

Role Shock in Local Community Development Dynamics

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Recent developments in Canadian Indian education provide some otherwise unavailable opportunities to observe potentials for implementing significant changes in schools elsewhere. One domain of potential change, often considered by educators and others to be a desirable condition, is "local control." For all the rhetoric about local control of schooling, it is actually observable only in a few cases and very little description is available about the processes or problems of implementation. This paper describes the beginning of one such undertaking and illustrates how the unanticipated emergence of pervasive role shock inhibits the expected positive results from autonomous local control of schooling.

Les développements récents dans le domaine de l'éducation des indiens du Canada fournissent une occasion inespérée d'observer les possibilités de réaliser des changements significatifs dans d'autres écoles. Un des domaines où des changements seraient possibles voire souhaitables, de l'avis de nombreux enseignants et autres éducateurs, est celui de l'autonomie locale. Malgré toute la rhétorique entourant la question de l'autonomie locale de l'école, force nous est de constater que très peu de cas et d'études descriptives existent concernant les procédés et les problèmes relatifs à son implantation. Cet article expose les débuts d'une entreprise de ce genre et fait voir que l'apparition inopinée d'un conflit de rôle a empêché l'atteinte des résultats positifs que l'on espérait de l'autonomie locale de l'école.

A unique choice to assume local control of schooling is now available to Canadian Indians. Community development processes in assuming local control have model implications for all who see grass-roots participation as desirable. Control, in this context, refers to autonomy; no external educational hierarchy of authority is involved. Aoki (1973) identifies this as a process of devolution — not just decentralization, but complete freedom from the centralized bureaucracies that are characteristic of Canadian education. Local control has a high positive affective appeal to many people and is variously used as a political slogan or as a means of local community power manipulation (Fein, 1971; Repo, 1972), but it is difficult to conceive under existing school laws for any Canadians other than Indians or private, independent schools.

The idea is relatively new in Canada, emerging from the reform ethos of the 1960s into federal policy in the 1970s. Urion (1975) and Carney (1978) provide substantial reference to its genesis among Amerindian people in the Navajo Nation and its rapid spread in both the United States and Canada. The Canadian National Indian Brotherhood pro-

duced an eloquent philosophy-policy paper titled "Indian Control of Indian Education" (1973). A surge of interest and tentative new kinds of involvement of Indians in schooling has followed federal government promulgation of policy guidelines enabling local bands to assume such powers. In many places local control has been assumed for partial, peripheral aspects of schooling — e.g., preschools, adult education, "alternative" schools — but not many have assumed full control of the total schooling enterprise.¹

Assheton-Smith (1977) reviews various operational definitions of local community control, illustrating multiple problems of coming to grips with realities in assuming full decision-making power for school operations. Aside from a major study of the Navajo Rough Rock Demonstration School (Erickson, 1969), there is little documentation of the processes or problems in the relatively few cases of communities assuming local control of schools which are already in existence and have institutional histories as organizations within a centralized bureaucracy. This paper will describe the immediate antecedents to take-over of schooling in one community, the salient events of the first year of local control, and the manifestations of what is here called "role shock," which has had a powerful negative effect resulting in organizational malfunction. This is worth documenting because such problems are foreseeable and preventable only when one has some awareness of their nature and symptoms.²

Culture shock is a widely known phenomenon associated with entry into new cultural systems (Spradley & Phillips, 1972). Role shock is conceptually linked to culture shock in that it also generates anxieties, stress, and generalized personal trauma. A major difference is that culture shock usually is a function of not understanding configurations of behaviors and values which can be — and often are — learned by the neophyte who ultimately adjusts at least to a level of reducing internal stress. Culture shock can be rationalized as resulting from the strange ways of others to which the outsider temporarily can learn to adapt.

Role shock evolves as a cumulative set of frustrations and escalating stresses. It occurs when an individual accepts a status with a feeling of assurance that he or she can provide appropriate role behaviors, only to discover that others in the social situation do not accept those role behaviors as appropriate. Further, no corrective feedback is given, no "successful" models are available. There are only recurrent, consistently negative messages. Such individuals become increasingly aware of their inability to produce acceptable behaviors; at the same time, they are unable to ascertain just what corrections might provide more nearly acceptable role behaviors. These discomforts and stresses mount over time to generate ego anxiety. Our fundamental identity concepts are the cumulation of images reflected to us from others as a result of our personal configuration of role behaviors. Role shock produces an increasing sense of personal inadequacy which is threatening to psychological

stability. Predictably, strained communications, withdrawal, and incipient paranoia manifested by scapegoating are observed. Such behaviors are organizationally disruptive. When they become pervasive throughout an organization — school or any other — the organizational goals become unrealizable. This is what I refer to as “malfunction.”³

I first became aware of role shock in experiences of expatriate technicians — usually provided with the formal status of “expert” — working abroad at familiar tasks in unfamiliar socio-cultural contexts. Accustomed to a known supportive environment, levels of competence and communication among co-workers, and having ideal values of equity, accountability, and democracy, the experts frequently became tremendously frustrated in the foreign bureaucracies where their expert status was expected to overcome problems of low competence, cumbersome or variable communication channels, nepotism, and other unfamiliar cultural patterns. Although highly competent in their familiar work and living environment, nothing in their behavioral repertory sufficed to justify their new status as expert. This was frequently a cause of early termination (Byrnes, 1966).

I had not previously associated role shock with the dynamics of rapid social change and new institutional developments in our own society until I became aware of it as a phenomenon in this local control takeover of school — largely unrecognized and yet probably the determining variable in the development. Upon reflection, I realize that I have seen other indications of role shock in other kinds of new school enterprises — some of the Free School manifestations, innovative efforts and some other alternative modes of schooling. (See, for example, Burton, 1972, for a poignant description of collective trauma among a group trying to establish a new mode of schooling for their own children.) But it is only in this instance that I have actually observed the phenomenon emerge pervasively and from the beginning.

COMMUNITY SETTING AND DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND

This is a relatively remote, affluent native Indian reserve with considerable experience in self-generated, locally operated economic development during the preceding decade. Local government is the band council which, in addition to responsibilities delegated by the federal Indian Act, has been the corporate entity responsible for major economic developments such as a co-operative store, a cannery, a hotel and several other commercial enterprises. Each of these has been developed by a committee of the band council making various uses of management consultation firms and external expertise, but retaining control, management, and benefits within the band. No non-native persons or organizations have any economic enterprises in this community. The only resident non-native people are approximately 50 specialists — mostly teachers, but

including nurses and doctors, a minister, RCMP, and a few wives who acquired legal Indian status upon marriage.

A federal Indian Day School to Grade 8 operated for many years on the reserve. The situation here discussed did not actually begin as a plan to take over that school, although the idea that this might eventually happen had been in a few people's minds for some time. Growing feelings of dissatisfaction with the federal school had led key people to believe that somehow more local involvement in school had to come about. Major elements of dissatisfaction were high student failure rates and early dropout; a conventional public school curriculum with little or no relevance to local community life; high annual teacher turn-over with a disproportionate number of "foreign" teachers, many with minimal training and qualifications and all of whom tended to form their own little enclave within the teacherages clustered adjacent to school.

The band council appointed an Education Committee to try to establish a semi-formal linkage between community and school in hope of increasing involvement of community members and raising levels of awareness among both community and teachers about school potential. About this time the federal government generated policies of supporting cultural development activities among Indian groups and this band alertly took advantage of the new policies to establish a well-funded Cultural Education Centre directed by an administrative assistant who was also a member of the Education Committee. Linguistic, anthropological, and curriculum development competences were incorporated into their operations by contract employment of specialists in these fields for projects defined by the Cultural Education Centre. Extensive research, documentation, and compilation were accomplished in libraries, museums, and archives as well as by uses of local informants. As in many places, the native language was infrequently used in general community contexts and well known only among older people. Possibilities of revitalizing the language and the whole vista of cultural heritage learnings as a significant component of school came to be seen as feasible. The Cultural Education Centre and the Education Committee were not identical, but all local employees of the centre were members of the Education Committee.

School reactions to these developments were defensive. Educators could hardly oppose cultural heritage or native language, but they stoutly resisted suggestions for major reformulations of curriculum or school operations to accommodate such domains. The teachers' position generally was that those subjects should be treated as additional activities which might be included in school content when, and if, the basic curriculum imperatives were accomplished. In school terms, they were treated as cocurricular (meaning optional extras). Band committee suggestions about changes were met with defences of the existing patterns, growing quibblings about minor matters, and, ultimately, a sense of

hostility and almost total lapse of effective communication between school people and the band Education Committee.

Illustrative of the dimensions of differences were the primary teachers who asserted that as long as a majority of the first grade children were failing, it was a disservice to them to take time to introduce cultural studies. The Education Committee members by this time had sufficient awareness of learning theory and pedagogy to be firmly convinced that when a majority of normal first grade children are failed, there are some serious questions to be asked about the nature of the school and its teachers. (In that year, 1974-75, 32 of 36 first graders in the local school did not pass. The four who did pass were repeaters of first grade.) And yet there was nobody of whom to ask questions. Teachers explained children's failures as "not working up to standard" and felt no need to discuss the matter any further. The principal supported the teachers, most of whom were leaving at the end of the year anyhow. At that point, the level of expectations among members of both school and Education Committee groups were for negative reactions and likely hostility in any attempts at dialogue. Teachers retreated even more than previously from non-school community encounters.

TAKE-OVER: PREPARATION PHASE

The year of decision to take over full control of their school began with the usual large number of new teachers from the usual pool of federal civil servants. There had earlier been some vague discussions at regional DIA level about the Education Committee being involved in teacher interviews and selection, but this didn't happen. Teachers were sent, as usual, by the regional federal office without local consultation. When the first few weeks of school passed with recurring indications that the new faces at school were no more receptive to change than those whom they replaced, the dynamic for take-over became a determined movement. The Education Committee made the recommendation to the band chief and council. They approved, passed the necessary band council resolution, and designated the Cultural Education Centre's administrative assistant as co-ordinator of the take-over process. (The title "administrative assistant" was a bit ambiguous. That person in fact reported directly to the band chief and directed operations of the Cultural Education Centre where there was no other person of higher status.)

A management consultant firm which had worked on other band project developments was retained to help in contract negotiations with DIA. Under federal DIA policy, the band becomes an independent contractor to provide school services within a negotiated budget and for a stipulated population, but otherwise as locally determined. As long as budget accountability is maintained and "school keeps," there are no external constraints on the nature of school operation. The regional DIA

response was positive; they appeared eager to see the new policies implemented in a community with a history of other successful developments. The formal procedures were accomplished with surprising (to Education Committee members) speed.

A general community plebiscite was required; the vote was more than 10 to 1 in favor. The band council expedited necessary resolutions; by late winter the full-time activities of the administrative assistant/coordinator were planning and preparing for the new school operation. Other Cultural Education Centre members also devoted most of their time to this planning, which was monitored by weekly or more frequent meetings of the Education Committee (which was to become the first board of trustees of the new school). A sense of excitement and euphoria prevailed. They were a bit awed by how easily the process had begun as well as by the great responsibility implicit in the undertaking. People worked hard, many more hours than just regular working times.

Those involved were quite aware that their basic motivations — frustration and dissatisfaction with the existing school — were perhaps not the best basis for the new development. However, by this time they had extensive awareness of educational developments elsewhere and a feeling of reasonable assurance that these could be borrowed from for their own development. Without being too specific about future directions, “At least we can’t do worse . . .” was a most frequently heard projection for their future. A more positive public statement, incorporated into the contract, used the term “Community School,” and referred to “education for life in *this* community.” This was further explained as developing among students identity-enhancing knowledge of their own heritage, using community resources and data for basic skill learnings in school, revitalizing native language, and, ultimately, producing students who both valued school and became better equipped to make decisions about whether to continue living within the reserve community or “outside.”

Among Education Committee members statements seemed to be well-shared understandings. No more specific school policies or objectives were produced. The term “Community School” was adopted with these ideas in mind but without further definitions of operation.

First priorities in the spring and summer months prior to opening of the new school went to multiple details of budget preparation, negotiations with DIA, teacher interviews and new staff recruitment, and assuming control of the physical plant. The current school year had to be finished. Inventories of existing equipment and ordering of new supplies and equipment were completed for the existing school as well as for a new secondary facility under construction and for teacher-ages. Even those Cultural Education Centre members whose work basically was with resource materials were co-opted into the physical preparations. It was a hectic spring and summer for the small group involved in assuming, in the name of the band, full control of the school opera-

tions involving more than 250 students and 20 teachers. No serious problems emerged. Everyone worked perhaps harder than ever before at tasks which they had not previously dreamed of handling, yet outsiders who were at all connected with the development were favorably impressed with the diligence and thoroughness of the co-ordinator⁴ and other Education Committee members in getting tasks completed.

A Board of School Trustees (school board) was formally appointed by band council in early summer. Responsibilities of the school board included all educational activities, with the Cultural Education Centre to be housed in the new school as a resource centre and curriculum development operation. Most Education Committee members became trustees; a few chose not to accept the responsibility and previously uninvolved community persons were appointed in their places. One of the new appointees was elected chairman of the board. However, the school board did not function officially until actual take-over date, September 1. A major reason for this lag was a need for consistent DIA fiscal responsibility in completion of the new classroom building and provision of its basic equipment before such expenditures became a drain on the Community School budget.

Until that year the school had consisted of one very old, wooden, two-storey "primary" building and a more modern brick and concrete structure for upper grades. Secondary students had gone away to boarding homes in a city to attend school. The new building was intended as a secondary school. It had been designed by an architect who worked closely with the band to provide not only adequate instructional facilities but several symbolic spatial arrangements and structural features intended to "indigenize" the building. A major intent was to attract students because, while parents generally preferred their children to stay at home, many of the young people looked forward with pleasure to the excitement of experiences while going to school in the city. The new school board was taking over not only an existing school but the task of implementing a new secondary school operation in a new building for a group of students who were, at the least, ambivalent about the whole idea.

So pressing were the many details demanding attention during the summer that the patterns of action and decision-making didn't change much as new statuses of school board member and chairman emerged. The administrative assistant co-ordinator planned to continue working in the school and did not become a member of the school board. Yet this person continued to be the key individual involved in all details and former Education Committee members continued to handle their responsibilities much as before. The school board existed in name only until September 1, although they did have meetings, were kept informed of developments, and were involved in recruiting and housing new staff. Channels of communication from the co-ordinator to DIA and others,

and the initiatives to complete tasks remained relatively unchanged, not so much by conscious decision as by time imperatives.

Within the next month after September 1 the manifestations of role shock were to begin to appear (role *strain* as per Turner, 1968). Before considering them, we should give some attention to the kinds of statuses and role expectations that were built into the planning and development up to that time by the small cadre of people who had done the work. This is important because, while they knew what they had in mind and why, few others in the community were aware of all the antecedent considerations of the Education Committee. This was particularly true for the new school board members and the chairman.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL STATUSES AND ROLE EXPECTATIONS

Administration was viewed by the Education Committee as a major problem of previous school operations. Principals had been non-teaching enforcers of rules and regulations. There had also been a vice-principal who taught only one period per day, devoting most time to "discipline." The Education Committee thought a good secretarial staff with one administrative-accountant type of person could handle most tasks not directly related to classroom operations and that the principal should be devoting his time to teaching and instructional leadership. They drew heavily on the British "headmaster" concept of which they had read and hoped to promote this ideal in the Community School by defining new administrative statuses.

The status term "education administrator" was adopted to designate the non-professional person who would handle administrative tasks to relieve the principal for a headmaster role. The job included most of the functions of "Secretary-Treasurer" in provincial systems but the committee did not want it to be completely analogous. Among problems foreseen was that the secretary-treasurer is the channel of communication to and from provincial school boards. Having the person who handles all expenditures also responsible for handling all communications to and from the school board seemed to the Education Committee to be placing too much potential power in one position. The job description of education administrator did not include executive secretary functions for the school board. The position was defined as being responsible to the school board *and* to the principal and teachers as they operated under school board policy. The intent was that the position be clearly and solely a clerical, accounting, supply procurement function, subject always to educational objectives determined elsewhere.

The principal's duties were broadly defined as implementation of all school board educational responsibilities — basic school, adult education, postsecondary — providing professional leadership and specifically relieved of fiscal management. The term "teacher" was of necessity retained

but much thought was given to defining and hiring the type of teachers the Education Committee thought would do the jobs. Teaching jobs were basically described as development of a new community school, responsive to and meeting the needs of this unique community. Incumbents were expected to have reasonable formal qualifications, some experience with living in isolation or away from urban centres, an attitudinal set toward working with and for the native community members rather than a conventional bureaucracy, and evidences of interests, skills, or avocations beyond school which could be thought of as indicators of well-rounded, autonomous personalities. A check-list of questions was developed to be asked during early interviews. Responses were categorized as "good," "acceptable," "doubtful," and "unacceptable."

There were many applications — at least five times the number of positions. Application of check-list responses to final decisions about whom to employ led to much attitudinal homogeneity among staff finally employed, although they included a wide range of experience and age. All ranked high on the list of criteria established; they had expressed positive responses to questions about open education, flexibility, diverse learning experiences, parental involvement, etc. The Education Committee felt confident that they had obtained services of a group which could and would implement the kind of new directions for which they hoped.

BEGINNING OF SCHOOL AND ROLE SHOCK

The two-week period before and after opening of school that September was characterized by a peak of euphoria which rapidly changed to panic bordering on chaos. At first, the only sour note was that equipment and supplies for the new building were not to arrive for another month. This was considered a minor problem. To the residents, the fact of the new school actually beginning was pleasing and the mode of entry of the new principal and teachers even more so. The newcomers, each alert to a need for new kinds of community understandings and each inclined to establish close community relationships, quickly settled into their quarters and then set out to meet people. Open, friendly, casual conversations, inquiries and answers, or just being a presence, quickly established a new sense of teacher identity in the small community where teachers previously had tended to arrive the day before school began and seldom be seen except at school or at necessary subsistence shopping. An Orientation Week was planned around a core of group meetings to hear local and invited resource persons describe the community past and present, to view some documentary films, to attend pot-luck dinners and community-school social events. Some time was set aside for the new staff to meet together to plan operations.

It was at these staff meetings that the dimensions of discrepancies among expectations began to emerge. Teachers had expected eventually to be provided with some kinds of direction and organizational pattern. They were prepared to accept almost any kind of new definitions of structure. Some were clearly hoping for other than traditional age-grade student groupings and subject-based curriculum; others were not firm in opinions but ready to adapt whatever new definitions of community and student needs were provided. What none were prepared for, and most dismayed to find, was *nothing* in the way of operational definition for the school structure, community wishes or needs, or curriculum expectations (beyond the earlier cited general statement about "education for life in this community").

This situation was not an oversight. Rather, it resulted from the broad assumptions seldom even stated among the Education Committee/school board that "professional" teachers had access to and competence to use a basic core of theory and antecedent knowledge to establish a functional community school in much the same way that marketing experts or health services experts brought theory and knowledge to establishment of a co-operative store or community hospital and health services. The school board had thought it would be presumptuous of them to provide more than the broad goal statement to the beginning staff.

The principal, inclined to be nondirective, consensus-seeking, and reflecting what he discerned as the school board intent, began the staff meetings by eliciting opinions from the staff about how the school should be organized and operated. The ensuing rhetoric ranged widely over dysfunctional aspects of conventional schooling, various innovative patterns individuals had observed or read about, and a considerable amount of sloganeering derived largely from recent protest literature about schools. Little debates rippled back and forth about "freedom from structure," "natural learning environments," "real student needs," and "community resources." Consensus did not emerge, despite the apparent homogeneity of teacher types. What did emerge was a rapid realization, consistently repeated by a few realistic individuals, that a couple of hundred students would be appearing for school classes in less than a week and the teachers had better be ready for them!

When it became obvious that the total group could not and would not come to an agreement about overall patterns or even planning procedures (a condition which requires more than a few days or few weeks with any staff, no matter how competent or well intended), the primary, intermediate, and secondary teachers were sent off separately to determine immediate organization and procedures for their own groups. Even within these groups, it proved difficult to find consensus. Teacher tendencies were to revert to known organizational patterns or age-grades, subject designations, time-tables and teaching schedules. A few teachers with ideological convictions about patterns such as "family grouping,"

“learning centres,” “integrated curriculum,” and so forth had more or less impact on the subgroups but, eventually, the teachers (with school board agreement) decided to begin on a half-day basis with classes organized essentially as they had been during the previous year and to use afternoons “working out” patterns as problems emerged. It turned out that this conventional organization prevailed full-time throughout the remainder of the year.

To most of the teachers it was a sobering realization that teacher training, the educational research with which they were familiar (a limited amount, at best), and the glib criticisms of current school practices with which they were so familiar all provided them with practically nothing other than conventional school structure as an operating premise. The highly popular ideological rejection of “structure” and assumptions that freedom from structural imperatives will somehow result in a more natural learning situation proved to be particularly threatening in this situation. Those teachers who did not already know it (perhaps a majority of this group), came rapidly to realize that they had an absolute need for firm organizational structure both for their classrooms and for the entire school. They further came rapidly to realize the intensity of effort required to develop such a structure when none is provided from external sources.

Role shock for the teachers began with the realization that they were unable to respond to community expectations for a new, rational school pattern because the teachers were so dependent on being told what to do — at least in terms of basic organization and curriculum patterns. Some teachers also realized with chagrin that they were unable to implement their idealized patterns to which they had felt committed if only the bureaucracy didn’t inhibit them. In this case, the only inhibitions came from themselves or their peers. A number of teachers did not survive. One took the first available transportation out after the first staff meeting. Others resigned within the first month. One had a nervous breakdown and could not work at all in the school during the year — although continuing residence there.

ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE SHOCK

The two people most responsible for administration, principal and education administrator, shared directly and reciprocally a number of role shock experiences. A first blow for the principal had been the total failure of the collegial, consensus process in which he had great faith as essence of his leadership role. But it was the status title “education administrator” that caused most problems. In common usage, that term is a category of occupational statuses rather than a position title. While the planners had their reasons for not using other terms, they had not considered that everyone who first heard it used in the Community School context would

have to ask about its meaning and intent. For teachers especially, a single explanation was not sufficient to provide understanding of the intended bifurcation of responsibilities. It was necessary to establish dimensions of role expectations by situational behaviors. During the first few weeks, most interaction responses of both principal and education administrator became precedents for operational definitions of future expectations.

The situation was even more complex and difficult because the education administrator was the same person who had been administrative assistant/co-ordinator of the whole take-over enterprise. The school board had considered this to be a reasonable choice because that person not only knew every antecedent detail, from initial planning to the nature of supplies ordered and current exact budget status, but also knew and favored the intended limits of the position — specifically, the intent to inhibit decision-making and limit the functions of the education administrator to supportive fiscal and clerical tasks. While the logic of the choice seems apparent, in fact it asked one individual to be the key decision-maker and operating person until September 1 and then to undertake an almost total role reversal overnight. It was just not possible to draw a time and performance line to define the end of one status and the beginning of another. The education administrator made extraordinary efforts to withdraw, even going so far as to become deliberately sealed off in an office. But repeatedly it was necessary to press for, or even to make, decisions for which the principal or school board should have had responsibility. Formally, the education administrator withdrew from regular school board meetings, sustaining the intent behind the position but depriving the board and principal of essential information. In addition to the confusing relationships and communication (or non-communication) channels which arose in this situation, the education administrator sensed a unique personal loss at being outside the mainstream of operation. While committed to establishing the position as peripheral and supportive, the incumbent still chafed at the apparent slowness, uncertainties, and ambiguities which emerged during the first few weeks of school operation. “I just don’t know what’s going on any more. I know I’m not supposed to and don’t have to, but I know I can’t take this for long. I may see it through the year, but then I’m going to get out,” was a comment made early in the second month of school operation.

The principal was a crisis-management person from the beginning, never really establishing — or being allowed to establish — a definite role. The school board had not wished to place constraints on the new school with a predetermined body of policy. They had planned to work out policies as the school dynamics developed. They perceived the principal’s inclination to seek consensus and to operate with staff and students in a democratic manner as singularly inappropriate and inconsistent with the kinds of leadership expertise they had thought to procure (despite the fact that in preliminary interviews this kind of rhetoric had sounded just

right). Teacher problems and student problems abounded and demanded resolution. In absence of policies, and with little faith in consensus, many people went right to the school board for immediate decisions (which became policy); other problems were decided on an *ad hoc* basis, increasingly with less and less consultation or reflection. The school board would sometimes ask the principal for recommendations to aid in a decision; at other times he would be called before the board to explain his or teachers' behaviors of which the board had heard first from nonschool sources. He was often unsure whether he was a consultant, an advocate, or a defendant. Teachers looked to the principal for definitions of school board policy and intent. Often these could not be provided as determined policy but only as inferences or interpretations the principal made from a sparse background, not really much greater in depth than that of the teachers.

Almost inevitably the negative image of the principal grew and he became the first school scape-goat. He was variously viewed as arbitrary, vacillating, indecisive, autocratic, overly permissive, inept, and having most other negative attributes that can be applied to administrators. In mid-year the school board abolished the position, demoted the principal to teacher, and decided to appoint "head teachers" for each of the three staff subdivisions — primary, intermediate, and secondary. Reasons for the demotion were that the principal had usurped and/or misinterpreted school board decisions. This led to a singularly divisive set of relationships during the remainder of the school year. The board asked each subdivision to select their own head teacher. A number of teachers who had been critical of the former principal also felt that his demotion had been unfair. Whether from sympathy or otherwise, the secondary teachers elected him to be their head teacher. The school board had no choice but to accept that and school continued to the end of the year with minimal communication and pro forma behaviors characterizing most subsequent interactions between board and secondary teachers.

SCHOOL BOARD ROLE SHOCK

A small community always has a limited number of people who are competent and willing to assume responsibilities for community enterprises. This community is no exception, although it perhaps has a somewhat larger pool of competence than usual because of its recent history of successful development in other enterprises of the band council. The Education Committee and the first school board were both composed of membership carefully selected and appointed by band council. The first election for school board was not to be held until the spring following take-over. This was done to provide consistency and predictably responsible performance. Because most of the men of the community are engaged in work which takes them away from home frequently, or in other band-operated enterprises, or in band council itself, the school board ini-

tially was all female. Because most people in the community are somehow related by blood or marriage, the school board represented a considerable mix of statuses — parents of children in school, wives of council members, relatives of school employees (as well as two who were themselves also school employees), in addition to all the other usual community relationships. Abundantly aware of the sensitive nuances of these multiple-status relationships and their role expectations, the school board members made explicit efforts to establish and to maintain a formal, straightforward, open operation which would be free from any taint of favoritism, nepotism or other arbitrary implications.

A critically important aspect of the early months of school board operation was the determination of former Education Committee members to avoid imposition of their past decisions on the new board members. They foresaw possibilities of friction if they appeared to dominate on a basis of seniority and they resolved to assume membership in the new school board with all matters being open to full discussion in which they would all participate on an equal footing. In doing this, the older members in effect suppressed knowledge of earlier shared decisions which were basic premises they shared with the education administrator as they had all worked at the planning and pre-implementation tasks. Thus the school board was never fully involved in preparation for the school operation; there was never any point (other than a date) from which the school board began to function. It assumed responsibilities on September 1 for a new school without full awareness of the philosophical and ideological premises underlying the plans for the school.

A second dimension of importance was the unique relationship with band council. Each of the several other enterprises under the council was managed by a committee appointed by council and chaired by a council member who reported directly to the council. There was a strong tendency to view the new school board as analogous to the other band council committees, both in responsibility to the council (which is legally the case) and in responsibility for management of the enterprise (which is not the case in usual school board operations). Specifically, the distinctions between establishing a philosophy and policies for a school and management of school operations were not at all clear to either band council or school board.

Although the intention was to develop policy in a consistent and systematic manner as the school year went along, the school board rapidly found itself immersed (as did the principal) in crisis management of such magnitude that policies emerged almost entirely from solutions to problems of the moment, often with implicit contradictions built in. Because no clear channels had been established, communications were directed to any of the board members as well as to the chairman, who increasingly spent more and more time at the school office seeking information about procedures, situations, and options. Just being involved

in the school office meant more and more seeming involvement in management than in policy.

One of the earliest decisions of the school board was that the regular provincial public school curriculum would be the prescribed pattern for the new school. This followed their rapid awareness of their error in assumptions of teachers' capabilities or willingness to devise new programs and curricula, plus obvious teacher demands for some kind of community direction. This in itself was a considerable disappointment to a number of teachers as well as to members of the earlier Education Committee, but it seemed the only solution since other choices demanded more time than was available. Greatest problems for the school board were the many complaints that began to flow in from parents, friends, and relatives: too little discipline, too much discipline, lack of organization, inappropriate organization, too little attention to basics, not enough attention to . . . etc., etc. The school board attempted to probe for details behind these complaints as well as to seek information upon which to establish policies. Principal and teachers seldom knew whether some past behavior was being investigated or whether the board was just seeking professional advice as a basis for their decisions. A kind of incipient paranoia began to be manifested. Almost any question from anybody elicited an initial reaction of wondering who wanted to know and why.

The school board desperately sought consistence and stability. They met at least weekly, often more frequently. They had study workshops with invited resource people to provide them with better understandings; they attended meetings of school trustees elsewhere, read voraciously and put in time as few, if any, other school boards have done. But the crises continued and the lag between emergence and solution of problems increased. The binds and double binds of interpersonal role relationships within the community and individual families were increasingly difficult. Several members quit and were replaced; most struggled along.

Not long after the demotion of the principal, the band council moved into the scene with "corrective action." At a council meeting the school situation was discussed at some length. One council member said that it took him two hours to walk the two blocks from his home to his office because he had to listen to so many complaints about "the mess at school." A new "Steering Committee," composed of three council members and three school board members was appointed by council and charged with making recommendations for achieving more order and sense of direction. This committee recommended an immediate "outside evaluation" of the whole operation — administration, policy, curriculum, teacher and student performances — to provide further recommendations for subsequent directions. They stipulated two months as a time for this evaluation to be accomplished. A request for the evaluation was sent to the management consultant firm which had helped in original negotiations.

An evaluation team composed of two retired, former provincial school administrators was quickly obtained. They visited the community for a few days, spoke with many people, and produced a report within the stipulated time. Essentially the report recommends wide-scale adoption, with some local modification, of provincial school law and regulations as basic policies, along with conventional school district structure for organization and administration of the school.

In the time between appointment of the evaluation team and production of their report, the first school board election was held. The original Education Committee members were all replaced with newly elected members — some did not stand for election; those who did so were defeated. The recommendations of the evaluation team were warmly endorsed by the school board (and band council) and rapidly adopted as official policy. Seemingly with relief, the concepts of developing a new kind of “community school” were dropped (although the name was retained).

A small group of teachers generated and presented to the school board a detailed criticism of both the methods and the final report of the evaluation team along with a request for continuing efforts to implement different school patterns, including continuing internal evaluation. This was rejected by the newly constituted school board. By the end of the year, a majority of the original staff either had resigned or been dismissed or were not offered continuing employment. The education administrator and the new co-ordinator of the Cultural Education Centre were both dismissed as “unqualified,” despite the fact that they were among the most well-educated members of the community and had been involved from the beginning, representing an irreplaceable pool of knowledge.

The need for structure and status-role security is neatly illustrated by the reception of the evaluation team and their report. Above all else, the team, after life careers as senior school administrators, exhibited security and confidence in their role behaviors. This provided strong assurance of their credibility to the school board and band council. The school board set out to develop a structure headed by a superintendent and replicating the provincial school district system.⁵

DISCUSSION

These are the major dimensions of events over approximately two years from the time when local control of school became first a reality perception and then a reality in one community. Further details would consume space without adding much more insight. The all-important first year, which often determines future success or failure in any such enterprise (see Firestone, 1976), was disastrous and everybody involved could point to somebody else or to some other group as responsible.

Although the well-intentioned and hard-working group who planned and implemented that first year were convinced that "at least we can do no worse," the resulting school and community schisms might well be considered worse to the extent that they provided generally negative attitudes and expectations for future operations. Further, these were now directed internally within the community rather than externally toward the bureaucracy as before. This is one further illustration of how the pervasive factionalism which is usually manifest in any small, enclave community shifts to become a schismatic factionalism (Beals & Siegel, 1966, p. 21). Various alliances which form to cope with problems stemming from needs to relate with external power sources tend to be tenuous, flexible factions, frequently changing over time and sometimes almost vanishing if the external power becomes a real threat. When power becomes an internal community function, the "we-they" boundaries of schisms become more rigid. Issues that arise are linked with personalities, alliances, and suspected motivations. Communication cues are derived from nuances of tone, environmental context of messages, and a cumulative knowledge of previous associations and behaviors. Expectations for behaviors tend to become stereotyped: from allies comes "good" and from non-allies comes "bad." Thus role shock extends throughout such a community because schismatic factionalism is antithetic to ideals of "community," "neighbor," and even good kin relationships.⁶

If some kinds of incompetence or selfish vested interests could be identified, these might account for the sad outcomes of the first year. Such attributes are not identifiable. On the contrary, almost without exception, teachers, administrators, and school board members were individually capable, committed persons. In comparison with other school groups I have known elsewhere, these would fall within a range of good to excellent.

While it may seem simplistic to suggest that a single, vaguely defined variable has fragmented the community and distorted the original plans for a bold new kind of locally controlled school, I think it is clear that intense role shock was experienced by most individuals connected with the school. The means of coping with role shock culminated in organizational syndromes of distorted or noncommunication, withdrawal, scapegoating and resignation. This is more aptly termed "shock" rather than "strain" because of the high levels of commitment and idealism with which each of the participants entered the undertaking. Prior to opening of school, everyone concerned felt assurance that these attributes would produce the kind of school they all thought they wanted. Teachers and administrators discovered that they were unable to generate role behaviors which the community — and even they, collectively — considered appropriate to their status. School board members, caught in binds between faith in external expertise and commitment to local control, were simi-

larly unable to display appropriate role behaviors for acceptance by staff or community as a whole.

One major dimension that was overlooked by the planners and community in this instance is worthy of further consideration. This is the concept and implications of change.

There are at least three dimensions of change that can occur in schools. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive but they have different implications to the degree that they are actually sought or resisted. A first aspect is change in control of resource utilization — employment of personnel and budget control. A second aspect is content changes in school curriculum — the knowledge and skills intended to be made available to students. The third aspect is change in operational structure of the school — the ways of organizing students and classes for effective instruction.

The Education Committee planners had not considered the three aspects of change separately. They viewed the first as simply a necessary condition to achieve the second and third. Perhaps their priority consideration was content change, but they also strongly favored structural changes. Their premises were based on their own extensive reading and knowledge of learning principles, pedagogy, and their own cultural heritage. They conveyed these kinds of messages to the first teachers to be employed. This was not, however, a shared community, or even school board, sense of priorities. General community support was strong for the control of resources dimension, as evidenced by the early plebiscite vote. There were direct local employment jobs to be had under local control, and there was a general feeling that better teachers would be employed by local people than by bureaucrats. But there was no general agreement that the content of school learnings or the age-grade pattern of class operations should be changed. Nor was there any mobilization of elders or local resource people or any commitment to training or development of a “local control” pool of expertise for effecting change. As with the other community enterprises, it was generally assumed that local management of imported expertise was the optimal condition.

This is essentially a conservative community. While there is deep pride in native heritage and there are complex, traditional interaction patterns, there is also a strong work ethic and individual success-achievement motivation. For all the dissatisfaction with the federal day school, the mystique of conventional schooling as a pathway to success and the importance of “basics” in schooling are deeply rooted in the consciousness of the community (coincidentally reinforced by the British Columbia Ministry of Education “core curriculum” publicity during the first year of this take-over). Ideas about “open education, “family grouping,” locally developed curriculum, and even native language classes were viewed by many as radical innovations to be approached cautiously, if at all, only after basic stability and discipline were achieved. New school

board members came to see their priorities as striving for that stability and discipline, particularly after the intervention of band council leading to the external experts' emphasis on conventional management policies. Most of the difficulties of role definition in this situation stemmed from discrepant perceptions of what kinds of and how much change was wanted by whom.

What of the future of local control in this situation? Nothing more succinctly predicts than the aphorism from Murphy's Law (Bloch, 1977): "When you open a can of worms, the only way to re-can them is to get a larger can." The can of worms in this case is introduction of previously unknown statuses and power-authority relationships into a stable, seemingly homogeneous community. Proponents of local control tend to assume more homogeneity within communities and even among communities than in fact exists. In addition to the pervasive factionalism in all communities, new authority statuses intensify schismatic tendencies within the community and create ambiguities for outsiders (educators, in this case) who have previously been confident in their abilities to manifest appropriate role behaviors.

Without a firm ideological consensus — as is found in some religious communities — or explicitly defined role expectations as provided by centralized bureaucracies, autonomous local control means that someone or some group within each community must define new statuses and appropriate role behaviors which, in at least some important areas, means making fate-control decisions affecting the lives of others.

This school may survive a few years longer but it is no longer credible as a viable entity or as a model for other developments. Now topheavy with administrative management, it is inordinately expensive.⁷ More than that, one of the significant schismatic factions within the community is beginning to speak of setting up its own independent school with local control defined by them as freedom from the community school operation.

Within British Columbia alone are 192 separate Indian band communities, to say nothing of the multitude of other communities which might be defined were laws changed to allow such an option in other than Indian communities. Each of these, at least in theory, has the same possibility of assuming local control of schooling. The Native Indian Brotherhood's policy of "Indian control of Indian education" is persuasive, defensible, and probably even realizable, but not on a band-by-band local community control basis. Some forms of regional grouping or affiliation with provincial school districts or other means of achieving consistent status-role relationships must be found for the policy ideal to be realized.

There is a positive note with which to end. A frequently cited criticism of policies toward Amerindians (often attributed to the eminent emeritus University of Chicago anthropologist, Sol Tax) is that the whiteman has done everything for Indians except give them the right to make their

own mistakes. Increasingly that right is being provided; this is one illustration. It is a positive development both in terms of morality and because of providing new insights into dynamics which have implications far broader than the limits of native Indian communities.

NOTES

- ¹ Categorization and description of the many local control aspects of parts of education under the new policies of the federal Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) could make a substantial monograph. Probably no one person yet knows exactly how many of these are operating. However, the cases of total takeover of all schooling for a given community could be counted on one's fingers. (See Urion, 1975; Carney, 1978; King, 1978.)
- ² I was involved as consultant to the Education Committee some months before the take-over decision was made. I was sympathetic with their aspirations to be more involved in their local (federal) school, to provide more content for the school curriculum, and to press for upper grades to be added so their secondary students would not have to leave home. My ethnographic inclinations led me to keep notes and records, but I did not enter the scene as a researcher. One might view this as participant observation; my own inclination is to view it as a clinical description derived from an attempt at applied anthropology. It is not ethnographic, because an ethnography would reflect more of the values, perceptions, and definitions of the participants. I have shared the paper with several individuals who were closely involved, and have had minor corrections and a general agreement that this is an accurate reflection. However, it remains my description and analysis.
- ³ Role shock is not a common term in sociological literature, although other terms are used for role problems. Brookover and Gottlieb (1964, p. 364) provide a good basic definition of "status" — the name of a social position — and "role" — the behavioral expectations for any given status. They further identify "role conflict" in two dimensions, illustrated by a father who is also his child's teacher and a teacher who has one set of messages about expectations from the principal and another set from parents and students. Turner (1968, p. 555) identifies "role distance" as a situation when an individual must "play roles that contradict self-conception" and "role strain" as a result of unclear, incomplete, or contradictory elements in a role, adding that "little has been noted [about] distinctive adjustments to role strain." While these conflict situations undoubtedly generate some trauma, they all, except "strain," differ from role shock in that the stable role expectations are available; the individual has but to make a choice or find a balance to reduce stress. Turner's "strain" is descriptive of the onset of role shock, but the word is not expressive of the intensity of trauma resulting.
- ⁴ It should be kept in mind that "co-ordinator" and "administrative assistant" are the same person, the former term being the operational title. Subsequently this person was to acquire new status as "education administrator," as explained in the following pages.
- ⁵ After the fourth year of local control, the structure of school in this community remains about the same; many policies have been codified but no philosophy has been enunciated; staff turnover remains high each year with only one of the original teachers remaining — the preschool teacher.
- ⁶ I have not dealt at all with students and do not have data to do so with any assurance. However, in the few years following this local control development, intensified traumas have repeatedly been reported among young people of the community; an inordinate number, considering community size, have been subject of regional or provincial news coverage. It is not unlikely that these are extensions of the role shock traumas experienced among adults involved in the school developments.

- ⁷ Schismatic factionalism and top-heavy administrative costs have also been major inhibiting factors in the prototype Rough Rock Demonstration School of the Navajo Nation. (See Erickson, 1968.)

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