

The Mt. Currie Indian Community School: Innovation and Endurance

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The early 1970s was a period of renaissance in Native Canadian Indian language and culture. At Mt. Currie, British Columbia, this rebirth was closely linked to the transformation of the school into a locally controlled Native institution. This article uses interview data to review changing role relationships of School Board and staff. The analysis reveals concerns in common with community education ventures across North America. Unique to the Native community is the integration of contemporary Anglo and traditional Native role relationships. Recommendations for responding to these concerns should be useful not only to Native communities but to other groups with school programs calling for community input and parental involvement.

Le début des années soixante-dix a marqué une période de renaissance dans les domaines de la langue et de la culture des indiens autochtones du Canada. Dans la communauté de Mt. Currie, en Colombie Britannique, ce renouveau était étroitement lié à la transformation du système scolaire anglais qui est devenu une institution contrôlée localement par les autochtones.

On se sert dans cet article des données recueillies lors d'une entrevue, pour passer en revue l'évolution des rôles de la commission scolaire et de son personnel. L'analyse révèle des points d'intérêts qui sont communs aux entreprises communautaires d'éducation à travers l'Amérique du Nord. Un trait unique des communautés autochtones est l'intégration des valeurs anglaises contemporaines et des rôles traditionnels.

Les recommandations qui découlent de ces études pourraient être utiles non seulement aux communautés autochtones mais aussi à d'autres groupes dont les programmes scolaires requièrent la participation de la communauté et des parents.

INTRODUCTION

The early 1970s was a period of renaissance in Native Canadian Indian language and culture. Signs of the rebirth were apparent in a blossoming of artistic expression. Painting, carving, dancing, and oratory – traditional and transformed – were evident not only within Native communities but in North American society at large. In addition to reshaping the old, some Native communities boldly ventured into the adaptation of an institution previously quite removed from their tradition: the school! While it is true that some chose to reject schools completely in favour of a return to traditional education (Mistassini Cree, Northern Québec),¹ and

others attempted no changes, a handful did embark on adapting the institution to their own culture (Aoki, 1973; Assheton-Smith, 1977; Urien, 1975).

These efforts at adaptation (Rough Rock, Arizona; Hobbema and Blue Quills, Alberta; Rae-Edzo, N.W.T.) were characterized by energetic, visionary goals, and intense commitment to working cooperatively for the betterment of life for future generations. Among many who watched (and participated) in these ventures, critical questions, often unspoken, were formulated: how long will the pioneering spirit and energy last? What will be the survival rate? What compromises in ideals and clashes of interests will occur? The developments in Native communities in many ways paralleled those in non-Native communities.

Elsewhere, many parent groups, convinced that they could provide a better education than the schools, created free schools and parent-run cooperative schools. As in the case of Native communities, conflicts between parental values and dominant societal values relating to education stimulated the creation of these alternatives. The survival or demise of these non-Native alternative schools related to how well or poorly they managed funding, personality conflicts, clashes in values between parents and hired staff, and ongoing reviews of participant values and goals (Firestone, 1976; Kozol, 1972).

A decade (more or less) has passed for the Native community schools. This article reviews the development of the Native community-controlled school at Mt. Currie, British Columbia in the context of issues faced by many parent initiated ventures. The review, analysis, and recommendations should be valuable, not only to other Native communities, but to other non-professional parent groups wishing to create for their children schools which incorporate minority cultural traditions and values.

The initial three years of the Mt. Currie Indian Community School (1972-75) were documented in an earlier article which presented the thesis that community control and autonomy in decision making were key factors in creating a program which synthesized, without conflict, aspects of traditional Native and non-Native culture (Wyatt, 1977a). This article examines the present Mt. Currie program, and the role relationships of teachers, administrators, and Board members in light of this thesis. Data from interviews indicate that concerns regarding role relationships and community participation in comparison with professionalism, which are characteristic of many community education ventures, are also significant in Mt. Currie. An important difference is concern, at Mt. Currie, about retaining traditional patterns of authority. Thus, while personnel involved with the Mt. Currie community school must contend with each of the concerns outlined as characteristic of non-Native communities, these

concerns must also be handled in the context of an overriding concern about the appropriate balance between traditional native and contemporary non-native culture.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Mt. Currie is a community of 1200 native Lil'wat Indians located 200 kilometres northeast of Vancouver in the Pemberton Valley of British Columbia. The rich farmland, large lakes, and heavily wooded coast range of mountains provide the economic base of the community. This is supplemented by a network of social services funded primarily by the Department of Northern Affairs.² A relative minority possess the wealth produced through logging and ranching. Food fishing, truck farms, and, to a lesser degree, hunting are significant in the economy of most households.

The local grocery, hardware and second-hand store, movie theatre, and laundromat are the only retail outlets in the community and these are owned by non-Indians. The non-Indian town of Pemberton (ten kilometres away) has a wider range of commercial enterprises and a medical clinic.

The major social institutions in Mt. Currie are the church, the school, and the band administration. The administration coordinates local government through a council of elected representatives and a series of committees on education, health, welfare, housing, and economic development. Funding for the band administration and the school, which are the major employers of Native people in the community, is provided by the Department of Northern Affairs. A common feature of parent-run schools is that they must clarify existing relationships with administrative and funding authorities, or negotiate new ones. At Mt. Currie this process was a constant source of difficulty – in part, because of parents' lack of formal professional training in administration.

Except for a recent major building project (a 70-house subdivision and new school complex), there are no significant economic development projects which could provide employment. Consequently, the community as a whole is, and has been for many years, economically depressed.

Planning for the construction of a new school began ten years ago. In 1973, the band education committee (T'zil), reconstituted in 1974 as the School Board, began to develop a locally administered program. This was consistent with principles set out in the highly acclaimed and innovative Indian Brotherhood position paper *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1973).³ This entailed taking steps to become independent of the church and the provincial school system. Until this time kindergarten through

Grade 6 were taught by nuns at the Federal Day School located on the reserve. At Grade 7, Mt. Currie students enrolled in Pemberton schools. This arrangement had always been a focus for divergent Native community views on education, but it was accepted by almost all community members as a significant improvement on the residential schools which preceded it until the 1960s.

The broad restructuring of education in the community occurred through many smaller changes. First was an on-reserve alternate program (to the provincial school) for junior secondary students. The band education committee/Board, appointed by the band council (with the later addition of some elected members), was responsible for this action, and proceeded in subsequent years to develop a full secondary school program on the reserve. The total school enrollment for the last eight years has been approximately 275, roughly the same as it had been prior to the community take-over. A major change, with long-range implications, was that the Board also began to staff classes with lay teachers—most of whom (17 of 21) are Native. These individuals were trained in a program initiated in 1974 and developed collaboratively by the Board and the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. After five years (1974–79) of full time on-reserve programming and four subsequent summers (1979–83) of course work, 17 native teachers are provincially certified. Two are curriculum writers, two are administrators and ten are teachers. The remainder have taken educational leave and are enrolled at the university full-time.

The dual focus of the teacher-training program was to prepare student teachers for provincial certification and to teach Native culture and language. The goal was to create educational programs which followed, at least initially, provincial guidelines and to integrate native language and culture throughout the curriculum. Other non-Native parent groups try to hire teachers with values and philosophy similar to their own; at Mt. Currie, parents felt that training Native teachers from the community was the only way to guarantee that teachers would share their values and philosophy. Data from interviews show that this has not always proven true.

The clearest statement of the Board's goals is the report *Direction of the School* (1979) which records the consensus of staff and Board participants in a two-day workshop intended to clarify the goals of the school programs. The workshop was initiated by the school director (the head administrator) after repeated expressions of concern by Board and staff that directions which were clear in 1973 when local control was initiated were becoming obscure and that communication between Board and staff was not sufficiently frequent, open, or productive. The administrator's

response was to establish a work session during which small groups of staff and Board members brainstormed and prioritized their goals. Among the points of general agreement were three relating to Native cultural curriculum and language.

1. More emphasis must be placed upon seasonal activities, cultural activities, and job or life skill preparation.
2. Training for rodeo, gardening, and the trades need to be considered more positively by teaching staff because these programs have as much of a chance to provide future occupation and gain as do the strictly academic courses.⁴
3. Indian language programs need to be expanded and given more emphasis throughout the school. Indian language should be broadened to include the teaching of culture (in the Native language).

In the area of community involvement, Board and staff members agreed that their common goal was shared planning, mutual support, and a school dedicated to the needs of the Native community. Involving parents and Board members on a day-to-day basis was identified as a high priority.

The thesis of this article is that, in the process of implementing the above goals, it has been necessary to integrate non-Indian role-relationships into the prevailing traditional Native role-relationships. This process has been difficult, not only because there were no models to follow but also because it was unanticipated. No preliminary steps had been taken to ease the way. It was necessary to try and sort out issues as best one could as they emerged. A widening gap in education between Board members, many of whom have little formal schooling, and more highly educated employees is a key dilemma in the changing pattern of relationships.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND: ROLE RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

The developments and problems at Mt. Currie exemplify themes, concepts and issues identified in research on educational reform and local control in other Native communities (Erickson, 1970; Ingram, McIntosh, Peters, and Young, 1981; King, 1981) as well as in North American society at large (Fein, 1971; Firestone, 1976; Sarason, 1982; Seay and Associates, 1974).

Examination of Mt. Currie in the context of the research literature can help to diagnose difficulties in ongoing development and to suggest ways to continue promoting the integration of traditional and contemporary role relationships. It can also suggest possibilities to other parent-run enterprises.

Role Relationships

Erickson and Schwartz (1969) and King (1981) provide detailed documentation of the specific problems and processes in the assumption of local control of schools by Native communities. Central to both analyses is the identification of the crippling problems sometimes associated with transfer of power from centralized government (i.e., professional civil servants) to local lay Boards. In the Navajo community of Rough Rock, the transfer of power resulted in control by a professional educator/administrator, not a lay Board as originally intended (Erickson and Schwartz, 1969). In the anonymous B.C. community studied by King, the lay Board and local Native professionals were insufficiently prepared, both psychologically and technically, to assume new roles. The resulting role shock resulted in a return to aspects of earlier patterns.

The events at Mt. Currie documented here, unlike those reported by Erickson and Schwartz, and King, have not completely undermined efforts at local control. However, the concepts of *role shock* and associated *role strain* do provide valuable insights into relationships at Mt. Currie. The concepts are outlined here; their utility for the Mt. Currie case is addressed below in the section Interpretation of Interview Data. Role shock is the result of an accumulation of personal frustration and stress. Often an individual accepts a job feeling assured of being able to perform successfully only to discover that the performance is unacceptable to co-workers or clients. Co-workers and clients, in turn, frequently are not able to give any suggestions for correction, nor is anyone able to point to successful models. The worker's feelings of personal inadequacy mount. Finally, the individual may withdraw from the situation and/or explain personal inadequacy through scapegoating.

The study by Ingram et al. (1981) of Alberta's Education North Project, a strategy for building school-community relationships, also deals with role relationship dilemmas. Local education authorities in the Native communities reviewed are hampered in their efforts to select and implement programming due to problems in stimulating volunteer interest and commitment, lack of experience in exercising organizational leadership, and conflicts of leadership between volunteer board members and paid professional staff. Ingram et al. conclude that, if local education societies are to be viable agents of educational change, they must both mediate conflicts between paid professionals and community volunteers, and nurture the leadership abilities of the latter.

Firestone's research (1976) into role relationships in non-Native parent-run free schools identifies further difficulties. These are related to the overlap of personal and professional roles not present in more traditionally bureaucratically managed institutions. Disputes that begin

dispassionately become characterized by personal hostility and therefore influence disagreement (Coleman, cited in Firestone, 1976). The total personality is invested in the group, and there is no distinction between business and private concerns (Coser, cited in Firestone, 1976). The tensions in each area become cumulative and under certain circumstances can lead to the demise of the entire enterprise. The emotional costs required to sustain the school in the face of these conflicts are judged greater than the educational benefits derived (Firestone, 1976, p. 51). Issues arising out of interconnection of personal and professional roles are significant in Mt. Currie because of the dense network of community kinship ties.

Constituencies and Professionalism

Fein (1971) identifies the underlying philosophical issues relating to professionalism in the U.S., where, in the context of a long history of democratic, progressive, and liberal thought, lay involvement in educational decision making is lauded. He points out that lay Board members are often swayed by parochial concerns which are neither liberal nor progressive. Paradoxically, the professional educator becomes the bulwark against the unenlightened view of the public, which "presumably" knows best its own educational needs and how to provide for them.

The democratic principle? Yes. Belief in this principle is based on the long tested knowledge that people, given the essential facts and freedoms to express their views will make the best decisions in matters that affect their own welfare. (Seay *et al.*, 1974, p. 171)

Fein questions whether in fact liberal professional educators practice what writers such as Seay advocate. Fein cautions that when educators' programs are no longer perceived to be effective, the legitimacy of the power which they have will be questioned and possibly overturned (1974, pp. 64-71). This has interesting implications for Mt. Currie, where tensions between Native professional educators and Native lay Board members are evident.

Sarason addresses the issue of legitimacy (the professionals vs. the laity) in his discussion of constituencies (1982, pp. 285, 293). He asserts that a frequently underestimated or overlooked factor in the process of educational change is the importance of constituencies. Changes require the consent of the constituents on behalf of whom changes are made (be these teachers or parents). He exhorts all innovators, in their own self-interest, first, to recognize the importance of constituencies, second, to view their leadership position as an opportunity to develop consti-
tuen-

cies, and, third, to confront realistically the time demands of constituency building. "The constituents must become as much the implementers as the objects of change" (p. 293). This advice has salience for the Mt. Currie School Board because of its avowed aim to involve the community (parents). It is equally relevant to school administrators whose immediate constituents (Board and teachers) must be integral to the change process if it is to succeed.

In the context of the literature on community control in Native communities and in North American society at large, the Mt. Currie example is illustrative. In turn, relating the Mt. Currie experience to the literature suggests steps which have the potential to help the Mt. Currie community expedite educational developments.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EDUCATIONAL ROLE RELATIONSHIPS IN MT. CURRIE

Data on program development, implementation, and role relationships were collected through a series of 25 interviews with five of the eight members of the School Board and 20 of 33 professional employees. The interviews focussed on three areas: the Native cultural curriculum, the Lil'wat language curriculum, and community involvement. It was the Board's intention to assess progress in these areas.⁵ Documentation of the work also revealed information on role relationships – especially as these inhibited or promoted program development.

Each interview used a series of open-ended questions as a reference and lasted between one and two hours. Each individual interviewed received the questions at least a week in advance together with the information that the Board was requesting assistance in gathering data. The Board's objective was to take steps towards achieving the school's goals of implementing cultural and Native language development programs, and community involvement. All individuals were informed that to help insure an adequate sample, the school staff was grouped into four divisions, by grade level, and members of each group were interviewed, based on their availability. Everyone was made aware that two school administrators, three curriculum consultants, five Board members, and two employees on educational leave were also part of the sample. Central questions were:

1. "What activities, materials and resources do you use in teaching which relate to native culture and the local community?" This question was subdivided into questions on curriculum materials, field trips, Lil'wat language, and resource people.
2. "What is your overall opinion of teaching Native curriculum in the

school? Is progress being made in this area? Do you have suggestions for improvement?"

3. "How often, and under what circumstances do you have contact with parents, Board members, consultants and teachers?" Specific categories of interaction were identified, e.g., interaction in regard to curriculum, standards of conduct for students, parental concerns, salary, contract, and professional development.

Using the method described by Morris and Fitz-Gibbon (1981), the responses were sorted into the following categories: cultural curriculum, language curriculum, curriculum implementation, community involvement, employment opportunities for graduates, and role relationships. Data from different groups (teachers, Board members, administrators, etc.) were recorded separately because their different roles suggested the possibility of different perspectives. This article reports the most frequent statements for each group. An assessment of the degree of implementation of program components was derived from a checklist which noted the presence or absence of important program components.

Cultural Curriculum

Teachers at every grade level (kindergarten to Grade 12) reported implementing curriculum units on the Mt. Currie community. This was confirmed by curriculum consultants, school administrators, and Board members. All agreed that it was a good thing to have these units, and all felt that more were needed. Two Board members, the administrators, the curriculum consultants and three of the twelve teachers noted that they were aware that there were parents in the community who did not approve of Native culture in the curriculum and that these parents sent their children to the provincial school in Pemberton. Questioned about how much more Native curriculum should be incorporated, the administrators and consultants indicated that they could never give up following the provincial curriculum for fear of alienating some of these parents. Among teachers, concern was directed at the paucity of materials and the lack of guidance and resources in developing new curriculum.

While no respondent would suggest exactly how many weeks of instruction on Native culture would be appropriate, all of the school employees, with the exception of the Grade 12 Social Studies and Language teacher, felt there should be more. All employees (that is, everyone except the Board members) also concurred that: (1) there were difficulties associated with repetition of material from one grade to the next; (2) many instances of low student interest decreased teacher interest

TABLE 1
Cultural Curriculum

<i>Level</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Time Per Week</i>	<i>Duration</i>
K-6	<i>Community units</i> e.g.: Family life Nature Walks Art Projects Fishing Music Medicinal Plants Story Telling	1-2 hrs./wk.	3-4 weeks each
7-9	<i>Art units</i> e.g.: History and Techniques of Native Art Styles	3 hrs./wk.	10 months
7-12	<i>Issues units</i> e.g.: Comparing Contemporary Indians of U.S.A. and Canada Trip to Rough Rock School	3 hrs./wk.	6 months
12	<i>Sewing unit</i> e.g.: Designing, Sewing & Decorating Buckskin Clothing	3 hr./wk.	3 months

in developing more material; (3) there were difficulties in attracting from the community volunteer resource people with cultural skills; (4) more direction from administrators and Board members was needed. Accomplishments in curriculum development are summarized in Table 1. In addition, all elementary students have access to an after-school cultural program.

All of the elementary teachers pointed to the after-school program as more successful than their own classroom programs. They attributed this to voluntary student attendance, salaries for resource people, and the relaxed atmosphere created by not having to integrate activities into the relatively short time slots (20 to 40 minutes) typical of classrooms. This last factor allowed the extended sequences of instruction necessary for many activities, and the voluntary involvement of parents who more readily *dropped-in* after than during school. High expectations of student

performance – if they didn't participate fully and practice skills regularly, resource people could ask them to leave the program – were also identified as contributing to the success of the program.

Language Curriculum

The role of individual teachers in implementing the language curriculum can best be understood in the context of the overall program and its development. In 1978, the Board authorized the establishment of a curriculum development project for Lil'wat language. The staff for this project, funded by Northern Affairs grants for special cultural projects, include a linguist, a curriculum consultant, and two curriculum writers. The linguist and the curriculum consultant, although hired from outside the community, have been on staff at the school since 1973. The two curriculum writers are graduates of the Native teacher education program, and each has five years of classroom experience. As the consultant prepares to leave the project (the terms of his contract involved training Native personnel to replace him), one of the writers has already begun to take responsibility for project reports and reapplications for funding.

Since 1978, the team has produced a Lil'wat language curriculum and supporting instructional materials for Grades kindergarten through 12. They have worked with teachers in implementing these materials and have been responsible for securing their own funding.

The overall design of the kindergarten to Grade 12 program places a heavy emphasis on an oral approach in kindergarten to Grade 3, slowly adding written materials, and moving to a more structured study of grammar in later grades. In addition to increasing formal structural studies, the conversational-oral component is supposed to be maintained at every grade level. Table 2 presents a summary description of the program.

In the elementary grades the language competency of instructors is varied, and this bears direct relation to the degree of implementation reported by the teachers (see Table 3).

Curriculum Implementation

The details of implementation are too numerous to record here, but achievements are considerable.⁶ Nevertheless, all respondents tended to emphasize overall weaknesses rather than specific accomplishments. Having done this, they then sought the cause of the weaknesses. Sometimes, these were skill-related and objectively assessed as such. In

TABLE 2
Native Language Instruction (Lil'wat)

<i>Level</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Grades 1 & 2	Vocabulary and Immersion Exercises	20 minutes/day	2 times/week
Grades 3, 4, 5	Vocabulary and Immersion Exercises	30 minutes/day	4 times/week
Grade 6	Vocabulary and Immersion Exercises	45 minutes/day	4 times/week
Grades 7–12			
Beginners	Conversation and Written	3–4 hours/week	
Intermediate	Conversation		
Advanced	Structure and Grammar		

these instances the route to remediation was clear. At other times, the source of weakness was identified as confusion in role relationships. In these cases the solution was seen to be clarification of someone's role and improved communication. As will be explored in greater detail in the section on role-relationships, the frustration over role-relationships tended to be generalized to overall achievements of the school and to cause individuals to undervalue documented achievements.

Community Involvement

In addition to community control of administration, encouraging parental involvement is identified as a high priority of staff and administration. Parental input on attendance requirements, desired academic standards, and preparation for post-secondary educational and vocational experiences have been influential in shaping policy. Administrators and teachers have proposed that, to draw together school and parents, the following be developed: a home-help service provided by the high school, a day camp during summer months, and a 4-H curriculum for students not intending further academic study. Parents have been involved in community-wide planning sessions for the new community school. These are held in conjunction with school sports awards, events which are always well attended. A yearly cultural day draws parents into contact with the school. Home visits are conducted by some teachers, primarily in lower grades. Some parents in turn visit the school, which has an open door

TABLE 3
Levels of Instructor Fluency

<i>Degree of Fluency</i>	<i>No. of Teachers Reporting</i>	<i>Sample Comments</i>
High	5	"I use Indian language every day throughout the day." "I feel completely comfortable with it. It was always my main language." "I put Indian language in every part of the curriculum."
Moderate	4	"I feel comfortable using the language in class to make commands, or to just use phrases, but I wish I knew more." "I feel comfortable with my level of fluency. As a result of the linguistics classes I talk more this year than last; before that, I had been ashamed."
Restricted	2	"My use of Indian language is restricted to prepared lesson materials." "I do not have enough fluency myself to speak outside of the lesson materials."

policy. Overall, the major concern about parent participation is that it focuses on special events and celebrations, slackening on a day-to-day basis. At the other extreme, some 25% of parents in the community have exercised the option to send their children to provincial schools (a figure which has remained fairly steady over a nine-year period). These individuals feel that academic standards are higher and vocational programs better developed in the provincial school. Many send their children to the Mt. Currie school until grade 6 and then transfer them to Pemberton.

Employment

A crucial goal of the school has been to prepare students for employment on and off the reserve. A technical institute in Vancouver offers on-site

courses in the building trades. This effort was coordinated with a major housing construction project on the reserve, and it will provide some of the trades people for the planned construction of a new school and town site. This vocational program is the result of the coordination of efforts of School Board, the band council, parents, administrators, and teachers.

In spite of such ventures, broader issues of community economic development still pose great difficulties. While technical training falls directly within the scope of the school's activities, the initiation and development of community projects are under the jurisdiction of the band council. Problems in initiating projects and integrating them with the school curriculum are common to Native communities across Canada, and to communities in the Third World (Sinclair and Lillis, 1980).

Reciprocal Role Relationships

Teachers, Consultants, and Administrators

All those interviewed noted that setting policies in the areas of curriculum, discipline and attendance of students, contracts, salaries, and the hiring, firing and professional development of teachers was a Board responsibility. Everyone interviewed also felt that Board members should be a source of moral support, and that they should be understanding and attentive, much like a beneficent parent. With one or two exceptions, teachers who had an extremely high level of skill in curriculum development felt that their expectations that the Board would set curriculum policy were not fulfilled. "I don't feel there were enough guidelines" and "They should be the ones telling us what to do" were commonly voiced concerns.

Similarly, there is disappointment in the overall level of moral support. "I've had more than average support for my own professional development (attendance at conferences, taking courses) but Board members don't say anything, one way or another, about whether they are satisfied with our work." "I don't think anyone knows I'm here. No one tells me (except the kids) how they think I am doing."

In view of the consistently reported fact that Board members did not visit classrooms regularly, all teachers were frustrated that the Board was authorized to make judgments of teachers' professional competence when these judgments have an impact on rehiring.

Board Members

All Board members said that they thought the teachers and consultants were doing a good job with curriculum. Special mention was given to the

after-school program. Members were not, however, able to identify specific curriculum units and who was teaching them.

The key item of concern to all interviewed was the comportment of employees in the school and community. It is, in part, to review possible problems in this area that each teacher and consultant is interviewed every year. Several discreet references were made to employees who had problems with alcohol and to the Board's attempt to give them support without jeopardizing the school's reputation. There were two cases of teachers who repeatedly failed to be present for work and were dismissed. Others who did keep up reasonable attendance records are still employed.

Board member's comments focused on three main areas: concerns about teachers; concerns about community support; and recognition of positive developments. The same positive developments were also noted by teachers. These are summarized in Table 4.

INTERPRETATION OF INTERVIEW DATA

Interpretation of the data reported above is guided by the literature on role relationships and constituencies, and by contextual information on the school and community. The literature fully documents that lay people, Native and non-Native, committed to an educational goal can have their best intentions and dreams undermined by insufficient knowledge and skills of administration, community relations, and curriculum development. As the participants confront the day-to-day details of operating an educational institution they may find themselves insufficiently prepared for the tasks or unable to reach consensus. While they try to sort out these concerns they may find themselves losing touch, and perhaps ultimately losing credibility, with their constituents. Where does the Mt. Currie community education enterprise fit in this context?

Role Strain

Interview responses on the subject of role-relationships indicate evidence of *role shock*, or perhaps its less severe form, *role strain* (King, 1981), as a mutual problem of teachers and Board members. While neither as pervasive nor as dysfunctional as the case observed by King, they are nevertheless evident. Board members accepted their positions with a feeling of assurance that as mature members of the community (all over age 40) their commitment to a native-run school, their support for Native student teachers, their desire for a curriculum including Native language and culture, and their knowledge of proper comportment and modelling

TABLE 4
Board Members' Views of the School's Operation

<i>Issues</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Sample Comments or factors identified</i>
Relationship with Teachers	5	"We are concerned about the behaviour of our native teachers; they are the role models." "We look for a respectable person." "We look for someone who supports the school."
Community Support	5	"People don't want to get involved." "They just complain." "We don't get any recognition."
Positive Developments	5	High School Graduation Cultural Day After school resource program Planning high school curriculum Planning new school complex Lil'wat language program

for children would amply qualify them for their jobs. They found that this was not the case and that they were often ill equipped to respond to issues in curriculum development.

Similarly, the Native teachers completed their professional training with the expectation that they would continue to have the emotional support they received from the Board while they were in training. The Board sponsored the student teachers by selecting them for the program and helping to secure funding for them. The Board served as an advisory council in giving shape and direction to the program. Student teachers were disappointed when twice-yearly sessions, where they presented their work and were praised by the Board, were replaced by end-of-year interviews to determine who would be employed the following September. The employment interviews often came in the midst of funding uncertainties (as did the interviews on which this study is based) when the Board did not know what its budget would be and how many teachers could be hired.

The transformation in the role of the Board and its relationship to the

student teacher was occurring as the teacher training program was shifting from full-time to part-time operation. Once student teachers received provincial certification, the Board and university agreed to a part- rather than full-time university program. Although the university will continue to offer two courses per year until 1985, the absence of a full-time staff of instructors and supervisors put pressure on the Board and staff to take on unprecedented duties.

Uncertainty about future employment and perceived lack of continuous guidance in curriculum development led all teachers to question the authority of the Board. The teachers had university training. The Board included a few high school graduates and several members who had never gone beyond elementary school. Few had any other experiences in community affairs which might have prepared them for their role. Board members were aware of teachers' dissatisfactions but unable to do anything except apply their well-established criteria for assessment. They continued to review employees' salaries on the basis of professional behaviour and role modelling. Teachers were criticized for their public consumption of alcohol and not consistently praised for educational achievements. The teachers who were looking for praise, guidance, and security felt they were receiving only criticism. The Board members, who were looking for teachers who would lead the way in curriculum planning and model citizenship, found themselves unable to provide the necessary technical guidance, uncertain about sources of funding, trying to control and rehabilitate a small number of individuals with alcohol and family problems, and trying to maintain credibility in a community whose most visible sign of support seemed to be sending their children to the school. All Board members and teachers reported that they could not walk down the streets of the village without hearing concerns from parents about attendance, discipline, and facilities. The spectre of parents withdrawing their most visible sign of support was mentioned by all Board members and teachers.

The mutually unfulfilled expectations and the apparent absence of ways to deal with resulting frustrations amply illustrate what King refers to as role strain/shock. But, often inadvertently, steps were and are being taken to resolve these strains. It was the expectation of those who developed the teacher training program that the gap in expertise left by their slow withdrawal would be filled by the more expert of the trainees and curriculum consultants (some of whom were drawn from the trainee group, some hired from outside the community). This did happen, but not immediately and not before role relationships with the Board were adjusted. Frustrated at the lack of direction coming from the Board, the curriculum development staff initiated meetings with the administrators

to plan their work. They continue to feel the need for personal approval and for access to the wisdom and moral support of the community. The gap created by the Board's inability to provide the support is being filled by a developing network of elders in the village who serve as resource people and close personal working partners. These resource personnel are paid for their work from grants for curriculum development. These individuals, with knowledge of language and tradition, are mentors as well as co-workers; they provide both technical and moral support as well as the commitment and leadership characteristic of the traditional model of interpersonal relations (Wyatt, 1977 a, b, 1978-79; Newmann and Oliver, 1969). Moreover, they have no role in hiring and firing nor in the administration of the school, and are not subject to the role conflict of Board members who, on the one hand, are expected to provide guidance and, on the other hand, are expected to make the hard decisions affecting employment.

Access to the community also comes through the after-school resource program, rodeo, and cultural day. Planning for the new school and the joint trips which staff and Board members are taking outside Mt. Currie to observe and review programs in other locales also serve this function.

Curriculum consultants along with teachers who have the skill and have taken the initiative in working with consultants have developed a working relationship which gives them desired access to the community. Less skilled teachers have, understandably, considerably greater difficulty in getting the guidance they need. Unlike the consultants, they have little time to get outside the confines of the classroom and to be in contact with the community. Consultants in turn are too occupied creating materials to spend much time implementing them with those teachers unable to do this immediately on their own.

Constituency Building

The importance of constituency building, identified by Sarason, is again illustrated at Mt. Currie. The *raison d'être* of an alternate school is the commitment of the community that initiates it. At Mt. Currie, the initial band-appointed education committee selected administrators to act on their behalf and promoted the training of teachers to implement their policies. The committee, later constituted as a Board, acted on behalf of the community. The Board is made up of community members but has no formal mechanisms for communicating with or developing its constituency. According to Sarason's paradigm, it is the role of the administrators to initiate and develop Board support and input for staff and school. It is the role of the Board and administrators to initiate and develop

community support and input for the entire school enterprise. Initial steps in constituency-building at Mt. Currie are being taken. The administrators initiated the Board-staff workshop referred to earlier. This resulted in the report, *Directions for the School*, the joint planning of a technical vocational curriculum for high school, the identification of the need for a program of individualized instruction in the high school, and planning for the new school complex. In these instances, the Board effectively served as a conduit for parental opinion, conveying parental perceptions of educational needs to administrators, consultants, and staff. Board, administrators, consultants, and staff then visited model programs, jointly invited and conferred with outside consultants from other jurisdictions, and formed a common definition of community needs. Consultants and staff then generated the specifics.

King (1981) describes a Native community where neither administrators nor Board members were clear about how to communicate with constituents. Erickson and Schwartz (1970) describe a Native community where professional administrators did not attempt to involve Board members. Ingram et al. (1981) describe the need in Native communities for educational leaders who combine technical expertise with the ability to lead by consensus. The administrators at Mt. Currie conform to this description. In interviews in Mt. Currie, all Board and staff members were able to identify specific activities initiated by the administrators to assist in improving communication. Both administrators were affiliated with the school even before it came under community control. The secretary-treasurer took all the courses in the teacher education program (with the exception of the practicum), and the principal was one of the few Native teachers in the school even before there was a teacher training program. Both are mature and respected members of the community and the staff. They combine elements of traditional leadership by consensus with contemporary leadership patterns founded on professional expertise.

Traditional vs. Contemporary Native Culture

The preceding analysis of Mt. Currie in the context of the literature on community control and educational change omits one important variable. Mt. Currie is a Native community, and this establishes key issues not common in other community ventures. King (1981) and Ingram et al. (1981) allude to the psychodynamics of negotiating role relationships in an Indian community. Reference is made to authority by consensus and endemic factionalism. Firestone (1976) talks about the strain of combining professional and personal roles in non-Native schools.

The specialness of the Native situation is that in interpersonal relations it is in many ways, in spite of the advent of media, technology, and schooling, still a *folk society* (Redfield, 1953). Moreover its avowed goals and commitments are to maintain aspects of traditional Native culture not only in curriculum content but also in interpersonal matters. Board and staff wish to follow a model of interpersonal relations based on traditional community patterns. This involves decision making by consensus, relationships defined by personal qualities rather than job descriptions, and authority based at least as much on the wisdom that comes with maturity and life experience as on formal schooling (Wyatt, 1977 a, b, 1978-79; Newmann and Oliver, 1969). What is sometimes found in place of traditional patterns is unilateral decision making, role specialization, depersonalization, and a generation gap. Nevertheless, efforts are being made to combine highly valued traditional patterns with contemporary ones. The cultural day, the after-school program, and joint staff/Board meetings are illustrative. Curriculum consultants have a network of mentors in the community who provide traditional role models. Administrators combine the technical expertise which derives from university training with the ability to lead by consensus which derives from traditional patterns. However, less highly skilled teachers still look to the Board as a mentor and are still not getting the support and guidance they desire. These individuals report feeling confusion and disappointment. Like the Board members who are inadequately prepared for their jobs, they too are experiencing the role strain that results from being unable to perform up to their own and others' expectations. They are also experiencing conflicts in personal and professional roles similar to those experienced by parents in the free schools studied by Firestone. The conflicts in Mt. Currie have not, as in some of Firestone's cases, led to the demise of the entire enterprise. However, they do draw vital energy away from the main goals of the school. Steps which can be taken to ameliorate this conflict and the technical-educational gap alienating Board and staff are discussed below.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

When members of the Mt. Currie community took control of their educational system they began to transform schooling in their community. Their goals have always been to maintain continuity with tradition and to prepare students for life in contemporary society. Rather than seeing these goals as conflicting with one another, the link with tradition is a source of energy in growing into strong roles in contemporary society.

In the Mt. Currie community, the locally elected all-Indian community school board (1) rejects the assumption of many radical educators – that an Indian-controlled school has to be entirely immersed in traditional Indian ways to maintain integrity and native identity; (2) feels the school should provide young people with salable skills on the job market; (3) is interested in innovation but is sensitive and responsive to many conservative parents who are hesitant about rapid change; (4) is sustaining a number of aspects of traditional life; (5) chooses to work within the structure of the school rather than attempt rapid transformation. (Wyatt, 1977a, p. 405)

The fact that they are not a centralized bureaucracy and are the decision makers allows them to do this, but not without difficulties. The dilemma is that continuity in traditional leadership roles for Board members has been difficult to maintain in the context of the growing technical expertise of their employees. Nevertheless, the desire to maintain continuity with traditional authority and access to the emotional support it provides is still present. Some means to maintain continuity have been outlined.

Some additional means of maintaining continuity with traditional patterns of authority and knowledge, while at the same time maximizing contemporary patterns, are suggested. These can be subsumed under two main categories: the operation of school programs, and the professional development and role of Board members. For reasons outlined, the after-school program better fits the life-style of the community than does bringing community resource people into the classroom. This does not mean that efforts at Native curriculum development within the school should be abandoned but that their impact is more circumscribed than developers had initially hoped it would be. The social studies, language arts, and science curriculum are enhanced by the inclusion of native resources but, by themselves, they do not convey the richness of experience which the after-school program has achieved. One of the keys to the success of this program has been the role played by resource people.

By contrast, Board members, whose skills and knowledge were adequate in the first years of the school's development, now need professional development. Most Board members have little more than an elementary school education. Most have no formal training or practical experience in social, political, or economic issues affecting their community. A program of adult education or on-the-job training focussing on personnel management, administration, and public relations is a prerequisite to implementing a number of recommendations for the continued development of the Mt. Currie community school. In order for the school to endure, it will be necessary to establish clear job descriptions

for Board and staff. Clearer job descriptions should forestall some of the staff's frustration. If, for instance, it were specified that Board members were not expected to design curriculum, this step could alleviate some of the tension Board and staff experience over this issue. If guidance in this area is needed, but it is not the Board's role to provide it, then additional support must be given to staff either to allow them to do this themselves or to allow consultants to do it for them.

The school's continued existence also demands establishing communication links between the Board and its constituency, the community. Without further efforts in ascertaining community wishes and initiating new programs, it seems inevitable that Board members will always fear the community and be on the defensive. Their position must be changed from one of total vulnerability to community rumour to one of confidence in their ability to respond openly and positively to community sentiments.⁷ A thorough-going system of regular elections for all Board members would also assist in this effort.⁸

Board and staff are so involved in day-to-day details that they have little time to stand back and assess their achievements and difficulties. Contact with other community schools, Native and non-Native, and assessment of accomplishments by an objective, outside party should become routine.

In addition to the educational benefits that would accrue to Board members from an on-going professional development program, such a program would also help to restore their own confidence in their role. Teachers have participated in an extensive training program designed to foster their professional development. Board members need the same nourishment and support in their role. Only then can they be returned to the position of confidence which will allow them once again to play the role of supportive leader.

The Mt. Currie Community School is part of an innovative educational movement which embodies a spirit of cultural renaissance and social reform. Ten years ago, when efforts at reform began, no one could predict where innovation would lead. Many efforts similar to those at Mt. Currie, in Native and non-Native communities, did not persist beyond the first few years. Documentation in the preceding sections records Mt. Currie's accomplishments. Difficulties in program development are primarily in role relationships and are in many ways similar to those in other parent-run schools in North America. At Mt. Currie there is the additional concern of balancing traditional and contemporary aspects of roles. Creating a balance has been precarious and has contributed to conflict, loss of energy, and lowering of morale.

In spite of these difficulties, shared commitment is still strongly in

evidence. It is hoped that the specific diagnosis and recommendations here will contribute to the Mt. Currie effort and assist others sharing similar concerns.⁹

NOTES

- ¹ The case of the Mistassini Cree is documented in two films by the National Film Board of Canada, *Cree Hunters of the Mistassini*, produced by Boyce Richardson, and *Cree Way*.
- ² During the ten-year period discussed in this article this federal agency has changed its name from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (D.I.A.N.D.) to the Department of Northern Affairs. For simplification, only the latter name will be used in this article.
- ³ This paper, written by the major national Indian political organization and endorsed by the Federal Department of Northern Affairs, is the reference point for all local initiatives in Native education across Canada.
- ⁴ The vocational dimension of the Mt. Currie program, identified but not examined in depth in this article, is strikingly similar in its goals and difficulties to programs in Third World Countries which attempt to use the community-based school as the fulcrum for localized economic development projects (Sinclair and Lillis, 1980).
- ⁵ The author conducted these interviews as part of a review process requested by the Board.
- ⁶ The developments in this program compare very favourably with the guidelines set by Bauman in *A Guide to Issues in Indian Language Retention*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C. 1980.
- ⁷ While all Board members are literate, only a few finished secondary school and some never progressed beyond elementary school. *School and Community* published by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (O.E.C.D., 1975) and reports of developments in Tanzania (Kassam, 1983) document the impact of adult education programs which transform adult members of a community from political vulnerability to positions of informed decision makers and support recommendations made here.
- ⁸ When the Board's precursor, the education committee, was formed by the Band Council in 1973, the Council also appointed all 12 of the Board members. In subsequent years elections were held for some of these positions. The Board chairperson, secretary-treasurer and four members are still council appointees. These individuals feel particularly vulnerable to community criticism.
- ⁹ The author would like to thank all Mt. Currie School Board and staff for participating in interviews and those individuals who read and commented on this article.

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Die Sprache und Kultur der eingeborenen kanadischen Indianer erlebten eine Renaissancezeit in den frühen siebziger Jahren. In Mt. Currie, British Columbia war diese Renaissance eng mit der Umgestaltung der Schulverwaltung – d.h. mit der Umgestaltung

von einem englisch verwalteten in ein örtlich verwaltetes einheimisches Institut – verbunden.

Dieser Aufsatz bedient sich Daten einer Umfrage, um einen Überblick über die ändernden Rollenverhältnisse von Schulbehörde und Lehrpersonal zu geben. Eine Analyse dieser Daten enthüllt ähnliche Bedenken wie die von örtlichen Erziehungswesen in ganz Nordamerika. Was jedoch einzigartig bei der einheimischen Gemeinde ist, ist die Integration der heutigen englischen und der traditionellen einheimischen Rollenverhältnisse.

Vorschläge, die auf diese Bedenken ansprechen, sollten nicht nur den einheimischen Gemeinden, sondern auch anderen Gruppen mit Schulprogrammen, die ein Input der Gemeinde sowie Anteilnahme der Eltern fordern, behilflich sein.

El periodo abarcado por los primeros años de los setenta vió el renacimiento de las lenguas y culturas indias de Canadá. En la Colombia Británica, en Mt. Currie, este renacimiento se unió de cerca a la transformación de la escuela de una entidad anglófona a una institución controlada por los nativos mismos.

Este artículo usa los datos recogidos en entrevistas para dar una idea clara de las relaciones cambiantes entre el Comité Escolar y el personal. Su análisis revela preocupaciones comunes con otras empresas de educación comunitarias en América del Norte. Lo que es particular a la comunidad nativa es la integración de las relaciones tradicionales nativas con las contemporáneas anglófonas.

Las recomendaciones para responder a estas preocupaciones pueden ser útiles no solamente para las comunidades nativas, sino para otros grupos cuyos programas escolares desean tener participación comunitaria e involucimiento de los padres.

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