have been avoided, and therefore its catastrophic impact on Aboriginal peoples, culture and history is an acceptable outcome of historical forces.

The use of words to encode or rationalise Canada's colonial past occurs in other parts of the guides. In the beginning of Unit Two, "The Nineteenth Century: The Road to Democracy," students quickly learn that the implementation of the National Policy created "a compelling need to secure the West" (p., 234), but what is not discussed is what securing the West meant for Aboriginal people? Who was it necessary to secure the West from and what does the word secure suggest? Does this mean that before the purchase of Rupert's Land the West was not secure? From time immemorial Aboriginal peoples lived in the "west" with systems of

government and societal customs. Is the curriculum guide suggesting that their life as it was known lacked a sense of security? Because this issue is not discussed, students are left to make their own conclusions. What might those conclusions or assumptions be? What do non-Aboriginal students conclude from this discussion, and equally significant, what do Aboriginal student learn about the value of their civilisation? Is the guide telling students that according to some unspoken standard it has been determined that Aboriginal civilisation was not capable of governing the land it possessed? In this way, the discourse of Canadian history continues to separate the coloniser and the colonised?

The power of colonial language continues unabated as students are also informed that "securing the West" (p. 234) required "a number of tasks" (p. 236). The nature of these "tasks" is explained latter in the unit. One of these tasks involved the dispossession of Aboriginal land through treaties which is justified because the "sparsely populated" (p. 238) area had to be settled with Euro-Canadians so that the "vast region would not be lost to the Americans" (p. 238). Therefore, although students learn that Canada's new possession could have been lost to the Americans, the dispossession of land held since time immemorial by the First Nations is only a task, or as indicated on the next page "a strategy to reduce obstacles created by the populations residing in the region" (p.239). Further in the guide this is referred to as an "arrangement" (p.244).

Part of these "arrangements" involved building a transcontinental railway and establishing the North West Mounted Police. The language used in this part of curriculum guide naturalises and normalises Euro-Canadian dominance. For

example the students are told that the transportation of Canadian troops during the North West "Rebellion" resulted in Canadians supporting the building and completion of the transcontinental railway because they could appreciate its "value" (244). However, as with the example of the American threat, what is left out of the equation is that the "value" of the railway means that Euro-Canadians could "secure" the dispossession of First Nation and Aboriginal Land by force if necessary. The justification given for the presence of the North West Mounted Police further demonstrates how language and logic can be used to rationalise the exercise of colonial power. The logic which I am referring to presents the argument that colonisation creates a problem and then solves it by exercising more colonial power, but does not acknowledge that at either end of the equation, colonisation caused the problem in the first place. The guide states that the North West Mounted Police were needed to solve the problem of the American whiskey traders as though these traders were a separate or different entity from the colonial practices that had been occurring in Canada since the time of Cabot. So in this example the North West Mounted Police "restore law and order" (p. 244) to a situation created by colonial actions, and yet were themselves agents of colonialism whose establishment of "law and order" resulted in the dispossession of Aboriginal land and a loss of power and rights for Aboriginal people.

The language of colonialism continues in the other units as well, though in these units the discourse of colonialism functions by not being named. In large parts of Units Three and Four Aboriginal peoples disappear from the story altogether and the outward role of colonialism is all but forgotten. Significantly,



the word Canadian has by default come to mean or include Aboriginal people because they are no longer mentioned in most parts of these units. This omission means that the impact and ongoing presence of colonial language, and practice is harder to detect, and as a result teachers and students could accept this version of history and leave colonialism out of the discussion on the assumption that Aboriginal peoples have become full members of the body politic. But what does this mean for students? If discussions around human rights within Canada and around the world do not involve Canada's ongoing history of colonialism then the guides are once again telling students that colonialism is a phenomenon that existed in the past and has no relation to contemporary conflicts and struggles. To identify how colonialism functions as an unspoken force in areas of Canadian history usually not associated with colonialism is the purpose of a post-colonial analysis.

For example, Canada's war years are covered in the guide with no reference to colonialism, and yet a postcolonial analysis can demonstrate how colonialism is normalised and naturalised in a historical category not traditionally associated with colonialism in Canada. In a discussion about the extra powers the federal government assumed during the First World War one of the exercises asks students to take into account the role of the constitution in protecting the rights of Canadians. Students are to, “Note that even in a democracy there are certain circumstances in which it is deemed necessary to limit the freedoms and rights of the citizenry” (Saskatchewan Education, 1997a, p. 3-18). Students are given the opportunity to discuss whether such actions by the government are acceptable when there is an “national emergency” or a threat to the “well-being of the nation”

and then to develop a set of criterion to determine if those actions are justified (p. 3-18). What is missing in this assignment is recognition of the actions of the federal government of Canada to the First Nations as contained within the Indian Act which had in 1876 restricted the rights of all First Nations in Canada. The Indian Act and its amendments dictated how First Nations could govern themselves, prohibited travel off reserves, "expropriated [reserve land] without surrender" (Dickason, 2002, p. 303), and in 1914 earlier amendments against traditional cultural and religious ceremonies were "strengthened with the prohibitions against Amerindians [First Nations] appearing in Aboriginal garb" (Dickason, 2002, p. 308). What does this say about the treatment of First Nations? The activity guide fails to acknowledge several things. The denial of Aboriginal peoples rights, which were ongoing, were based on what threat? Or are we not dealing with the fact that there was no threat, but only a racist policy? Because these questions are not being asked in either guide students are left to assume one of two things. First they could assume that Aboriginal people were a threat, and therefore were either enemies of the nation or, second, and more likely, this discussion does not pertain to Aboriginal people, and therefore their loss of rights, which was not related to the war, stemmed from some other sources. What that other source was goes unchallenged because this question is not even asked. The end result is that students will by default accept the outcome of colonialism as though the plight of Aboriginal people at that time in Canada was normal and natural.

Other examples of this omission occur in the curriculum guide. Students are asked, for example, to "discuss how the actions of foreign nations can influence the

lives of ordinary Canadians” (p.315). These exercises and statements prompt students to examine the impact of the coming World Wars on Canada, and how those wars changed Canada’s relationship with the United Kingdom and the United States. Teachers are to give historical examples “of how other nations and international events/conditions can affect the lives of Canadians” (p. 315). The suggested examples include the War of 1812 and the cancellation of the Corn Laws, but the experience of Aboriginal peoples with foreign powers, those being European, is never mentioned. This omission is ironic because the experiences of Aboriginal peoples with European powers and the Canadian government could provide many examples of how sovereign nations have had to deal with foreign powers.

An ironic example of this situation can be found in a section of Unit Three dealing with Canada’s response to German aggression in the 1930’s. The guide recommends that teachers should “Discusses with students the response of nations whose fundamental values are democratic and based on the rule of law, and who seek to maintain a peaceful foreign policy in the face of an aggressive foreign policy by another nation” (p. 351). Yet in Unit One the curriculum guide established that the Iroquois confederacy was a democratic nation that was governed by the rule of law. So why when considering this issue, do students and teachers not look at how the Iroquois, or other First Nations, responded to the aggressive foreign powers of England and France? By not showing the connection between these events and the colonialism that was still functioning at the time these events were taking place the guide builds a grand narrative that dismisses

colonialism to a distant irrelevant past that no longer pertains to the twentieth-first century. As a result this omission leaves Aboriginal students with gaps in the history of their collective experience and confirms for the Euro-Canadian students that colonialism played, perhaps a significant role at one time in Canada's history, but that time is long passed.

### **2.3 Ranking and Classifying**

In the above section the post-colonial analysis demonstrated how events and developments in Canadian history which empowered Euro-Canadians was made to seem natural and normal by rationalising the role of colonialism out of the story. This section deals with how the language of the guide teaches and reconfirms Euro-Canadian dominance by assuming that the Euro-Canadian or Western culture is, and was, a standard by which other peoples and civilisations are measured and evaluated.

According to postcolonial author Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Western history as vehicle for colonialism is a discursive practice of power which marginalizes and “others” entire cultures (Smith, 1999). From the perspective of those who have suffered through colonisation, “the West” which Western history is a component “is an idea or concept, a language for imagining a set of complex stories, ideas, historical events and social relationships” (Smith, 1999, p. 42) which has the power to classify, categorise, evaluate, and rank all knowledge, cultures and civilisations (Smith, 1999, pp. 42-45). The West exercises its power as the standard to measure other cultures, and those cultures or peoples who do not have similar attributes as the West are therefore assumed to be substandard. In his analysis of Western

history's role in Africa, Steven Feierman describes a condition that applies to Canadian history. "The problem here is that categories of historical analysis, even though ostensibly value-neutral, are drawn from Europe, and therefore the historian looks in Africa [or Canada] for a familiar constellation of kings, nobles, church and merchants ... If what is European is defined as normal, then the non-European appears to be disordered, abnormal, primitive... The categories that are ostensibly universal are in fact particular, and they refer to the experience of modern Europe" (Feierman cited in Wilson, 1999, p. 135). The results of this practice is that Western history is full of evaluations and rankings as to which culture is civilised and not civilised, advanced or primitive, and therefore one culture becomes the winner while another is the loser (Willinsky, 1998). The History 30 Guide attempts to avoid this type of language and analysis, but it cannot.

The dominant positioning of the Euro-Canadian culture and history is "encoded" within the language of the guides, suggesting meanings which are not readily apparent and yet serve to normalise and naturalise the hierarchy of civilisation which places the Euro-Canadian at the top (Green, 1995). For example the curriculum guide includes an analysis of the Iroquois Confederation as an attempt to represent Aboriginal culture. It says some positive things about the Iroquois society, emphasising that the Iroquois constitution allowed for the political involvement of both men and women when this was not the case in Europe. However, other statements about the Confederacy, which appear to be equally well meaning, work to undermine the guide's goals.

The European explorers and colonisers encountered some First Nations societies that possessed societal attributes equal to those present in Europe

at that time. One of those societies, the Iroquois Confederacy, possessed a constitution that governed decision making, individual rights and the parameters of government (p. 103).

This one statement contains several encoded meanings which divide the world between the colonised and the coloniser.

If the statement is taken at face value, it demonstrates a Euro-centric tendency to identify only with a culture which has some of its own cultural identifications of what a society should be (Wilson, 1999). Even 500 years after Columbus it is easier to use the Iroquois as a model because they lived in farming communities, waged war with their neighbours and used what would be defined, in European terms, as a formal system of government. Why did the Guide choose this culture? Why not the Naskapi or the Algonkin? By not using a society that cannot be easily classified what message is that choice sending out? The message is in the statement. The phrase "some First Nations" encodes the meaning that if some First Nations passed the test then the rest did not. Students, who are Aboriginal, but not Iroquois, are told that their societies were not equal with European society. Students who are Euro-Canadian learn this as well. This example also assumes that this statement be taken at face value. However, there are other encoded messages as well.

Even for those First Nations that are either Iroquois or part of the "same" the statement still supports the colonial order of European dominance, and therefore, it implies all First Nations at the same time. How did the curriculum guide make the assumption that Europe was the standard by which Aboriginal cultures or societies should be measured? So that even if the statement is once

more accepted on face value then why would there not be some First Nations that possessed societal attributes that were better than those found in Europe? Ronald Wright in his book, *Stolen continents: The 'New World Through Indian Eyes* indicates that the concept of what should be considered 'advanced' needs to be open to re-evaluation because he points out the many advantage to life in the Americas before Columbus (Wright, 1992). Nevertheless according to the curriculum guide at the very best some First Nations can be equal to, but they cannot be better than European civilisation. There is no explanation as to how this criterion was selected or even what the criterion is. And it cannot be explained as a desire by the writers to avoid hyperbole, because the next paragraph states "European military and political supremacy allowed them to impose European paradigms and practices throughout North America" (Saskatchewan Education, 1997, p.103). Therefore, one is supreme while the other is sometimes equal. What underlies this assumption is the tendency as pointed out by Smith that Western history establishes Western culture as the unspoken but fully understood standard to measure all things.

The measuring and ranking of cultures from the Western perspective is exemplified by the curriculum guide's quotation concerning assimilation. According to the guide students should "Know [as a foundational objective] that assimilation is the belief that when a weaker and supposedly inferior culture comes into contact with a superior culture, people from the inferior culture can be educated to understand and practise the norms of the superior culture" (p. 108). Does this means that if the students should reach the conclusion that Aboriginal culture was in anyway assimilated, then it must be weaker and inferior? There is a

good chance that students will reach that conclusion because in the next unit, the guide states the following as a foundational objective: "Know that one of the goals of the Canadian government was to implement policies that would lead to assimilation of the First Nations who resided in the former Rupert's Land."(p.207). Added to this is another foundational objective: "Know that the well being of society will be influenced by sustained contact with other societies" (p.108). This objective implies that after students conclude that Aboriginal culture is "inferior" they can then further deduce that assimilation acts for the "well-being of [Canadian] society" (p.108). The assimilation statement is a forceful example of how the discourse of Euro-Canadian dominance operates on unspoken assumptions of superiority.

## **2.4 Controlling Time**

Another avenue by which Western history builds its grand narrative is through the control of linear time which places meaning within a Euro-centric time frame. The story of history is capable of expressing the history of all societies and peoples, and presenting it in an orderly fashion by creating a precise beginning and end. This creates support for the doctrine of progress and development, with the inevitable comparison between cultures and peoples leading to a hierarchy of advancement. For Aboriginal cultures this understanding has meant that much of their history, when told within the Western framework, begins only after Columbus, as though they had not existed before they were discovered and labelled by Europeans (Smith, 1999). In this sense history becomes a vehicle to contrast the modern industrialised state against the non-industrialised. In this binary



categorisation the modern Westerner emerges as an individual capable of controlling his or her own future, whereas the non-industrialised person, like her or his culture, has no future other than as cast in the context of Western history (Smith, 1999). Often this context, as will be seen in the analysis below, is one in which the non-Westerner is disappearing or being relegated to a closed and frozen past.

The power and legacy of colonialism to affect those descriptions offered above are present in the language of the guide from the first page to the last. Once again the first page of Unit One provides a starting point to analyse how the world is ranked and how this ranking is presented to the student as normal and natural expressions of time and history. For example in the first paragraph of the first unit the ordering of time as a basis for understanding information and knowledge occurs within an Euro-Canadian context, which provides the means by which Aboriginal world views lose their validity and credibility.

In the unit "Relationships: Peoples and Paradigms" the overview states that students will "investigate the assumptions and practices held by the major population groups from precolonial times to the beginning of the nineteenth century" (p. 103). What appears to be a straightforward introduction nevertheless functions as a colonial tool to maintain a relationship or order between the coloniser and the colonised. As indicated by Smith and Green there is the immediate implication that when we start to study Canada all frames of reference exist within a Western reference point as indicated by the term precolonial times. Precolonial, as a term, is a good example of why a postcolonial analysis is a valid

exercise for this guide. That term in all likelihood replaced older terms or phrases which implied that Canada was "discovered". The term "discovered", which was commonly used until most recently, has been discarded because it implies that Canada and the Americas did not exist until Europeans found them and furthermore as a result of their "discovery" Europeans claimed the right to rule the Americas (Adams, 1989; Dickason, 1984; Wright, 1992). Therefore, the term discovery, used in this context, has taken on a pejorative meaning.

But how much different is the term pre-colonial? Though precolonial may seem a more progressive term than discovery because it acknowledges that Aboriginal history existed before colonialism, it nevertheless has similar implications. Regardless of the positive connotations the word precolonial carries it still defines the Aboriginal world within a European context on the basis of the Europeans actions and European notions of time. The act of discovery is still implied and so is the power that comes with the right to classify time. As the claim of discovery lead to the right to claim land so the labelling of time gives control to the labeller. Contemporary Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal students learn that the world is divided between those who create time periods that lead to the future and those, like First Nations, whose world was of another time. In this case the prefix "pre" signifies, a difference between the Euro-Canadian and the Aboriginal, and that by placing the Aboriginal world in a time before the colonial world it is in effect placing it into the past, and this past will disappear and not play a role in the future. The implications of using the term precolonial become apparent even before Unit One is finished.

In that same opening paragraph the curriculum guide states that “Those populations groups included the First Nations, the European colonisers, and the people residing in the colonies. The assumptions and beliefs held by each of the groups influenced how the various peoples interacted and shaped the history of the Canadian nation” (p.103). The intention of the guide is to show that the coloniser and the colonised worked together to form the nation of Canada. But the term precolonial associates itself only with First Nations and signifies not its future but its past. Although the guides intends to create a continuum involving all three groups, that intent is not possible because precolonial cannot be associated with either the European colonisers or those Europeans who have become settlers in the colony. This conclusion occurs because no precolonialism exists for Europeans. Their arrival in the Americas was a continuation of a cultural pattern already established and as this analysis is suggesting is still ongoing. Therefore, as the curriculum guide demonstrates the term precolonial signifies a timeframe only for First Nations.

Unit One contains two examples that show the perspective and values of Aboriginal culture. One example analyses the democratic nature of the Iroquois Confederacy and the other shows how worldview determines a culture's approach to land use. In the first example students test how the values of the Iroquois Confederacy play out in what the guide calls the "key societal relationships" that a template for all societies. These key relationships include the relationships between the members of a society, the nature of the government and its relation to its societal members, and the relationship between that society and others. The

example contrasts the strengths of the Iroquois society favourably against the hierarchical nature of European society at the time. Likewise in the second example students contrast the Aboriginal worldview of holistic land management with that of the traditional European practice of exploiting the land for commercial gain. At this point in the guide the coming together of these different peoples to form Canada is explained in terms of paradigm and cultural clashes.

Even before they reach the end of the First Unit, students, who have been given an insight into the Aboriginal worldview, learn that those "assumptions and beliefs" from the precolonial times, contrary to what the curriculum guide said on the first page, did not "shape the history of the Canadian nation" (p. 103). In a section of Unit One "Road to Responsible Government," students are told that new political forces were unleashed in the nineteenth century and these "resulted in the peoples of the colonies creating Canadian solutions that were distinct from...[the British and Americans, and that] "Within the increasingly diversified colony, there emerged groups with distinct economic and political agendas" (p.134). To the students of Canadian history two things become apparent: "distinct Canadian solutions" do not involve any Aboriginal "assumptions and beliefs" and Aboriginal peoples do not form groups that have "agendas". In another section of Unit One students learn that there was a conflict between new immigrants and established colonial oligarchies over a shortage of land. As in the examples concerning political reform there is no discussion of how an Aboriginal worldview could have been applied to these conflicts. Aboriginal people are not mentioned in either example. Therefore, the curriculum guide's attempt to show Aboriginal peoples,

cultures and history as an integral part of the Canadian story fails because the grand narrative has no room for representation other than that of the Euro-Canadian. New terms such as precolonial can be used but they function in the same way as older terms like discovered.

The activity guide also provides examples of how the precolonial classification functions to signify the passing of Aboriginal culture. In a document called "Student Information Sheet: Chronology of Significant Events Pre-Contact to the War of 1812" only two significant events out of twenty-seven are classified as pre-contact and one of those is about the Vikings. In contrast, the arrival of Columbus, Cabot, Cartier, Champlain, and Bishop Laval all warrant a separate place in the first part of the list, while the two Aboriginal references to the colonial era highlight the establishment of the Jesuit mission in Huronia and then the destruction of Huronia by the Iroquois. Two other significant events involving Aboriginal peoples are mentioned, but like the reference to the Jesuit mission, they are explained primarily as European events. In the first reference the creation of Indian Land by the Royal Proclamation is significant because it attempts to block further colonial expansion which "angers"(p. 1-6) the Thirteen Colonies and in the second item students are informed that the Six Nations supported the British in the American Revolution. These types of lists, which are common through out the activity guide, confirm that First Nations are not an integral part of the Canadian story, and once again the term precolonial or precontact acts to signify the marginalizing of Aboriginal history and people.

A second information sheet from the activity guide, "Growth of Democracy" fails to mention either the precolonial era or Aboriginal culture. Perhaps the most telling example occurs in a third information sheet designed to accompany Unit Two, "Chronology of Significant Events Constitution Act of 1791 To Confederation." In that list, students learn that the only significant event that mentions Aboriginal people, out of twenty-four significant events between 1791 and the 1869 was the "Death of Shawnadithit, the lone remaining Beothuk" (p. 2-5). When later Aboriginal people are mentioned in the same list they, as in the previous list, are discussed in relation to Euro-Canada and the Euro-Canadian people. The first reference is to the Riel Resistance of 1869 which "strains relations between the English and the French" and the second informs students that "Treaties with prairie First nations groups were negotiated and resulted in Canada acquiring lands from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains" (p. 2-6). So even when there is an effort to represent Aboriginal peoples as part of the story, the grand narrative of Canadian history makes it all but impossible.

### **2.5 Canadian Identity and the Cultural Identity of "others"**

In the previous section I analysed the ways in which the language of the guide encoded certain meanings and understandings to rationalise and maintain a position of dominance for Euro-Canadians in the telling of the history of Canada. This examination showed the subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways in which the language of colonialism ranks and evaluates other cultures under the pretext of telling an objective account of history. In this section, I have examined that same process, but with an emphasis on how identity is produced, used and controlled.

The grand narrative continues through a process that has been referred to as "othering". In this sense "othering" operates to produce identity, by naming, defining and classifying to control groups of people or cultures which are separated from the group doing the naming, which, as a function of its power, considers itself the 'norm' (Ashcroft et al., 2000; Walia, 2001). "Othering" then is an integral part of the exercising of colonial power because those who are "othered" are the colonised while those who do the "othering" are the colonisers. In the guides, the "othering" of Aboriginal culture occurs because they discuss Aboriginal identity as separate and problematic in relation to Canada and assume a natural and understood identity for what is Canada and the Euro-Canadian people.

As with many of the examples above, the first page of the Guide provides an insight into how this "othering" functions. The guide states "The encounter and sustained contact between these peoples produced change, conflict and accommodation. A 'distinct' Canadian experience was a 'product' of that interaction" (p. 103). This statement introduces students to an all-encompassing teleological narrative, which either subsumes or excludes any alternative narrative. The guide defines concepts, events and actions and rationalises them to appear as normal and natural parts of this "Canadian experience". This understanding occurs because the term "'distinct' Canadian experience" contains the unconscious assumption that such an experience exists, and that the students understand what it is, and if they do not understand what it means the guide will show them. This understanding implies that regardless of the specific events and occurrences, all people who have, or are living in Canada, belong to, and share an unspoken

commonality. However, at the same time that the guide suggests a unique Canadianism, it also hints that an “other” exists which is not necessarily part of that entity.

In Unit Five this duality is given expression in the following statement concerning diversity and the nation state. "Know that changing immigration demographics are creating new dynamics in terms of relations among the peoples of Canada and have brought prominence to the debate of what it means to be Canadian" (p. 507). A debate resulting from demographic changes about what it means to be a Canadian assumes that an agreed upon understanding of what it means to be a Canadian must either exist, or has existed. What that is, and how it came to be, is not discussed, but it seems to be challenged by "changing immigration demographics" (p. 506). What this means for Aboriginal students, and how it is played out in the guide, will be the focus of the analysis below along with an examination of identity production

To challenge identity production and build a counternarrative students need to be shown that “the construction of identity is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society" (Said, 1994, p. 332). Nevertheless, resistance to this kind of analysis will occur because “most people resist the underlying notion: that human identity is not only not natural and stable, but constructed, and occasionally even invented outright” (Said, 1994, p. 332). People want to be allowed to believe “in the certain positivity and unchanging historicity of a culture, a self, a national identity" (Said, 1994, p. 332). Challenging the guide's



Euro-Canadian identity production could meet with resistance from students who, like the curriculum guide assume a common national identity.

The resistance in this case may be particularly intense because this analysis requires that White Euro-Canadians be the racial identity analysed. This analysis is not to say that the racial identity of "Whiteness", as Richard Dyer terms it, functions the same way as other ethnic minority identities, and in fact is almost the polar opposite of minority identities in that it exists without being named. This situation occurs because "Whiteness" or in other words the identity of Euro-Canadians is considered by them to be so normal and natural that it does not need to be named, and therefore becomes the "universal norm" to which all other cultures are compared (Dyer, 1997). What this means, then, is that culture and multiculturalism, whether viewed as issues, concepts or practices, are not about all Canadians, but instead, are about Canadians who are not White. As Dyer states, "Indeed to say that one is interested in race has come to mean that one is interested in any racial imagery other than that of white people" (Dyer, 1997, p. 1).

For many Euro-Canadians this will be hard to accept, especially for those who have supported the study of cultures as a way of creating a more understanding society, and have taught and believed that multiculturalism is a great achievement that separates us from other less peaceful and caring societies. For those who believe in the march of progress, multiculturalism holds out promises of a society working towards a better future, "...if equality does not actually exist in the present, the possibility of enculturation means that every one is at least potentially equal to everyone else" (Young, 1995, p. 33). But as Wetherell, Potter,

and Minh-ha argue, the tendency to celebrate the unique and special features of culture mask more serious issues of racism, domination and violence (Day, 2000; Minh-ha, 1989; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Cultural discourse, therefore, takes over some of the same tasks as race. It becomes a naturally occurring difference, a simple fact of life, and a self-sufficient form of explanation. Culture also continues the doctrine of fatal impact and the white man's burden....In addition, culture has this aura of niceness, of progressiveness and humanitarianism. It covers over the messy business of domination and uneven development through advocacy of respect and tolerance for differences. (Wetherell & Potter, 1992)

Legare also argues that the emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity creates and maintain differences by separating from the majority a "culturally defined other" (Legare, 1995, p. 347). As she states, "'culture' is invoked to signify ethnic identities as other than the normatively Canadian identity" (p. 347). This theme reoccurs throughout the guides as students and teachers are asked to examine how minorities should fit into the larger Canadian society. Although the guides points out flaws in the government's actions, ranging from the establishment of the Indian Act to the 1969 White Paper, it also spends a lot of time dealing with issues of pluralism and diversity. For example it often asks questions such as: "Do the interests of a particular region or population of a nation take precedence over the interests of an entire nation?" or "In a representative democracy should the will of the majority be compromised by the interests of the minority" (pp. 131&143). These types of dialectic positions are designed to address the interests of the minority, but as Legare (1995) indicates they create the image that the minorities are not really full members of the society because they are the other.

Legare's analysis is supported by Malik who states: " The plural outlook ignored the dynamic interplay of the various groups making up colonial society...[and therefore]...Like racial theory, plural theory provided an apology for social inequalities, portraying them as the inevitable results of cultural differences" (Malik, 1996, p. 173). In a section of the guide dealing with plurality and diversity, the type of constructed cultural differences mentioned by Legare and Malik can be found. Students are given an exercise to select a particular group in society that has not benefited from the overall prosperity of post-war Canada. The suggested groups include: Aboriginal peoples, African-Canadians and immigrants. The Guide then instructs the students to do the following:

Have students groups select a particular segment of the Canadian community that appears to have not experienced the level of opportunity and prosperity enjoyed by most Canadians.

The responsibilities of each group would include:

Seek out statistics that illustrate the social and economic conditions facing the particular population

Identify specific challenges facing the particular population

Suggest new initiatives that could meet the needs of the population. (p.371)

Instead of determining the source of the economic inequality the students are asked to come up with ideas that the government could implement to improve the plight of the group selected. In this exercise, the cultural group is associated with the problems and the majority is associated with the solutions. Therefore, many Euro-Canadian students can conclude that if a cultural minority has problems the culture or the people themselves are the source of that problem.

The final unit of the curriculum guide “Challenges and Opportunities,” continues the construction of Aboriginal peoples as partial or problematic members of the Canadian experience. In this case students are asked to describe the perceptions and assumptions surrounding the position of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society. They are then further instructed to consider “mainstream society’s expectations of Aboriginal peoples” (p. 525) in light of the knowledge that Aboriginal peoples are “now seeking the means to secure their identities as distinct peoples” (p. 520). Not only are Aboriginal peoples classified as being distinct from the majority, but also within the binary framework of the guide, their position as a “Collective Aboriginal identity” is pitted against the “individual rights of Canadian citizens” (Legare, 1995, p. 358). Evidence in the curriculum and activity guides of this pitting of Aboriginal identity against a Canadian identity can be found in the guides' references to multiculturalism and immigration policy.

Richard Day suggests official multiculturalism was created to solve the perceived problem of French separatism and the perceived problems that occurred from the failure of the White Paper, which had as its main target the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into Canadian society (Day, 2000). In Day's analysis, multiculturalism offers the Euro-Canadian majority a convenient way of dealing with diverse cultures they cannot control. Another troubling aspect of multiculturalism is its connection to outdated and racist terms of classification of cultural groups, which Day refers to as the "Great Chain of Race" (Day, 2000).

In the 1991 census, state-sponsored social science was still reproducing the ancient European scheme...by presenting its table of 'Population by Ethnic Origin and Sex' in the order that would be given by the Great Chain of Race: British and French are followed by Western, Northern, Eastern, and

Southern European; next come West Asian, East Asian, and Latin and Central America; then Black, Aboriginal, and, finally, Multiple Origins (Day, 2000, p. 192).

Although the curriculum guide indicates that Canada's past attitude towards immigrants had been hostile and racist, there are parts of the guide which still indicate that immigrants are problematic. The guide makes certain teleological assumptions about an agreed upon Canadian identity that it implies is threatened by the newest waves of immigrants. For example the guide states:

Know that new realities are impacting relations between new Canadians and the existing populations.

Know that in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the number of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America has grown.

Know that changing immigration demographics are having social, economic and political ramifications for Canadian society.

Know that immigration policy has always reflected a dialectic between the desired population increase, the impact of immigration on established Canadian assumptions and values, and the racial and ethno-cultural composition of the country.

Know that changing immigration demographics are creating new dynamics in terms of relations among the peoples of Canada, and have brought to prominence the debate about what it means to be a Canadian. (p. 532)

In all of these statements the guide is implying that immigrants are the source of the tension and that just as in the past they are problematic.

In the content section relating to debates about multiculturalism, the guide points out that opponents to multiculturalism are concerned that “ By focusing on our cultural differences and our individual rights, Canadians have lost the sense of what binds them together as a collective society” (p. 536). The guide in this instance is not suggesting that this is the guide's view or the view of all Canadians, but it nevertheless assumes once again that there is an understanding of that

position, or how could that phrase have any meaning. But, as with other references of this kind, the guide never explains who, or what bound Canadians, and who articulated this national unity. The guide invites students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to participate in a discussion of this issue. However, what will such a discussion mean for these students? If non-Aboriginal students identify with this assumption, they will have their own identity validated. Aboriginal students on the other hand will either be confused, not sensing this unspoken identity, or sensing it, will not have their identity validated.

The final confirmation of the creation of the "other" is the process recommended in the final unit of the guides. These strategies are also found in the activity guide. In this activity students are asked to "identify the form of relationship that existed during the following historical/events in Canada's history" (p. 533). The relationships which students identify are between different groups of people in each time period. In five of the six periods, all of which occurred before 1939, Euro-Canadians who are referred to as citizens, or as residents, or as just Canadians are always one of the groups and are compared to groups of immigrants or in one of the time periods the "the Aboriginal people of the north West at the time of the purchase of Rupert's Land" (p. 533). In each case the guide is confident is assuming that the term "Canadian", "Canadian citizen", or "Canadian resident" carries enough meaning that do not have to be explained. Significantly Aboriginal peoples and other immigrant groups are being juxtapositioned against an unexplained Canadian identity, which in several of the categories goes back before Confederation.

The power of "othering" is demonstrated here because of how it controls the identity of Aboriginal peoples. By grouping Aboriginal peoples with different immigrant groups, the guides have effectively removed Aboriginal peoples status as First Nations. I am not suggesting that being grouped with immigrants, who according to the guide challenge the meaning of being Canadian is bad, but only that the Aboriginal peoples now become the "other" in their own country. The irony of this has an absurd quality to it: the final act of colonialism, the removal of Aboriginal people from this country, is completed, not by force of arms, but by language, and educational practices such as those found in the guide.

## **Chapter III**

### **Teleology and Dialectic Reasoning**

#### **3.1 Introduction:**

In this chapter, I have examined the power of colonial discourse from a broader perspective. Although language is still the basis of colonial discourse, I have shifted the focus to the overall grand narrative of national identity and how it is supported by the concepts of teleology and dialectic reasoning. As in the previous chapter, I have focussed on the normalising and naturalising of Euro-Canadian dominance, but in this chapter I focussed my examination on how teleology and dialectic reasoning operate as tools to support the colonial relation between Euro-Canadians and Aboriginal peoples. National identity, teleology and dialectic reasoning are critical to the grand narrative because they make it appear not only normal and natural, but also inevitable and logical. In responding to this grand narrative, I have provided a counternarrative to challenge these colonial tools.

#### **3.2 National Myths and Identity**

One of the impressions I have from reading the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* is that it is interested in creating a Canadian national identity. Although the curriculum guide was not the responsibility of just one writer it nevertheless reflects the “conscious and unconscious” political values and



beliefs of those responsible for its creation (Evans, 1999, pp. 191-195; Heathorn, 2000, pp. 18&19). As suggested by Heathorn, because the authors are representative of their culture, and are immersed within that frame of reference, they quite possibly function unaware of their own biases. Canadian history as presented in the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide* reflects a Euro-Canadian bias. As I have demonstrated further in my analysis, the guide has a self-congratulatory tone about it as though one of its purposes is to make sure Canadian students are aware that the making of Canada was a great accomplishment. Although many may argue that this belief is indeed part of the purpose of Canadian Studies, it is also part of the tradition that helps to maintain the dominant role of Euro-Canadian identity.

Daniel Francis in *National Dreams* (1997) suggests that Canadian history plays a role similar to how religion or language have bound other nations and peoples in a sense of identity. Because we don't have some of the nationalistic characteristics that other societies have had, we have had to build what he calls "national myths" or a "civic ideology" through our history. These myths, which include everything from "universal health care" and "hockey" exist as parts of the story of Canada, and combine to build a "national identity" (Francis, 1997, pp. 10 & 11). "How exactly this works remains a bit of a mystery, but most of us are convinced that it does, that there is such a thing as a national identity and that it is a good thing to have one" (Francis, 1997, p. 11). The problem with this type of thinking, which I am suggesting is found in the guides, is that these constructed "national myths...vilify or at least marginalize" those parts of society that do not fit

or support the accepted national identity (Francis, 1997, p. 11). In the case of Aboriginal peoples, and their history, this marginalisation is accomplished by not only endorsing teleological narratives of progress and accomplishments, but by leaving out important accounts that maybe too complicated to deal with if myths of national identity are to be maintained. As Francis suggests, the myth of peaceful European settlement in Canada cannot exist if contrasted against the devastation of Aboriginal society. "This holocaust is arguably the most important episode in Canadian history, yet most of us pay it far less attention than Confederation or the Quiet Revolution or the latest referendum in Quebec" (Francis, 1997, p. 12). If sources of historical information, such as the guides, are part of the production of national identity, which is what I am suggesting, then teachers will need to expose how these are created and what are the alternatives to it.

### **3.3 Teleology and History**

To offer a counternarrative teachers will have to become aware of and be ready to challenge the teleology found in the Curriculum and Activity Guides. Teleology is a critical part of the grand narrative of Canadian history, because it makes the story of nation building appear so natural that at times it is hard to see how the national myths, that Francis refers to, construct the grand narrative.

One of the traditional criticisms made against the writing of history is that it is teleological. Teleology is way of telling history with the end in mind so that the past becomes a justification for the present (Wilson, 1999, p. 8). "Teleology, the development of progress or decline over time, is an inherent aspect of historical writing because historians are recounting a past after they know the outcome of it"

(Wilson, 1999, p. 25). Teleological history rewards and seeks out the great patterns of progress as though they were inevitable. The result is "... a history of the winners without adequate consideration of other outcomes that might have occurred" and with this comes a "...tendency to tidy up the past from the perspective of the present [which] allows historians to champion their own values by placing them in a position of understanding instead of confusion" (Wilson, 1999, pp. 8 &9).

In the English speaking world this tidying of history has often been referred to as the Whig Tradition of history, a practice similar in intent to what Edward Said refers to as the Enlightenment Project, which functions to rationalise the totality of global imperialism. In both concepts progress is celebrated through the achievement of reason, liberty, and specifically in the Whig Tradition, the spread of the British values and institutions (Evans, 1999; Kaye, 1991; Walia, 2001). The problem with this approach is that both traditions ignore the oppression of millions of peoples world wide (Kaye, 1991; Walia, 2001). In the case of Canada, specifically, this view of history allows Euro-Canadians to celebrate heroic deeds without being implicated in the suffering of Aboriginal people.

As my analysis will later demonstrate in greater detail, the guides follow this type of teleological presentation of Canadian history. This has a significant impact on how teachers, who will follow the guide, teach it, and as their students, who are exposed to its content, images, values and ideals come to understand it. Throughout the guides the "march of progress" is an overriding theme, but whose "march of progress" is being told? In my experience as a teacher I would say the

guide, like other general histories of Canada, is often better understood, and easier to grasp, if students starts on the last page and works their way backwards. A reverse reading of the history makes more sense because the history is written with the end clearly in mind. Although the guides gives examples of those peoples who lost out, and of plenty of controversies, its overriding message is that things worked out this way for the better, and therefore, everything naturally leads to the modern existence of Canada. The result for Aboriginal youth becomes apparent: too bad, but that's the way it is, so you had better get used to it.

The question may arise as to why and how teleological writing of history occurs? Understanding the inherent nature of bias in the writing of history begins when we become aware that the written history of the past, and the past itself, are two different things (Jenkins, 1991). History is an interpretation of the past. As an interpretation, it is open to a wide range of influences that impact an historian's perspective. Because of the enormous amount of knowledge which the historian attempts to represent or capture, and the actual separation of time and experience between the historian and the past events, the historian is forced to create a structure of interpretation that stands for a reality that may or may not have existed (Jenkins, 1991). As Hayden White points out a simple event like, "The death of king may be a beginning, an ending, or simply a transitional event in three different stories" (White, 1973, p. 7). One result, as mentioned above, is the tendency for the historian to give an orderly interpretation of past events by providing a narrative structure, which fills in for the actual past events, words spoken, and lived emotions, which cannot be retrieved.

In translating the past into modern terms and in using knowledge perhaps previously unavailable, the historian discovers both what has been forgotten about the past and pieces together things never pieced together before. People and social formations are thus caught up in processes that can only be seen in retrospect, and documents and other traces are ripped out of their original contexts of purpose and function to illustrate, say, a pattern which might not be remotely meaningful to any of their authors. (Jenkins, 1991, p. 13)

To make sense out of a past in which only partial information can be obtained, narrative accounts of the past can become teleological as those past events are placed within a coherent story. As will be demonstrated in the next section, the guides fall prey to teleological practices as it constructs a version of Canada which celebrates the achievements of Euro-Canadians thereby erasing and producing or "othering" the identities of non-Euro-Canadians.

### **3.4 Teleological Practices in the Guide**

Teleology in history means that history is written not from the past, but from the present with an eye on the future. In a general sense teleology can be defined as, "a metaphysical doctrine explaining phenomena and events by final cause" or "the fact or the character of being directed toward an end or shaped by a purpose..."and finally as, "the use of design, purpose, or utility as an explanation of any natural phenomenon" (Merriam Webster, 2002 ). The guide wastes little time in demonstrating its teleological perspective. In an introductory section "Course Goals for Canadian Studies: The Perspectives of the Past" the guide quotes prominent Canadian historian Donald Creighton.

"The waves behind the vessel which is carrying humanity forward into the unknown can teach us where the winds of change are blowing and on what

course the chief currents of our age are set. They can reveal to us the main directions of our voyage through time. (p. 22)

To explain Creighton's quotation, the guide offers that students, who are often "bewildered", need help because "They lack a perspective which would allow them to find a pattern in the complexities of current events. Education should help them discover the harmonies and the conflicts which have shaped and continue to shape social life" (p. 22). Once these patterns are presented students can "discover for themselves a perspective in which themes become apparent. It is the task of the Canadian Studies program to allow these discoveries to occur" (p. 22). The need to make sense out of history, as these examples indicate, means that history is explained teleologically. Directing students to recognise patterns and themes in history can serve to justify outcomes. So what does this approach mean for Aboriginal history?

Teleology in history, from the perspective of historians, may centre on the debate of what constitutes innovative and accurate scholarship, but in the arena of education teleology can move beyond academic skill and integrity to areas of social and political analysis which include practices of racialization and racism. For example if the authors of the guide had students recognise certain patterns and themes to understand Canadian history, then they must have had some preconceived idea of those patterns and themes. By directing the students towards these preconceptions, teachers are then offering a specific prearranged explanation of what Canada has been, and is. This explanation allows the guide to introduce controversial issues, but without having to deal with their long-term implications as

colonial practices because they are rationalised away as steps leading towards the building of Canada. Therefore, the patterns and themes, which lead to the idea of Canada, are then in turn endorsed and confirmed by the conclusion they were designed to bring the student to in the first place. This type of teleology is not only found in school curriculum guides, but has been identified with writers as renowned as Jean Paul Sartre. Robert Young in his critique of Sartre offers this example of Sartre's teleological practices:

Throughout, Sartre has nevertheless taken it 'for granted that such a totalisation is constantly developing both as History and as historical Truth'. His History, therefore, is always in process: but its teleology of a final totalization always has to be assumed. He thus asserts the Truth of History while constantly projecting forwards and deferring its proof. But when the proof comes it also turns out to rest on the assumption that it is already true. (1990, p. 33).

Young's criticism of Sartre can also be applied to the guides in that they offers students a way to understand the meaning of Canadian history, while at the same time implying and assuming that an agreed upon understanding of "the Canadian experience" (p. 103) exists. Once students discover this "Canadian experience", then all the exercises and examples in the guides are validated because they confirm an already agreed upon conclusion.

### **3.4.1 Roots, Roads, Paths and Steps**

Teleology is often expressed with various terms and metaphors. All imply a journey, like the one provided by Creighton, or a path, or often an organic metaphor related to things such as roots, branches or other evolutionary images. Regardless of the metaphor, the message is the same: forces can combine to

provide a design that leads to an ending. This metaphorical language is evident throughout the guide. In a section which provides a yearly plan "Planning A Year of Study: Choosing A Sequence of Units" the language of design and biology are evident. "Unit I also is intended to give students an introductory historical overview of the major events that led to the formation of Canadian society" (p. 42). The terms "led" and "formation" imply a sense of order and destiny to the establishment of Canadian society. The guide has no problem in claiming that such and such an event leads to a formation because it had already agreed to acknowledge that formation as a major accomplishment. On the following page, which further recommends strategies for the overall plan, the guide continues with teleological metaphors and terms. In these examples teachers are told that,

...all societies will evolve a worldview that includes assumptions and practices that surround certain key societal relationships, including:

- the relationship between the members of a society and the societal decision-making processes that impact their lives;
- the relationship among the members of the society;
- the relationship of the society towards other societies; and,
- the relationship between the peoples and the land.

The units provide a historical description of how succeeding generations of Canadians have evolved assumptions and practices, surrounding those relationships. It is, therefore, possible for teachers to implement a thematic approach to the curriculum on the basis of those key societal relationships. (43)

That approach allows teachers to " focus on contemporary issues surrounding those relationships and then undertake a study of the historical roots of the associated issues..." (p. 43). As with all this language, the guide expresses an assumed understanding of purpose or place of destination or achievement.



If the guide has a plan on what Canada is, or at the very least should be, and if this plan calls for a celebration of Canada as an achievement, then the road leading to that accomplishment must be full of contributory events, occurrences and developments of achievement. Non-achievements must be reasoned away, dismissed altogether, or somehow absorbed into the total narrative. For example, the guide has a summary for each unit. The summary for Unit Two states:

Every society has to develop decision-making processes that secure the social and economic well-being of its members. Students will learn that competition exists within society for control of decision making processes, that not all interest groups possess the necessary power to significantly influence societal decision making, and that Confederation was the process of seeking consensus among the competing interest groups. (p. 24)

Unit Two spans the years from the end of the 1837 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada, to the early 1900's. As the title of the unit suggests, this is "The Road To Democracy", and like all roads it has a specific beginning and ending. In this case the unit focuses on building Canada through the processes of Confederation, treaties with the First Nations, the National Plan, and the setting forth of Canada's economic future. An analysis of the language and the structure of the above quotation demonstrates how teleology functions within the guide.

The summary quoted above indicates to students that although the road to democracy had some difficulties these difficulties can be both ignored and rationalised. This rationalisation occurs because the guide informs students, before they start studying the unit, that not all groups have enough power to be part of the decision making processes. As a result the disempowerment of Aboriginal peoples appears normal and natural because students were forewarned that it would happen.

The guide's concise and simple explanation appears to be part of a big plan: which in this case it is. The summary presents this information as though well-established rules to the game exist that everyone either already understands or will understand. Events, facts, exercises and analyses that the guide requires students to know or complete take the student down the "Road to Democracy." Therefore, students will accept the interpretation that consensus was the model for Confederation, even though Aboriginal people are excluded from the decision making process, because that conclusion is validated by the process of study and analysis the students took to reach the conclusion and the process itself is validated by reaching the conclusion as though it was reached independently of the summary. As a result, the establishment of democracy in Canada, except for Aboriginal people who lost all their rights, is presented as a naturally occurring path of history.

In this same part of the curriculum guide each unit has a similar overview that presents a pattern to understand the founding of Canada. The guide makes references either to the steps towards creating Canada or to an already agreed upon sense of a Canada. In *Unit One*, "Students will learn" that "contact between peoples of differing societies, is a catalyst that produces new realities..." (p.24) whereas in Unit Three and Unit Four they will learn that the "Canadian State" has the ability to " 'incorporate' new peoples whose interests were not always accommodated by the existing political and social status quo" (p.24) and that the same state " has played a significant and leading role in the formation and implementation of a uniquely 'Canadian' societal paradigm" (p. 25). As in the above example, the guide has established patterns and themes so well that when the students reach a certain

conclusion, they achieve a sense of completion because the path to that conclusion was clearly established before the course was started, resulting in a duality of validation whereby the conclusions justify the methods and the methods confirm the conclusion.

The above examples, though significant in demonstrating the tone of the curriculum guide, come from an introductory part of the guide and therefore to see how this teleological perspective functions and its implications for Aboriginal youth I will provide examples from the text of the guide and its accompanying activity guide. On the first page of Unit One the curriculum guide quickly establishes a teleological perspective. The third sentence of this Unit states, “The assumptions and beliefs held by each of the groups [Aboriginal and European] influenced how the various people interacted, and shaped the history of the Canadian nation” (p.103). In subsequent sentences, the guide states that, “The encounter and sustained contact between these people [Aboriginal and European] produced change, conflict and accommodation. A 'distinct' Canadian experience was a 'product' of that interaction” (p.103). Words like shaped and product indicate to the student that what they are about to study, like all manufactured things, has a concrete reality and that reality is the “Canadian nation” or “distinct Canadian experience”. Although for many Canadians this statement may seem to be a fact, it nevertheless presupposes all other ideas. The significance of this introduction is that all words, ideas, examples and exercises in the guide will eventually lead to this conclusion and all cultures and histories become part of the greater grand narrative of the Canadian story, whether they like it or not, because they cannot

change the conclusion. “The path to the present frequently appears predetermined and inevitable because we look at the past in retrospect, know the outcome, and trace what happened” (Wilson, 1999, p. 7)

Tracing the path of the past to a predetermined present creates, as Wilson (1999) states, “... a history of the winners without adequate consideration of other outcomes that might have occurred”(p. 8). This pattern Wilson refers to occurs in Unit One when students are given the chance to apply their knowledge of how Aboriginal people and Europeans related with each other. But even in this exercise students are directed to, or reminded of, the road they are to travel, and so each exercise, skill, value and concept becomes part of that road which leads to the creation of Canada. The following example shows how students are guided by the foregone conclusion: “Note that cultural conflicts, in which the values and beliefs of cultural groups have to be conciliated so that people can live together peacefully, have occurred many times throughout Canada’s history...” (p. 121). Once again, the guide provides students with a rationalisation for the colonial actions of the British and Canadian governments by classifying the dispossession of Aboriginal land as a 'cultural conflict'. At the same time, the guide makes colonialism appear natural and normal because it has to happen, as it always has, so that people can live together in peace. As indicated by Wilson, teleology prevents or blocks students from reconsidering these events and occurrences.

As a further example of the need to rationalise the past, through the perspective of the present, the guide identifies mercantilism as a colonial practices, but stresses that it is important to “Note that the economic well-being of successive

generations of Canadians has greatly depended on exporting resources and products”(p. 127). Although the guide correctly associates mercantilism with colonialism, it also connects it with present economic practices that it stated support the present well-being of Canadians. By associating mercantilism with modern trade instead of colonialism, mercantilism becomes a necessary step that contributed to the making of Canada's well being, and the horrific outcomes of mercantilist policies are minimised. The issue of morality is lost in the teleological move to the present. What would happen if we explored those implications? One answer might be that teachers and students would become mired in confusing issues that would prevent teachers from finishing the course. Teleological direction establishes an order and cohesion to the story and when that is deviated from the story may no longer fit into the grand narrative.

The guide further strengthens the sense of Canada's creation as journey by instructing teachers to “Discuss with the students that contemporary Canadian realities are the product of a steady accumulation of change that has occurred throughout the nation's history. Note that change is often the result of challenges facing peoples and societies” (p. 129). As with other teleological statements this discussion gives students a way to understand and interpret the information in the guide, and to minimise the impact of colonialism. In this example the guide is once again simplifying and rationalising a complicated and moral issue. The guide claims that change, of whatever kind such as colonial exploitation, is the same as any other kind of change because it is all part of the progress that leads to the establishment of Canada. As with other teleological examples once students are

made aware of the teleological concept of change then all other developments become examples of the steady accumulation of change." This process eliminates the possibility for Aboriginal students to explore what change has meant for them or their culture because all forms of change are equal. Whereas simplifying the concept of change means that the Euro-Canadian student reconfirms their cultural position of dominance as natural normal and inevitable.

### **3.4.2 Falling off the Path**

When Hegel spun his epochal story of Universal History, he left little doubt that "History" belonged to some people but not to others.... As he saw it, indigenous Americans and Africans lacked history altogether.... [and]...they remained "peoples without history," and in the greater tale of Spirit's evolution they would disappear or assimilate themselves to the rising West. Today, decolonization has made this bit of Hegel's tale both implausible and unappealing. (Klein, 1995, p. 275)

One of the interesting things in the Guide is what happens to Aboriginal content when it no longer fits neatly into the narrative. In the above examples dealing with such things mercantilism and other conflicts, the Aboriginal perspective can be rationalised away within the teleological narrative. However, because the Guide is a narrative with a determined goal in mind, it surprisingly reverts in many places to older traditions of Western history, such as Hegel's sense of the non-Western world, by treating Aboriginal people as a people with no history (Klein, 1995). I say surprisingly because recent scholarship in general, and Saskatchewan Learning specifically, seems so aware of that tradition, and in the case of Saskatchewan Learning so intent on avoiding it, and yet it does not. In many sections of the curriculum guide and the activity guide, Aboriginal people

disappear from the story. This omission in itself is significant, but what is telling is when, how, and most importantly, why it happens.

Even in Unit One, which has as its main focus the nature of the encounter of between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans, Aboriginal people drop out of the discussion as the main focus shifts to a French/English tension and the move to responsible government after the American War of Independence. Beginning on page 132 the guide directs students and teachers to focus on the complexity for the British government of having to govern a colony made up of two incompatible cultures: the French and English, while at the same time dealing with the demand for more democratic rights. In the last 13 pages of a 42-page unit the guide mentions Aboriginal people only twice. One of those times is to emphasise that Aboriginal people, along with women, had no say in the growing challenge to the oligarchies in Upper and Lower Canada. However, the guide does not include exercises or value issues to accompany that comment. Instead the guide directs students to know about the emergence of new interest groups, which do not include Aboriginal peoples, but do include newly arriving immigrants who want access to either crown or clergy controlled land.

The omission or inclusion of Aboriginal peoples from the narrative is indicative of two things. First from the traditional Western view, the early colonial period has always been where Aboriginal content fits in, and therefore this guide follows that same pattern, and because it is the responsibility of Saskatchewan Learning to increase the amount of content, this is the logical places for it to happen. Secondly, Aboriginal people fit in at this time because they are critical to

the teleological nature of the narrative. They are in a sense one of the building blocks or progressive steps along the linear story. This pattern repeats itself when the story of Canada moves west and treaties are made with other First Nations. So the guide includes Aboriginal peoples when they can be a logical component of the linear and progressive narrative. However, as soon as they are not part of the march of progress, and any discussion of Aboriginal people falls out of place with the narrative of progress, they disappear from that story, as though for decades, and even centuries at a time, they are a people without history.

In the other units the pattern not only continues, but is also more acute. Unit Two of the Activity Guide offers an information sheet for students: "Chronology of Significant Events Constitution Act of 1791 To Confederation," which provides a time line, which is teleological in and of itself, but is significant in that the death of Shawnadithit who is referred to as "the lone, remaining Beothuk" (2-5) is the only reference to Aboriginal peoples before mention of the Treaties and the Northwest Resistance. Therefore, according to this handout from 1791 to 1871 only one event involving Aboriginal people, tragic though it was, merits any mention. Not only is this the only event mentioned, but also the guides offer no explanation for it, or other reference to it. This is because teleology does not allow it. The Unit "Road to Democracy" has no space or time to ask questions which do not support the progress being made in creating Canada. A question asking who or what was responsible for the loss of an entire population of people would force a counternarrative to occur because it would disrupt the teleological discourse of Euro-Canadian progress and accomplishment.



Proof of this comes from another information sheet in the same unit “Growth of Democracy” which teleologically lists each major development in democratic Canadian history from 1660 to 1867. Aboriginal people do not appear in that list. I am not challenging or offering a particular historical interpretation of content; which content is appropriate and which is not, is not the issue. Instead I am emphasising that the choices of that content and how it is presented betray biases which contradict other educational philosophies such as those established by Saskatchewan Learning in regards to social studies, education in general, and Aboriginal students. So in the case of those two timelines, it is not simply a matter of saying that we need to add more Aboriginal content. Though that would not make matters worse, it would not change the message, the tone, the language, metaphors and logic that is directing students towards an already agreed upon ending. Therefore, these examples are not wrong because they left something out, but are instead examples of how teleology works.

The inability to include content and perspective about Aboriginal peoples is even more pronounced in Units Three and Four. Unit Three, "External Forces and Domestic Realities" covers the time period from 1900 to the 1940 plus has a large section dealing with the development of Universal Medicare and the "Social Safety Net" after the Second World War. From pages 303 to 371, the guide mentions Aboriginal people and culture only on two pages, 369 and 370. The topic of Aboriginal people as a group enters into discussion only at the end of the unit in a topic dealing with post-war prosperity, and its relationship to the development of government policy in regards to social programs.

Activity 11 in the activity guide parallels this part of the guide. After acknowledging that the general level of prosperity improved in Canada by the 1950s the guide switches gears and focuses on those groups which did not share in the overall prosperity. According to the guide these groups, "could include: Aboriginal peoples, rural Canadians, northern Canadians: newly arrived immigrants, and the Maritime Black community" (p. 369; Activity Guide, p. 3-75). The two guides then suggest that students can research the causes of that unequal distribution of wealth. The assignment is not incorrect in recognising the need for students to address this situation, but in regards to Aboriginal peoples the answer is reflected in the level of representation in the guides. As in the guides, Aboriginal people at this time in Canadian history were considered to be a disappearing people. They rejoin the guides' narrative of the 1950's when they can be included into the story of Canadian economic and social progress which focuses on the issue of prosperity within the debate over democratic socialism and the private or market ideology. Colonialism as a cause of the unequal prosperity is not addressed by the guides because the topic is not about Aboriginal peoples but instead is about Euro-Canada's changing social, political and economic prosperity after the Second World War. Therefore Aboriginal people though mentioned by the guides are only props that help to move the teleological narrative forward and the real reason for their poverty, colonialism, is not addressed.

Unit Four like the previous unit continues the same approach. The unit "The Forces of Nationalism" covers the years from the end of the Second World War to the 1990s with an emphasis on the concept of nationalism in the context of both

foreign relations and domestic circumstances involving English Canada and Quebec. As with the previous unit Aboriginal people are left out of most of the story. In the "Overview of the Unit" (pp. 403-404) the topics range from the impact of Canada's relationship with the United States, including the formation of NATO and NORAD, through to the rise of the Parti Quebecois and the Reform party. In the final statement of the overview the guide declares that, "The future of the nation will depend greatly on the response of Canadians to the challenge of Quebec francophone nationalism and the challenge of regional disparity." (p. 404). Aboriginal people in this two-page overview do not warrant discussion. As in the previous unit Aboriginal people either do not serve the narrative or if they do they function as secondary props to the story.

This pattern is apparent in one of the exercises dealing with Quebec separatism and the concept of ethnic nationalism. In this case, the guide automatically assumes the concept of a national character exists because the assignment is set up to examine how "forces" such as ethnic nationalism "question the continued viability of the Canadian nation" (p. 428). Both the guides address the position and role of First Nations as an example of an ethnic group asserting their own nationalism. This exercise is a microcosm of the issues I have identified. Aboriginal peoples, for example, are not given the same status as Quebec nationalists because they are used only as an example of an ethnic or interest group. Therefore, the issues which surrounds them are secondary and temporary to what the Guide really wants to look at: the nature of French separatism. This conclusion is confirmed at the end of this process where the curriculum guide recommends the

use of Activity Eight, a dialectic exercise, to examine the history of French/English relations. The activity guide provides information sheets, which describe key events as far back as the British conquest, for the research. These handouts and the exercises for the most part do not mention Aboriginal people, and therefore the teleological pattern demonstrated above is repeated. Because Aboriginal people are not necessary for the point of this story they are left out or used as secondary props to support the conclusion of the story.

### **3.4.3 Arriving at the End of the Road**

The domination of national decision making by any one segment of the population or any one region, as existed at the time of Confederation, has been challenged throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New realities will not permit such a closed process aimed at nation-building. Populations, such as women, First Nations peoples, visible minorities, and labour, who have felt marginalized in terms of national and societal decision making, continue to challenge systems and institutions that impede their quest for equality of opportunity. (Saskatchewan, 1997b, p. 503)

The above quotation from Unit Five provides an example of the guides' attempts to address the position of Aboriginal peoples in contemporary Canada. The section that the above quotation comes from contains the language of teleology and nation building. Statements such as, "Our nations future will greatly depend on how the constituent populations interact" and in the reference in the foundational objectives sections to "the Canadian community" and the need " to debate what it means to be a Canadian" betray a teleological perspective because the guide still espouses the same Canadian identity from Unit One (pp. 503, 506 & 507). Therefore, even with the inclusion of contemporary Aboriginal concerns and

issues, the position of Aboriginal peoples as represented in the guide has not changed. They are still the "other".

In contrast to Units Three and Four and in common with Units One and Two, Unit Five has large sections devoted to Aboriginal topics, content and perspective. The content itself is straightforward information highlighting changes that have occurred in Canada in the last 40 years. These include the impact and rejection of the White Paper on Indian Policy introduced in 1969, the recognition of Aboriginal Rights by the 1982 Constitution Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the emergence of Aboriginal political and social activism pushing for land claims, self government and an overall increase in recognition of the place of Aboriginal people in Canada (pp. 512-526). The unit also includes an overview of the more aggressive political activism centred around the Lubicon Cree, the James Bay hydro-electric project, and the confrontation at Oka.

Although the above topics are valid and important areas of study for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, the approach for analysing these topics endorses and supports Euro-Canadian national identity. One example of this occurs when students are asked to compare and contrast the "societal assumptions concerning the Aboriginal population during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century...with contemporary assumptions held at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (p. 523). This exercise focuses an analysis on how these changes have occurred and what are some of the forces involved in those changes.

The influence of the American Civil Rights Movement, the process of decolonization occurring throughout Africa and Asia, the greater number of people receiving a higher education, the mass media, and general North

American prosperity, all influenced public perception and assumptions concerning progress and creating a better society. (p.523)

Although this exercise has some validity there are several areas of concern. First as this quotation demonstrates the exercise has more to do with how Euro-Canadians responded to the need for change than it is about Aboriginal peoples. Secondly, Aboriginal peoples are in this exercise still defined by the assumptions and perceptions Euro-Canadians and lastly the term "creating a better society" is part of the guide's teleological direction towards "a distinct Canadian experience" (p. 103). In this exercise students learn that Euro-Canadians define Canada for good or for bad.

In this exercise on changing assumptions and perceptions the guide continues this line of thinking when it asks students to consider, as they do the analysis, "mainstream society's expectations of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society" and "the consequences of social change for the entire Canadian community" (p. 525). In the second part of this assignment Aboriginal peoples are again defined within an Euro-Canadian context. The guide instructs groups of students to report their findings concerning how assumptions about Aboriginal peoples have changed. There are no suggested strategies for further analysis because the assignment's main focus is not Aboriginal culture and history but how and why Euro-Canadian society changed its definition of Aboriginal peoples. Because students have been directed towards an agreed upon conclusion, the Canadian nation, an analysis serves no purpose. It is worth noting that there is no activity in the Activity Guide relating directly or indirectly to any Aboriginal topic, perhaps again because the future of Canada, having already been determined,

allows for a discussion of Aboriginal people, but no real alternative analysis.

Therefore, the guide can look at how Aboriginal peoples now exist in a different site within Canada, but Canada itself has not changed.

This observation is further confirmed in Unit Five by other developments. Like the other units, the guide drops Aboriginal content and perspective in some sections of the unit and inserts it into other sections dealing with such things as The 1982 Constitution Act, The Meech Lake Accord and the Charlottetown Accord, once again confirming that Aboriginal content is included when it adds to, or is critical to advancing the Canadian story. In the activity guide this tendency is more pronounced due to its teleological nature and the most teleological part of the activity guide, the timelines of significant events. For example, in a unit dealing with the contemporary era there is only one reference to Aboriginal peoples in a three-page list of significant domestic events and policies from 1960 to 1995. The event listed was the attempt by the federal government to implement the White Paper of 1970 on Aboriginal Affairs.

Even in areas that do not deal with Aboriginal peoples, immigration, minority rights, and national unity, the process of establishing the national identity and "othering" Aboriginal people continues. In a section of Unit Five dealing with Canada's economic status in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the activity guide asks students to "explore the historical and contemporary role of government in securing the economic well-being [of the] Canadian nation" (p. 5-23). As part of the assignment students are to "investigate the role of government during specific historical periods" (p. 5-24). The historical periods include the colonial period, Confederation

up to the turn of the century, the time period before the First World War, and several more time periods up to the present age. One of the sub-tasks that students are asked to do is to “identify the major challenges facing society during the particular historical period” (p. 5-24). As with other examples, the guide supplies no definition to suggest what or whose society the students are looking at during a particular historical time period. Are students to assume that the “society” of the colonial era and the Confederation era are the same, or that either one is the same as contemporary Canadian society?

In earlier instructions in the same assignment students are asked to “generate a list of services and programs, either operated or financed by government, that provide for the well-being of individual citizens and regions of the nation” (p. 5-23). These might include public service jobs, taxation policies and government programs. These instructions prompt students to look at parallels between the present and the past. Given that the past involved periods where the economic interest of Aboriginal people were not looked after then students can draw the conclusion that the “well-being” of Canadians once again does not apply to Aboriginal people. In fact it would not be impossible, given what was discussed in Unit Two, that students could determine that one of the challenges the government faced in the colonial or Confederation period was the confiscation of Aboriginal land to pave the way for the economic well-being of non-Aboriginal Canadians, and therefore the guide excludes Aboriginal people from this sense of Canada.



The guides summarise all the above examples in the final recommended teaching and evaluation strategies for Unit Five. These exercises wrap up both Unit Five and the whole guide in one teleological and nation building process. In this case the students analyse the "key societal relationships that are addressed in the Canadian Studies 30 Course" (p. 553). These key societal relations are identified and were established both in earlier parts of the guide and in the activity guide, and provide an ongoing structure to the analysis. Those relationships involved the "relationship between the members of a society and the societal decision making that impacts their lives; the relationship between the people and the land; the relationship among the members of a society; and, the relationship of the society with other societies"(p. 553). In this assignment, students "discuss how various generations of Canadians have defined those relationships" (p. 553).

To help the students with the assignment the activity guide provides a three page handout " Student Information Sheet: A Canadian Economic Development Timeline" (pp., 5-41 & 5-43). According to the curriculum guide the handout "provides students with a model chronology of key events, personalities, developments, and issues that have shaped the nation's economic history and well being" (p. 553). Students then use this model to create other timelines that highlight Canada's development using the "key societal relations" as a "focus" for each timeline (p. 553). Students are further encouraged to use the overview found in each unit as sources of information when making the time line. The question then arises, what is the significance of this assignment? As with the steps found throughout the guide the students create a time line that has a teleological approach

to Canadian history that validates itself by providing a confirmation of the conclusion and the steps that have been used to reach that conclusion

This teleological approach continues in one last exercise of Unit Five. In this assignment students are either reminded or told that some Canadians identified the post World War Two era as a time of “national optimism and opportunity” and as the guide points out “people often see the past as the ‘good old days’” (p. 555). The guide then suggests that Canadians in the last part of the twentieth century have faced many “challenges” but there does not appear to be the same level of national confidence as there once was. In response to this assertion the guide asks students to “identify factors and conditions that would promote a sense of confidence for the individual citizen” (p. 555). Once again the guide has made many assumptions about the nature of a Canadian national identity. As with previous exercises the purpose of this exercise is to confirm the “Distinct Canadian Experience” that the guide set out on the first page.

This assumption is confirmed by the guides' instructions on how to set up the criteria and the possible examples. The guides instructions are as follows: "Have the class construct criteria to evaluate the well-being of the nation during the different decades of the 20th century. The criteria should be distinctively Canadian in that they focus on Canadian issues such as culture and identity" (p. 555). The guide offers a list of possible criteria and includes such things as access to Canadian content in the media; rates of unemployment, immigration, family income, and crime; technological advances; educational opportunities; major economic developments; societal issues; and Canadian accomplishments. Once the

class has agreed upon a criterion they then create an analytical grid to determine "whether a particular decade was a decade of opportunity or of a challenge" (p. 556). To the guide's credit, it does offer students the chance to anticipate the future, but given that it has already mapped out the past and the present how will future be any different? The guide will continue to normalize and naturalize the dominant position of Euro-Canadians in the narrative of Canadian history and Aboriginal students will not feel that their culture and history is part of that narrative. If the criterion of this assignment is distinctly Canadian then what does that mean for people whose cultures were excluded from that experience?

### **3.5 Dialectic Reasoning**

The nature of teleology works as a tool to maintain the colonial dichotomy between the colonized and the colonizer by giving the grand narrative of Euro-Canadian dominance the appearance of a natural and normal occurring phenomenon. However, the dialectic offers a more specific validation of the inevitability of Western achievement through the use of logic. Nevertheless, the results are the same. Contrary to the guide's intentions the dialectic will not lead to original or creative thinking in relation to Euro-Canadian/Aboriginal history. Like teleology, and as an extension of it, the dialectic will function as a tool of colonialism by reconfirming, under the guise of logic, the inevitability of Euro-Canadian domination.

This reconfirmation occurs because the dialectic, as a methodology of reasoning and investigation, when linked with history, strives, or searches for a better, or more complete level of 'truth' and understanding, which suggests that past

occurrences and developments are parts or pieces leading to higher levels of such things as consciousness and existence (Ollman, 1993). Though the guide's definition of dialectic does not specifically associate itself with this type of description, I am arguing that it cannot escape this tendency due to historical traditions and origins of the dialectic. The result of this tradition or system of reasoning, then, is that once again colonialism is rationalized away, as an occurrence, or phenomenon, as it is naturally absorbed, or in dialectic terminology, "sublated" into a higher or new "unity" (Sciabarra, 2000, pp. 64 & 65). The higher or new unity would be the Euro-Canadian nation. Understanding how this process occurs requires an analysis of the Guide's definition of dialectic and the historical implications of dialectics.

### **3.6 Dialectic Reasoning and Saskatchewan Learning**

Why is Saskatchewan Learning emphasizing dialectical thinking and evaluation? According to the curriculum guide (1997b) "Dialectics and its related processes of creative problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution are logical extensions of hypothesizing and analyzing" (p. 12). The skill of dialectic thinking will allow students "to analyze and evaluate competing arguments with the purpose of determining which argument is better" and as result, "prepare them to play a significant role in the affairs of Canadian society." (p.12). When students learn dialectic reasoning they acquire a logical system of analysis to evaluate the "carefully crafted arguments supporting various points of view" about complicated issues in Canadian society. (p. 12). When they apply dialectic reasoning to historical discussion and analysis, students are to "Note that dialectics is not just an

exercise in debating opposing points of view with the goal of 'proving' the other side 'wrong'. It is rather a system that allows one to identify the merits of each viewpoint and evaluate each viewpoint's supporting arguments and evidence" (Saskatchewan Education, 1997a, p. 1-29). Therefore, it would appear that dialectic reasoning is a good thing. However, when this reasoning is applied to the recommended topics in the guide that deal with the encounter between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans, the dialect functions to reconfirm the dominant position of Euro-Canadian culture. To understand how this occurs it becomes necessary to look at other definitions of the dialectic and its place in the history of Western thought.

### **3.7 The Difficulty in Defining Dialectics**

The purpose of this part of the thesis is not to prove that the guide's definition of dialectic is wrong, but only that like all definitions of dialectic there appears to be room for reinterpretation. This room for interpretation occurs because if there is one thing scholars agree on in respect to the dialectic, it is that there is no one standard interpretation or definition. This vacillation then both validates and challenges the definition of dialectic provided by the guide in that as J. D. G. Evan's suggests "[it] is a piece of intellectual currency which, like the currency of cash, is more used than understood" (Evans as cited in Sciabarra, 2000, p. 19). Sciabarra further indicates that even "the supreme dialectician himself, Hegel, thought that dialectic had been 'most misunderstood by ancient and modern thinkers alike' (Hegel cited in Sciabarra, 2000, p. 19). Put another way, "It is all things to all men: to some, the most rigorous procedure for exact and cogent

thinking; to others, a way of getting outside the established rules..." (Rescher, 1977, p. xi). These scholars are not alone in their assessment, because many others also assign varied meanings and interpretations to the dialectic (Bailey, 2003; Ballard, 1955; Desmond, 1998; Hammer, 1991; Ollman, 1993)

Although one scholar, Karl Popper, can emphasize the "dialectic triad: thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis" (Popper, 1940, p. 404), another, Bertell Ollman (1993), states that, "Dialectic is not a rock-ribbed triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis that serves as an all-purpose explanation..."(p. 10). How far these many definitions can go is perhaps best exemplified by Roy Bhaskar who in *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*, suggests that his "critical realist dialectic" is different than any other "preexisting form of dialectic" (Bhaskar, 1993, p. 1). As this statement indicates, not only is it possible to have a different sense of dialectic, but also it is also possible to have different dialectics. This conclusion is crucial in explaining how the dialectic functions as a colonial tool.

The difficulty in determining a definition of dialectic results from how it has been used throughout history by different philosophers and practitioners. "Dialectic has a plurality of meanings which in some respects define the repertoire of possible ways of thinking offered to us by the philosophical tradition" (Desmond, 1998, p. 171). Tracing the history of dialectics in Western thought often becomes an exercise in the history of Western thought itself because dialectical thinking has been a critical part Western philosophy. The guide's claim that the dialectic is this or that can be accepted, or furthered challenged, due to its varied

uses and interpretations throughout history. Sciabarra provides a summary of the breadth of the dialectic.

From Zeno's paradox of motion to Ayn Rand's epistemological insights, dialectics has manifested itself in numerous ways. Before Plato, dialectics was seen as a technique of interrogation, a question-and-answer method designed to make explicit the many different ways of looking at an issue. Plato saw this technique as a means of grasping transcendent truth by comprehensively tracing interconnections within an organic unity. Aristotle achieved the crucial breakthrough when he severed the concept from Plato's totalism and provided it with a concrete role in the analysis of real world objects, events, issues, and problems. The Scholastics followed suit by applying Aristotle's techniques to Biblical texts. They inadvertently ignited a hermeneutical war on the Church, a precondition for the secular Renaissance that followed. In the modern era, Kant resurrected the concept and linked it to a concern for 'allness,' or totality, and Hegel used it against Kant and his formalized dualisms. Marx brought the concept in to the realm of social inquiry, and even classical liberals and libertarians have used its techniques in their defense of the free society. (p. 142)

As the above quotations indicate, no simple solution or answer to what dialectics is or what it can be used for exists. This aspect is significant because I consider that its application to historical contexts in the guide and the understanding of Canadian history is problematic for its representation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. This problematic characteristic, which relates to the further rationalizing of colonial power, is apparent in the historical roots of the dialectic and how it has been used in Western thought. Nevertheless, before I can demonstrate this position I need to show where some of the common understandings of the methodological orientation of dialectic reasoning can be found in sources other than the guide. By doing this, the problematic nature of the dialectic, within the context discussed above, will become more apparent.

### **3.8 Finding Common Ground About Dialectics**

Although scholars do not agree on one solid interpretation of dialectics, they tend to agree on several basic characteristics about dialectics that supports many of things said about it in the guide. Bertell Ollman (1993) in his attempt to pin down a definition states that, "First and foremost, and stripped of all qualifications added by this or that dialectician, the subject of dialectics is change, all change, and interaction, all kinds and degrees of interaction" (p. 23). Bhaskar also indicates that "In its most general sense, dialectic has come to signify any more or less intricate process of conceptual or social (and sometimes even natural) conflict, interconnection and change, in which the generation, interpenetration and clash of oppositions...plays a key role" (p.3) Therefore as these two quotations indicate dialectical thinking is about understanding change and how to interpret the forces that cause that change. This assessment is similar to the guide's goals of preparing students to deal with complex issues and "competing arguments" which determine how students interpret Canada's past, present and future (Saskatchewan Education, 1997b, p. 12)

The guide also recommends the use of dialectical reasoning because it provides a logical system of analysis for complex issues. Methodologically, scholars also support dialectic reasoning. In defending his interest in dialectics Sciabarra (2000) indicates that it is "...the only methodological orientation that compels scholars toward a comprehensive grasp of the many factors at work in a given context" (p. 2). In a similar vein Hammer and McLaren (1991) stress that dialectics is "a heuristic device that can enable teachers, researchers, and students



to interrogate and transform” new ways of thinking and “...to rethink social problems in a more contextual and critical way” (p. 23). This observation occurs because as the guide, and Ted Bailey (2003) stress, dialectical thinking “involves seeing things from both sides of the relationship at once, as both separate and unified, as positive yet in the negative” (p. 134). The guide provides the students with an extensive method for checking the validity of opposing view points by evaluating not only facts but ethical and moral positions as well. These tests require students to evaluate their positions and conclusions by changing their perspectives. This idea of shifting perspective to test the universal validity of an argument can be traced back to Aristotle. “Hence when we come upon a paradox, ...It is incumbent on us to engage in a process of abstraction, a form of testing that requires us to change our context and shift our vantage point in order to resolve the puzzle” (Sciabarra, 2000, p. 32). It would seem that the guide, supported by dialectical scholars, has found a method for teaching critical thinking. For the most part I would agree with the guide, and those ideas I have referred to. What is also apparent in the work of these scholars, however, is that the dialectic is problematic and this problematic nature impacts the guide's representation of Aboriginal history and culture.

### **3.9 The Problematic Nature of Dialectics.**

One thing that becomes apparent when studying dialectics is that there appears to be a lot of confidence in the dialectic’s ability to solve problems of analysis, research, understanding, interpretation and truth. Equally significant is the thought or expression that dialectics has not been just ‘right’. There is an

implication that there have been problems. These problems manifest themselves in a postcolonial analysis. For example Hammer and McLaren (1991) indicate that they will “rethink various commonplace formulations of the dialectic” and that to understand their “revised” application they will need to deal with “some of the current misperceptions of the dialectic” (pp. 23 & 24). The implication is that some things related to the dialectic are problematic. Hammer and McLaren are representative of the complexity of dialectics in that they are advocating for dialectical reasoning if it is done right. Doing it right means that a dialectical analysis of a problem such as race relations avoids the “oppositional” or binary characteristics, which pit two racial groups against each other without dealing with the actual problems of “illegitimate power, privilege, domination and oppression” (Hammer & McLaren, 1991, pp. 41-43). The authors argue that the proper application of the dialectic will avoid this problem by exposing a “hierarchical positioning of individuals within the social order on the basis of race, class, and gender” (p. 40). In contrast, I am arguing that the guide’s method of dialectic reasoning is binary because the very things which Hammer and McLaren recommend avoiding cannot be avoided because they are built into the dialectic. Hammer and McLaren indicate that the traditional “Hegelian triad” is too “linear” and “one dimensional” (p. 40), but as other scholars argue Western thought and history cannot escape the influence of Hegel, and it is the Hegelian influence which overshadows the guide's attempt to apply the dialectic to Aboriginal/ Euro-Canadian historical relations (Willinsky, 1998; Young, 1990).

I am not suggesting that the guide's dialectic strategy is that of Hegel's, but only that, like other dialectical interpretations, some of those characteristics associated with Hegel, along with other historical aspects of the dialectic, cannot be avoided. The first is the tendency towards binary opposition, which in the case of the guide pits Aboriginal peoples against the Canadian nation. In Unit One-activity seven of the activity guide, students are given an opportunity to practice dialectic reasoning by applying it as a methodology to Canadian history. They determine if the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples, and Europeans and Euro-Canadians was one of accommodation or assimilation. A post-colonial perspective might ask what is the point of the exercise? Regardless of what students come up with as an answer, what have they learned? Does it matter if students' answers are accommodation or assimilation if they do not understand the nature of oppression in the lives of both those who lived at that time and today? What is confirmed to the student is that Canada's history can be defined in oppositional terms: with one representing Canada and the second side as the "other" or non-Canadian. The guide reinforces this representation through instructions to apply the same criterion to contemporary Canada, with the implication that natural binary opposites still determine how Canada is defined. Through this exercise the guide ignores the history of oppression and the exercise of power that accompany either accommodation or assimilation or rationalizes it away as an intellectual exercise, which under the heading of critical and creative thinking confirms the dominant positioning of Euro-Canadian history.

Whether students chose to select accommodation or assimilation as the operational relationship between Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal peoples, or even a combination of both, appears to be an important lesson for students. The need to chose is important given the definitions of accommodation and assimilation supplied by the guide in that, one would assume, the former is better than the later. However, as in the above example, choosing will not have a significant impact on what the lesson actually teaches Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, because the lesson is not about relations in the past, but about nation building and making the inevitable march of progress appear both natural and normal. The second problematic aspects of this dialectic exercise is that it allows the guide to construct and reinforce a Euro-Canadian national identity. This construction occurs because the dialectic subsumes or sublates into a synthesis, the events, knowledges and peoples of its analysis so what they originally were is less important than what they will become: the Euro-Canadian nation. This aspect of the dialectic to move onto higher levels of history, existence, knowledge, or consciousness is deeply imbedded not only in the works of Hegel, but in the very history of dialectic.

As I have said above, the nature of the diversity of understandings of the dialectic allows me to suggest that the guide's use of the dialectic falls within the dialectic tradition of Hegel even though the guide makes no direct reference to Hegel or his dialectic. If there is not direct reference to Hegel then how can I make this claim? "Hegel believed that history involved the resolution of inconsistencies of individual thought and that this was achieved by dialectical thinking. Of course, Hegel was an idealist, so he believed that he had discovered a logical process that

under-pinned human affairs throughout history that would lead to an absolute position of truth and harmony" (Bailey, 2003, p. 135). Like all dialectical uses, the strategy in the guide is prone to this type of thinking. Therefore, this position has significant implications when the dialectic's oppositional structure of analysis is applied to Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian history and peoples. To the students in the classroom it implies that everything that happened in the past occurred for a specific reason. The specific reason is to build towards that higher existence, or society. This dialectic process serves to cover over the tragedies of the past and to validate the present and future with little real regard for the inequality of that past. To demonstrate how the dialectic reflects this Hegelian vision of history requires a further explanation of Hegel's dialectic, an analysis of how the guide uses the dialectic, and an assessment of why the guide's version of dialectic cannot escape the influence of Hegel.

"Dialectic, like love, has a good and bad reputation" (Ballard, 1955, p. 205) and so does Hegel. "Whether we love or hate Hegel, it is difficult to ignore him. We cannot neglect him if only because of his enormous historical significance. Most forms of modern philosophy have either been influenced by Hegel or reacted against him" (Beiser, 1993, p. 1). As these quotations would indicate, any dialectic orientation dealing with history would be hard pressed to escape the influence of Hegel. Hammer and McLaren point to his widespread influence in philosophy and his impact on the ideas of Marxism, socialism, and even fascism (Hammer & McLaren, 1991). Some, as Sciabarra (2000) relates, even goes as far as to blame Hegel for things such as Nazism and Communism.

The philosopher Ayn Rand considers "Hegel as second only to Plato" (Rand cited in Sciabbarra, 2000p. 60) for intellectual crimes against humanity.

Sciabbarra, who is intent on showing how his interpretation of dialectics can escape Hegel, nonetheless provides an indication of Hegel's influence.

The dialectical turn in philosophy has had a significant impact on many schools of thought in the years after Hegel. So strong is Hegel's influence that one can detect traces of it in such diverse thinkers as Marx, Menger, Bergson, Whitehead, Blanshard, Adler, Rescher, Harris, Collingwood and Gadamer. Even those not explicitly following in Hegel's footsteps can be said to have been deeply affected by his resurrection of ancient dialectical categories (p. 84).

So if we can assume with a certain confidence that the dialectical reasoning recommended by the guide did not escape the presence of Hegel then it is necessary to expand on why his influence is so critical to the representation of Aboriginal history in that guide. According to Hegel the dialectic process functions as process whereby the "driving force of history" is "Absolute knowledge" which is a time and place where "pure reason" gains absolute "ascendancy" (Terray, 1990, p. 2). In this development "Each of the great periods of history is thus seen as one of the stages in this process, one of the phases of the movement by which reason takes control of the world and submits it to its law" (Terray, 1990, p. 2). This "spirit" of reason is located within the national consciousness of nations at different stages of development, and "Naturally, the various nations do not make equal progress. For each stage, one nation acts as model and guide, providing us with a criterion by means of which we can judge to what extent the other nations' achievements match up to the demands of historical development" (Terray, 1990, p. 2). However, all these nations and epochs are temporary and partial because they are destined to

disappear and become part of the next stage of human history, which continues to strive towards the goal of absolute knowledge. Hegel's vision of history is teleological in that it has "an ultimate direction and goal" (Hammer & McLaren 1991, p. 29). To the Euro-Canadian student this vision of history may appear to be logical because it reflects a belief in progress and change, which is reflected in the narrative structure of the Guide's account of Canadian history? However, from the perspective of the Aboriginal student, or the non-Aboriginal student studying Aboriginal history, it becomes an elaborate and seemingly logical way to rationalize the oppression, domination, and disappearance of Aboriginal history over the last 500 years.

In the dialectical exercise provided in the guide no discussion occurs about the grandiose pursuit of absolute knowledge; however, the underlying message of the exercise is that the "sustained contact" between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian peoples serves as a stepping stone to the creation of a higher order of existence, which is the Euro-Canadian nation. For example, the knowledge objective of the activity guide states "The students will know that the history of Canada has, and continues to be shaped by the interaction among the many peoples of Canada" (p. 1-46)." Students should also know "that dialectics is not just an exercise in debating opposing points of view with the goal of 'proving' the other side 'wrong'. It is rather a system that allows one to identify the merits of each viewpoint..." (1-29). Taken together this process begins to take on the characteristics of the Hegelian dialectic in that there is no right or wrong, but only a coming together of peoples, ideas and conflicts melding together to build a new nation.

In the exercise the guide asks students to evaluate whether the relationship between Aboriginal and Europeans was marked by accommodation, assimilation, or in true dialectic fashion a "different viewpoint [that] is superior" to the other two (p. 1-49). The answers to this question function to subsume Aboriginal culture and history within an emerging larger Euro-Canadian culture and as a result directs students to incorrectly conclude that the Euro-Canadian synthesis is a step towards a higher existence; a better world, and an overall achievement of superiority. To understand how students are led to this conclusion one has to again go back to the guide's definition of assimilation. According to the guide, assimilation, as a concept, is a valid option, and the definition of assimilation refers to one people as "inferior" and the other as either "dominant" or "superior" (p, 108). Therefore, students can conclude that if Aboriginal culture was, or is being assimilated, then it was, or still is inferior, while the culture doing the assimilating, the larger Euro-Canadian culture, must therefore be superior. As mentioned above it does not really matter which relationship the students chose because in the tradition of Hegel's concept of history, cultures were destined to disappear by becoming parts of new and better societies. This is the same message that the guide's dialectic exercise is sending to students. Aboriginal peoples and the world they had created, were, like the communities established by French and English colonizers, only a part, or piece, of an inevitable march of progress to the creation of the Canadian state. The result is that dialectics, like teleology functions as a tool of the Euro-Canadian discourse, by normalizing and naturalizing the destruction of the Aboriginal world



and at the same time reaffirming the dominant position of Euro-Canadians within the narrative of Euro-Canadian history.

# Chapter IV

## Conclusions

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to create a point of discussion and debate about Canadian history education. Specifically I have been interested in determining how the teaching of Canadian history impacts the education of Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan. This effort runs parallel with Saskatchewan Learning's goals, and efforts, to enhance the education of Aboriginal youth. Both Saskatchewan Learning and this thesis are working from the perspective that education in general has not benefited Aboriginal youth to the extent that it should, and in many instances has had a negative and hostile impact. Although these are strong statements, they are not meant to attack, but instead to help build better educational practices. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this summary it is helpful to examine why education in Saskatchewan has often failed to meet the needs of Aboriginal youth.

The failure of education to better serve Aboriginal youth has occurred for several reasons. First, the educational methodology used in Saskatchewan schools has for the most part been foreign to cultural practices of Aboriginal people. Methodology includes things such as the nature of instruction, evaluation, discipline, and can be extended to include the structure of the daily timetable and even the physical structure of the school and classroom. All these features reflect

an Euro-centric orientation that contradicts the traditional Aboriginal child-centered experiential mode of learning. Secondly, educational content in Saskatchewan schools has not invited Aboriginal students into the learning environment. The content of most curricula reflects an Euro-Canadian orientation and bias. Aboriginal people, stories, inventions, ideas, and images have not been a large part of many curricula. When Aboriginal youth have gone to school they have often found that they are learning about someone else's world, culture and history. This omission extends beyond content into a deeper understanding of perspective and values. Content that says nothing or little about who Aboriginal people are, and yet celebrates the achievements of Euro-Canadian culture, tells Aboriginal students that they are partaking in an educational experience which considers their culture values, and beliefs insignificant.

This description may no longer fit or be a fair assessment of the present educational practices in Saskatchewan classrooms because Saskatchewan Learning, school boards, schools and individual teachers have put in considerable effort to address the issues mentioned in the previous paragraph. Like other curricula the *Canadian Studies: History 30 Curriculum Guide* and the *History 30: Canadian Studies A Teacher's Activity Guide* have been designed to meet the needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. To meet the needs of Aboriginal students the guides have included Aboriginal content and perspective within their units and lessons. Although this is commendable I have argued that it will not be an effective way to invite Aboriginal students into a common learning experience that shares the values and traditions of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian history.

Chapters Two and Three of my thesis offer an analyses of how and why Aboriginal content and perspective does not transform the meaning of Canadian history. To start with I demonstrate how the guide does not, in any genuine way, offer an Aboriginal perspective. Attempts to do so are both superficial and commonly contradict themselves within the larger context of the guide. Typically, these contradictions occur in lessons where the guide discusses Aboriginal perspective and even provides an exercise to enhance understandings. However, the guide does not apply that perspective, on such things as land use and governance to issues or events in other parts of the Guide rendering that perspective insignificant.. These contradictions impact both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with equal force. Aboriginal student's worldview is not recognized as important, while Euro-Canadian students have their cultural perspective validated. Saskatchewan Learning has also included Aboriginal content as an agent of transformation and reform, but as with Aboriginal perspective it will not succeed.

That an educational transformation does not occur has less to do with any specific Aboriginal content, and more to do with the narrative structure and language of the guide, which operate as both a product of the historical tradition they originate from, and as agents that reinforces the same tradition. I argue that Canadian history is not an 'innocent discipline' that simply relates the facts, but is the story of European and Euro-Canadian achievement which was accomplished through the forces of imperialism and colonialism. To maintain that story of progress the guide relies on colonial tools of representation and at the same time

uses those tools to minimize and rationalize the tragedy of colonialism. This rationalization of colonialism is done primarily through language, which places Aboriginal history and peoples into a hierarchical and unequal relationship with Euro-Canadians and their history. The guide perpetuates this dichotomist relationship between colonizer and colonized by defining each culture within the concepts of time and place. The failure to address how this dichotomy has been, and is still functioning, in Canadian history and society, results in the failure of Aboriginal content to work as a transformational agent of change.

The structure and logic of the narrative, which function as inherent features of Western history also limit the impact of Aboriginal perspective and content. Similar to how language serves as a tool to maintain the colonial dichotomy, teleology and dialectic reasoning validate the dominant Euro-Canadian position in relation to Aboriginal peoples because both concepts work to make the story of progress and achievement appear natural, normal and perhaps most significantly inevitable. Teleology operates throughout the guide to give the content a sense of purpose and direction. That purpose allows the guide to format the story of Euro-Canadians as though it followed certain universal laws. This approach eliminates interpretations of the past that do not fit into the logic of the narrative, and makes Aboriginal content, and the actions of colonialism appear as necessary stepping stones towards the building of the Canadian nation. Dialectic reasoning, which is more specifically applied, functions in the same manner by using logic as a method to rationalize Euro-Canadian colonialism. The end result is that the Guide builds a sense of national destiny and accomplishment, but its construction either ignores,

minimalisms or subsumes Aboriginal content and perspective into the larger story of Euro-Canadian achievement. Underlying this construction of national identity is an unwillingness or inability to deal with the nature of colonialism, other than as something involving explorers and Jesuits, in both the past, and more importantly, the present

This analysis is as much, if not at times more, about Euro-Canadians than it is about Aboriginal people. The way the guide offers Canadian history is as equally significant for the Euro-Canadian as it is for the Aboriginal student, because it has the potential to show students how their identity and the identity of their culture are constructed. This has implications for their education and how they chose to participate in society. Influencing the role they play in society in a positive way is one of the purposes of education. Therefore coming to terms with identity production and the role of colonialism in our society is critical to enhance the Euro-Canadian understanding of what motivates Aboriginal peoples' desire for reform, and what should be the role of Euro-Canadians in that reform (Green, 1995 ).

## **4.2 Implications**

Where does this leave the implications for this study. First I have based this analysis on the curriculum and activity guides as a key, but not exclusive representation of Canadian history and the practices and beliefs of Canadian high school history teachers. A safe assumption could and should be made that there are teachers are operating outside of the framework provided by the guide.

Nevertheless, this analysis still offers a point of discussion for any teacher or person interested in Canadian studies and in particularly the teaching of Canadian

history. Even for those teachers who claim to already use their own counternarrative, this research will provide a starting point for further analysis. I would suspect that only a handful of teachers use the guide as their sole and literal source of Canadian history; nevertheless, they could compare their practices against this postcolonial analysis of the guide. By doing so it would be possible to establish a continuum, which could function as an expression of where teachers see themselves, and the practices associated with their teaching of Canadian history in regards to a postcolonial level of awareness. This hopeful thought may not reflect reality, but only teachers will be the creators of curriculum materials and strategies that can disrupt the dominant positioning of Euro-Canadian in Canadian history.

#### **4.3 Recommendations**

This topic is perhaps the most difficult part of the thesis. What can and should be done concerning the conclusions found in this thesis? I have provided an analysis that demonstrates areas of concern for the teaching of Canadian history in Saskatchewan high schools. The purpose of this research is to offer a point of discussion about the reform or transformation of the meaning of Canadian history education and the methodology which accompanies it. Discovering how Canadian history functions as a colonial discourse creates an opportunity for challenging that discourse. I call this disruption a counternarrative because it challenges the common narrative of Canadian history that is found in the curriculum guide. What might a counternarrative look like?

### **4.3.1 Rethinking the Narrative**

Perhaps a simple place to begin would be with a small piece of historical imagination. What would happen if we contemplated a narrative that was not written by Europeans and their descendants, but instead was written by Aboriginal peoples? What if this process had begun from the time of the first European arriving in what would become Canada, and continued to the present? Add to this that only Aboriginal peoples kept a written account or narrative of what has happened. We also have to assume that changing which culture did the writing did not change any events and all events, happenings and developments of the last 500 years occurred the same way. The only difference would be that Aboriginal people wrote down the records of the past. While this scenario might take a leap of imagination, it should take a lesser one to begin to see results.

What shape would the story of Canada assume? How would the narrative be different? The first thought that comes to mind is thinking about which events and developments would these different historians include, and which would they exclude? Would this different narrative be full of the same stories of triumph and achievement? Would they be given the same names, and how would they be described? The power of language to work as a tool of a dominant discourse becomes apparent in this situation. Verbs, nouns, and adjectives are not just chosen by chance: they transmit a variety of meanings. The logic and overall structure of the narrative would also be different. If there were only an Aboriginal account of the last 500 years, and it was the basis of a grade twelve curriculum, what would



the units be called? Would this guide, like the *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide*, constantly pose questions, and create exercises, requiring students to think about the role of minorities in relation to the will and desires of the majority. Would this Aboriginal curriculum call its second unit “The Road to Democracy?” I think this would be a great exercise for teachers and anyone else interested in Canadian history. An exercise like this creates room for a discussion about the power of language and demonstrates that the perspective of the creators of the narrative chooses, either unconsciously, or not, words and images which further support and strengthen their cultures identity.

#### **4.3.2 Rethinking Personal Practice.**

The most important factor regarding the implications of my research is how it influences what I do in the classroom. I have the luxury and the burden of being able to practice what I research. When I think about why I have chosen this particular area of study I have found that Willinsky's call for accountability provides a vehicle to express and attain some of the reforms which I think are necessary. By accountability Willinsky means that teachers need to provide students with an explanation of how the world became divided between people who have been labeled 'civilized' and those who have been labeled 'primitive' and 'backward'. Who created these terms and the criterion that has made these terms accepted as facts within the Western world? Determining how and why these terms were made, and how they were used is one way of inviting students into a new and different learning space. The benefit of this questioning will be that Aboriginal students can see that the school system is at least aware of its colonial

practices. This awareness provides a critical first step in creating a counternarrative curriculum which meets the goals, set out by Saskatchewan Learning for Aboriginal education in Saskatchewan. One of the lessons learned in this process is that the classifications Willinsky refers to are artificial constructs, and are not the product of universal laws of inevitability. This understanding will be equally important for the Euro-Canadian students. They need to see where the language of colonialism and oppression originated and how Euro-Canadian culture has exercised the power and privileges that comes from that language. Euro-Canadian students also need to see that these systems of classification are human and social constructs that shape reality as much as reflects it. They have to see how the dividing of the world has allowed them to enjoy their present standard of living and comfort. This aspect of discovering how the world was divided by language is attractive because it is attainable. However, what is the next step?

I believe the next step, after identifying, how language has divided the world would be to start on an original counternarrative. This counternarrative would go beyond the first step by creating a curriculum of Canadian history which would not need to explain and expose the tools of colonial power because they would not be there. Therefore, one of the characteristics this new counternarrative curriculum might have is a blending of the imaginative curriculum and the present *History 30: Canadian Studies Curriculum Guide*. This appraisal would force a constant reassessment of the language, logic, and images used to describe, explain, and analyze the past, present, and future. If the counternarrative avoided the dichotomy of colonizer and colonized, then the structure of teleology, and the

belief in progress and universal inevitabilities, could be challenged and escaped from. I use the word escape because personally I find the task of creating a counternarrative daunting. Just wanting to avoid the language and tools of colonialism is not enough. For myself, and I would assume many other Euro-Canadian teachers, the standard narrative has such sway over our own identity and mode of understanding that leaving it behind will require the passion and energy often associated with escaping from the grasp of a dominating force.

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