



Tribal education : a case study of Blackfeet elders
by Dorothy M Still Smoking

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

A major concern exists in tribal communities for the preservation of the native language and culture. For many generations, tribal people have relied on the traditional educational system to support their future. Through this educational process, the family role of transmitting tribal knowledge has been severely weakened as formal educational institutions do not transmit Blackfeet knowledge, language, or cultural elements as part of their learning process.

Since the public schools are not supporting the cultural and language needs of the tribe, the responsibility rests on community programs to provide alternative opportunities of tribal holistic learning for tribal ways.

The viewpoint of the elders is the link to tribal knowing. Educational institutions have neglected to teach Blackfeet cultural elements, and the views of the elders have not been incorporated into these systems. Thus, this traditional knowing is excluded from the current educational system and is in danger of being lost to the tribe.

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of selected Blackfeet elders (a) concerning what constitutes the traditional Blackfeet knowledge base and (b) concerning how they believe this knowledge base should be passed on through the various formal and informal institutions that exist in the Blackfeet community.

Following the model of the Rowland study with the Northern Cheyenne, 20 elders were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in Blackfeet in order to preserve the rich context of the language.

Findings were in the areas of (a) Blackfeet ways of life, (b) family relationships, (c) importance of Blackfeet names, (d) significance of Blackfeet ceremonies, (e) importance of respecting and restoring the language, (f) reflections on the formal school experiences of the elders, and (g) the role of the language in transferring Blackfeet knowledge and culture. The role of the family has been weakened as the use of the language has declined. The elders clearly see that the hope for the future for Blackfeet people rests in developing and restoring language usage through the children. Recommendations were made in the areas of restructuring formal educational systems to include language training, continuing to involve community-based programs in language restoration, and involving parents and elders in language implementation programs.

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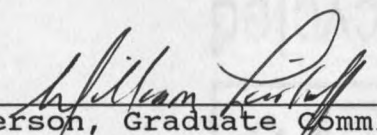
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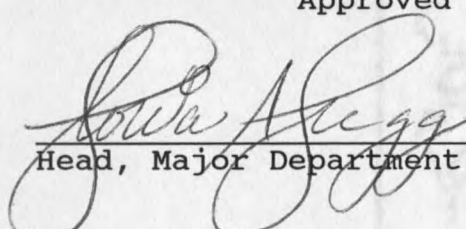
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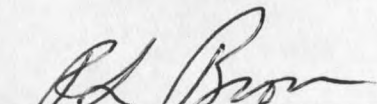
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ABSTRACT

A major concern exists in tribal communities for the preservation of the native language and culture. For many generations, tribal people have relied on the traditional educational system to support their future. Through this educational process, the family role of transmitting tribal knowledge has been severely weakened as formal educational institutions do not transmit Blackfeet knowledge, language, or cultural elements as part of their learning process. Since the public schools are not supporting the cultural and language needs of the tribe, the responsibility rests on community programs to provide alternative opportunities of tribal holistic learning for tribal ways.

The viewpoint of the elders is the link to tribal knowing. Educational institutions have neglected to teach Blackfeet cultural elements, and the views of the elders have not been incorporated into these systems. Thus, this traditional knowing is excluded from the current educational system and is in danger of being lost to the tribe.

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of selected Blackfeet elders (a) concerning what constitutes the traditional Blackfeet knowledge base and (b) concerning how they believe this knowledge base should be passed on through the various formal and informal institutions that exist in the Blackfeet community. Following the model of the Rowland study with the Northern Cheyenne, 20 elders were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in Blackfeet in order to preserve the rich context of the language.

Findings were in the areas of (a) Blackfeet ways of life, (b) family relationships, (c) importance of Blackfeet names, (d) significance of Blackfeet ceremonies, (e) importance of respecting and restoring the language, (f) reflections on the formal school experiences of the elders, and (g) the role of the language in transferring Blackfeet knowledge and culture. The role of the family has been weakened as the use of the language has declined. The elders clearly see that the hope for the future for Blackfeet people rests in developing and restoring language usage through the children. Recommendations were made in the areas of restructuring formal educational systems to include language training, continuing to involve community-based programs in language restoration, and involving parents and elders in language implementation programs.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Enter this lodge, oh Sun, that we may share your strength.

Our friends are before us.

They have purported great things.

They have undertaken difficult tasks.

Make plain their trails before them.

Bring them health and strength and good fortune.

Keep their minds and hearts toward all people

As straight as this pipe stem:

Their deeds and thoughts as fragrant

As the incense of this sweetgrass:

Give their eyes the vision of the eagle

to see the needs of the people:

Their ears the alertness of the deer

to hear the cries for help and understanding:

and into their hearts the courage of the bear,

to speed to the relief of distress

swift as the flight of the arrow;

Make them strong like the bull buffalo,

That swerves not from its course

But overcomes all obstacles

That stand in its path.

As the smoke of our pipe spirals upward

So rise our thoughts in prayer.

We invite you, oh Sun Spirit,

And all friendly spirits

To enter this Medicine Lodge

And smoke with us the Medicine Pipe,

Kimoki, kimoki.

Have pity on us. Have pity on us.

Bird Rattler, 1931

(Prayer recorded and transcribed from religious ceremony held at Bird Rattler's residence on Cut Bank Creek, 1931.)

The above message was translated from a prayer of Bird Rattler, a Blackfeet medicine pipeman for his people. The

main element of the prayer is a clear invitation to members of the tribe to investigate means to assist the tribe's survival since "the journey of the tribe will rest upon the shoulders and dreams of its children, and those adults who choose to share with them, and all people, the powers gifted to the tribe eons ago" (Kipp & Still Smoking, 1994).

In a collection of presentations entitled "Stabilizing Indigenous Languages" from Northern Arizona University's Center for Excellence in Education Monograph Series, a discussion of native language preservation, restoration, and research was made by professionals in the fields of linguistics, Indian education, and anthropology. One professor from the University of Alaska in Anchorage stated his concern about tribal languages:

Families must retrieve their rightful position as the first teachers of our languages. They must talk our languages every day, everywhere, with everyone, anywhere. But if they are going to relinquish this teaching responsibility to the schools they must be supportive. They must make sure the schools use teaching methods which are oral-based.

All presenters stated that everyone must keep discussing issues surrounding Alaska Native/Native American language preservation efforts. Dr. Richard Little Bear, Northern Cheyenne, stressed regarding to tribal languages that "it is the last and only time that we will have the opportunity to save them."

For many generations, tribal people relied on the "traditional" United States educational system to support

their future as indigenous people. This historical dependency can be traced from colonial times to today, illustrating hundreds of years of the assimilation process. Tribal people accepted this approach to education and have replicated it over the years even when given the choice to develop their own formats. Attempts to move tribal educational formats away from the "traditional" American approach were made through the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 when tribes were given greater control over their educational policies. In 1978, Congress passed the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act allowing Indian communities to charter their own institutions of post-secondary higher education. In the 1990's, an even greater defining of Indian education needs to take place.

Current educational philosophy applied to Indian children is in need of change in order to benefit from recommendations derived from the historical analysis of the reservation school systems' record in educational achievement. The educational record clearly illustrates the long-standing negative consequences of "traditional" American educational formats on Indian children (Rowland, 1994).

In spite of the legislative effort giving tribal communities more control over their educational process, change has been slow and weak. For example, the long-

standing practice of eliminating tribal languages from the educational process continues to devastate and negate "indigenous" attempts to educate tribal people. Too often Indian education formats merely replicate the traditional mainstream public school model. The educational model that is needed to educate Indian children successfully needs further revision and definition. Statistics indicate innovations in the traditional model of education to increase Indian children's achievement rates have been pseudo-treatment because little statistical improvement is noted in the record of public education on reservations (D. R. Kipp, personal interview, 1996).

In a community survey conducted by a Blackfeet Community College bilingual project (BCC, 1984), Blackfeet students expressed shame at being unable to speak the language, and they lamented its disappearance and all the attributes connected to it. This expression of cultural shame among tribal members points back to a time the Blackfeet language was forbidden to be spoken in educational institutions.

Rowland (1994) chronicled support for the notion that education can transmit tribal culture for future generations by incorporating Cheyenne philosophy and beliefs into the present Cheyenne reservation educational system. The study sought to help resolve the dilemma of poor student achievement and cultural conflict facing the Cheyenne people

in their schools. The study explored the perceptions and reactions of Northern Cheyenne elders concerning the educational process and the resulting implications on the Northern Cheyenne reservation educational system.

The Blackfeet were no exception to the arrangement of educational services through government contracts with public and parochial movements (Howard, 1965). Since the first mission schools offered by the Catholic Church and U.S. federal government to recent public school acquisitions with modern educational gadgetry, the puzzle remains to what are positive methods for educating Blackfeet people as opposed to mere theories based on the mindview of the day about Indians and their abilities.

Many theories heavily influenced by biased sociological considerations were used to establish educational formats on Indian people; these techniques were considered practically barbaric in this day and age. For example, the practice of removing Indian children from their homes and sending them to far away boarding schools has ceased. Today, due to the lack of objective history and reflection on what took place in the past, a majority of reservation residents--including the educational cadre--know little about the dynamics of education applied to Blackfeet people. Assumptions about learning based on biased information can have an impact on the treatment of the learners. Further, few university and college curricula researchers are in any better position to

advise due to their own lack of candor and knowledge of the quintessential tribe. (D. R. Kipp, personal interview, 1996).

For example, the speaking of the native language by Indian students has never been socially and educationally accepted by educators and their theories (D. R. Kipp, personal interview, 1996). Instead of a true investigation of the role of language in learning, educators have simply assumed it is a negative factor. Once established, bias become fact. History shows the Blackfeet were no exception to the widespread bias. Maintaining eloquence in two languages is still considered to be linguistic retardation by reservation school educators (D. R. Kipp, personal interview, 1996). Learning a second language while keeping the first is still thought to handicap a child. Nothing is further from the truth, yet the notion persists. Therefore, speaking a tribal language at school was grounds for punishment (Rowland, 1994). In an unfortunate way, this remains true today.

In the past 90 years, most papers written about the learning patterns, abilities, and difficulties of Blackfeet children have presented little factual knowledge. In the same time span the Blackfeet Tribe has suffered more than its share of irrelevant studies with over 250 major studies having been conducted on the reservation. Studies have ranged from elaborate and sophisticated intelligence testing

formats to perfunctory walk-through observations conducted in less than an hour. The spectrum of analyses, recommendations, and predictions derived from these studies have often been biased and incompetent. Nevertheless they have been influential in dictating curricula and learning-teaching practices for Blackfeet people. Without reform, these abuses will undoubtedly persist into the future.

In the 1930's, Douglas Gold came to the Blackfeet Reservation as a young man to be a school teacher and, ultimately, the superintendent of schools. Over the years he has enjoyed a solid reputation as friend and benefactor to the Blackfeet. Most importantly, he was viewed as one of those insightful outsiders who, upon living with the community for a suitable time, had come to know and understand the tribe.

Yet, in spite of the good will of the Blackfeet community towards Gold and his obvious attachment to them, it is ironic, if not illustrative, that he wrote one of the most damaging studies ever done on them (Gold, 1934). Gold so eloquently stated, based on his investigation, nothing less than the notion that the Blackfeet Indians were born less intelligent than White people. Gold based his knowledge of the traits and characteristics of Blackfeet children as exhibited in early Indian schools; writings presented through the Report of the Secretary of the Interior, and executive documents. Gold distributed a

survey which solicited estimates of Blackfoot intelligence by local White people and teachers. These estimates of the intelligence of Blackfoot children contained biased data supporting the premise that intelligence correlated with the amount of Indian blood a child possesses (Gold, 1934).

Blackfoot History

David Thompson, one of the earliest visitors to the Blackfoot Tribe is cited with providing the earliest description of the tribe. "The Piegan, the frontier tribe of the Blackfoot Nation, were on the Plains of the Eagle Hills, near the North Saskatchewan River, in 1730, a distance of over 400 miles east of the Rockies" (Ewers, 1958, p. 8). He referred to the Blackfeet as:

Descendants of the Algonquin linguistic family, distinguished for noble tribes, stalwart warriors, and a high aboriginal development, the Blackfeet constituted a powerful nation: a fierce, proud, haughty tribe. They were one of the great Indian people of the northwest, with thousands of lodges, and holding by force of arms their hunting grounds....They were an intelligent, and when aroused, an extremely warlike people....These red men had rarely known defeat in battle, and considered themselves the aristocracy of the fighting tribes of the whole vast Rocky Mountain country. Their war parties ranged from the Saskatchewan on the north as far south as the Salt Lake, and not a tribe that inhabited that great area but knew and feared the raids of the Blackfeet. (p. 8)

Historians did not write then nor do so now of the intricacies of the native culture, the dynamics of the language patterns, the systems of social order, the learning

order of the patterns of life, the dynamics of family structures, or the sophistication of spirituality and psychological interpretations of life. Yet, it is true that a common philosophical perspective kept tribes together and functional. Spirituality connected to language interpretations gave strength and meaning to life. The Blackfeet had their own distinctive mindview. When it was intact, tribal self-description came from within the tribal bands of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The Confederacy of the Blackfoot people consists of three main tribes. To the far north in Canada are the "Siksika" or Blackfooted people. Their reserve is located near present day Gleichen, Alberta. Further to the south are the "Kainah", today called the Bloods. The word "Kainah", means Many Chiefs. Their reserve is at present day Cardston, Alberta, and is called the Blood Reserve of Canada. The southernmost contingent of the Confederacy are the North and South Piegan, known in the language as the "Pikuni" or "Pikani". The North Piegans, after the institution of the Canadian/American border, were kept in Canada and are on the reserve on Pincher Creek, Alberta. Their agency town is Brockett, Alberta. The South Piegans are located on their reservation at Browning, Montana. The word "Piegan" is pronounced "Pay-Gan". This pronunciation came about as a result of the early French trappers inability to say "Pikuni" (Ewers, 1958, p. 5).

The policy of colonizing native tribes has taken its toll on the Blackfeet. Treaties were made the law of the land in hopes of "settling down" the tribes "roaming" the plains. Treaties became avenues for abuse by defining and focusing on the land bases of tribes in terms the tribes could not understand. Treaties were interpreted through courts based on English law and embedded in a notion of "ownership" foreign to the Blackfeet philosophy of land stewardship.

An example of this is the Agreement of 1895. In this treaty, the starving Blackfeet people relinquished their mountain range, which is now Glacier National Park, to the federal government for 15 million dollars. Bookkeeping sleight-of-hand meant that little money actually reached the tribe. Included in the transaction was Chief Mountain, a sacred area for the Blackfeet (Ashby, 1985). Of this action, White Calf, a tribal leader, stated:

Chief Mountain is my head. Now my head is cut off. The mountains have been my last refuge. We have been driven here and now we are settle here. From Birch Creek to the boundary is what I now give you. I want the timber because in the future my children will need it. I also want all the grazing land. I would like to have the right to hunt game and fish in the mountains. The first treaty this people made with the Great Father was what was known as the Stevens Treaty. That was the first. That was the time we gave the Judith Country to the Great Father. Afterwards we made another treaty on Badger Creek. We made a good treaty then, but we were blind. (Minutes of 1895 Agreement)

Each treaty contained agreements to "educate" the

Indian people. The Senate documents of 1868 specified how Blackfeet were to be schooled (Gold, 1934).

In order to insure the civilization of the Indians entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted. Especially of such of them as are or may be settled on said agricultural reservations, and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with. And the United States agrees that for every thirty children between said ages who can be induced or compelled to attend school a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education all be furnished, who shall reside among the Indians and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher. The provisions of this act to continue for not less than twenty years. (Gold, 1934, p. 17)

The 1840's brought the Jesuit Order, or Black Robes, who introduced Catholic catechist work. English was the spoken word. The Jesuit influence extended into the Blackfeet territory when St. Peter's mission school on the Sun River was opened in 1859. Eventually, the federal government subsidized each pupil attending. Soon after, day and boarding schools were built in the vicinity of the Blackfeet Agency (Blackfeet Heritage Program, 1980).

Parallel to the establishment of schools, a treaty was signed with the Blackfeet in 1855 and later in 1888, and an Indian Agent was assigned to direct the affairs of the Blackfeet. The treaty specified monetary terms for educating the Blackfeet. The educational policy established then still prevails: Convert Blackfeet children into an

acceptable image unlike their ancestors (Blackfeet Heritage Program, 1980).

Early annual reports to the Washington, D.C., Central Office show the early day foundation of today's bias toward the education of Indian people. The Superintendent-in-Charge of the Agency between 1873 and 1876 wrote that:

They appear to have no purpose in life except to hunt and to procure robes and peltries for the traders; no thought of settlement; no knowledge of the value of agriculture; no comprehension of social or family relations or morality; the animal instinct of self-preservation; and the cunning that provides for it. (Howard, 1965, p. 10.)

"Educating" the Blackfeet by imposing a new way of life on them was difficult. The Jesuits, rejecting the established patterns of the Blackfeet, tried to mold the children into "educated" and "civilized" individuals, meaning an idealized white people. This remains true today. As the reservation grew smaller, the mission and government schools were more and more able to insist that white values be accepted by Blackfeet children (Blackfeet Heritage Program, 1980).

The diminishing of land bases, the extermination of the buffalo, and the continuing waves of disease among the Blackfeet created dependence on schools and Indian Affairs agencies. In exchange for help, the Blackfeet had to accept and give in to a whole new system of thinking, acting, feeling, looking, and talking. Between 1883 and 1884, the infamous Starvation Winter exterminated one fourth of the

tribe. By 1885 only 1,400 Blackfeet were left on earth (Ewers, 1958). Survivors took a second look at education as a means of survival.

In the early days of the Holy Family Mission, half of the enrolled students were orphans. Indoctrination of tribal elders, parents, and children continued until most families could repeat the dogma fed them over the years. In 1887, Chief White Calf, who keenly felt the loss of ancient sacred lands, contributed some of his own allotted land to establish the Holy Family Mission. Completed in 1890, the school programmed Catholic religious and moral instruction on young Blackfeet children along with vocational on-the-job training. Strict teaching methods and rigid schedules were used to eradicate Blackfeet language and culture with punitive actions (Blackfeet Heritage Program, 1980).

Years later, when tribal elders were interviewed and invited to reflect on those years, they said that school meant abandoning everything Blackfeet and adopting the white Christian way. Speaking the Blackfeet language was forbidden by harsh punishment. Though families camped around the Agency in order to be close to their children in the school, the traditional family lifestyle of the Blackfeet was already being altered without their participation or permission (Transitions, 1992).

The new ideas of the Boarding School Era published comments that illustrate this mentality. Agent Wood,

affiliated with the Blackfeet Agency, remarked that "a boarding school is the only practical method in which to inculcate and ingress the minds of the coming generation with the superiority of civilized over the uncouth and precarious course of the life in the wigwam" (Blackfeet Heritage Program, 1980). Now the separation of Blackfeet children from their home environments could be completed by sending them to distant schools for years on end before allowing them to return. In 1889, 45 Piegans were sent to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to attend school. Naturally, when the young people returned home, they were entire strangers to their parents, tribe, and culture (Howard, 1965).

Other forms of schools sprang up. Public and day schools were built. Education was a concern to both families and agents. Military posts were converted into government schools. Government boarding schools across the country sprang up to accommodate policies and dealings with tribal groups.

The Public Works Administration opened up many rural schools for adults throughout the Blackfeet Reservation, which then became centers for indoctrination of parents as well as the children. An ethnologist among the Blackfeet said,

The work of civilizing the Indian children required much more than the constant drill in the three R's. It required painstaking indoctrination in the basic fundamentals of the whiteman's culture and learning to be civilized meant learning a host of little things--to comb one's

hair, to wear a coat, trousers and shoes, to sit in a chair, to sleep in a bed, to use a knife and fork, to tell time, and much more. (Ewers, 1958, p. 309)

Adapting to the new culture meant internalizing a whole new way of thinking, acting, and living. Education, ironically, became one of the fastest growing, most acceptable activities of the Blackfeet people. With it came change, indoctrination, and conversion. Without it came starvation, hunger, and hardship. Parents saw it as a means of survival. However, the success of education, in this sense, is questionable.

Statement of the Problem

On the Blackfeet Indian Reservation today, Western education is highly valued but seldom attained. At the same time the family role of transmitting tribal knowledge has been severely weakened. The formal educational institutions do not transmit Blackfeet knowledge of language, history, and cultural elements as part of their learning process. The Blackfeet people value their tribal language and traditional ways. Public schools are not supporting the cultural and language needs of the tribe. This responsibility rests on community programs to design, develop, and provide alternative opportunities of tribal holistic learning for tribal ways. The Blackfeet Community College is one of few institutions of learning where there has been a serious attempt to incorporate community and

tribal ideals. The tribal college is still struggling with this attempt.

There is no documented evidence that the elders of the tribe have been included in giving input, ideas, and recommendations toward the transfer of tribal knowledge. On occasion, a group of elders has been interviewed to share their educational experience and viewpoints as they reflect back on their lives. Tribal knowledge consists of Blackfeet philosophy, religious concepts, traditions, customs and language. Language and culture are inseparable; therefore, language needs to be the medium for learning and acquiring tribal knowledge. The problem of teaching the Blackfeet language in formal school settings is almost non-existent or acceptable.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of selected Blackfeet elders (a) concerning what constitutes the traditional Blackfeet knowledge base and (b) concerning how they believe knowledge should be passed on through the various formal and informal institutions that exist in the Blackfeet community. The goal of the research was to uncover challenging designs for transmitting tribal culture for future generations by incorporating the Blackfeet language learning formats with children and families. A qualitative study approach of interviewing the

tribal elders to share their concerns, perceptions, and recommendations on the Blackfeet way-of-knowing was utilized. This approach supported incorporating Blackfeet philosophy and beliefs into the present system of education on the Blackfeet reservation.

According to Rowland (1994), the viewpoint of the tribal elders is the link to the tribal way-of-knowing. Educational institutions and learning environments have neglected to teach Indian cultural elements, belief systems, and traditions, and views of the elders have not been incorporated into these systems. Rowland made the assumption that education provides a vital role in transmitting culture for future generations. This study includes this plus the additional vital assumption that tribal knowledge is transmitted through the language of the tribe. This concept holds true with the Blackfeet Tribe. Education is the means for all learning to take place. This process must be started early with young children and their families prior to the direct influence of the formal education.

Research Questions

The research project utilized a qualitative case-study research design. The qualitative approach is the appropriate design for descriptive studies which focus on discovering new information, insights, and interpretations

of phenomenon as they relate to specific groups of people (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1988). This study was delimited to the Blackfeet Tribe. By means of in-depth, personal interviews, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the Blackfeet concepts of wisdom and knowledge?
2. What are the characteristics of Blackfeet teachers and students?
3. How does a person learn the Blackfeet culture?
4. How does a person learn in the Blackfeet culture?
5. How are the Blackfeet ways passed on in the culture?
6. How important is the language in transmitting Blackfeet knowledge?
7. What roles should various community institutions be playing in passing on the Blackfeet Way-of-Knowing?

Culture conflict and its resulting negative effect is a key element for many groups suffering a high rate of illiteracy. For example, the high rate of school drop-outs in reservation schools can be attributed to culture conflict, but it is usually disguised in educational jargon of the day. This explains the reasons for achievement at the expense of the drop-out, but, again, it avoids investigation and solution of the real problem. While the mainstream culture rarely uses the word "culture" to encompass itself or else uses the term to refer to elements such as the arts as standards of status within society,

minority groups threatened with extinction use the word frequently to refer to the distinctive characteristics they wish to keep.

This research, which is based upon the model of Rowland (1994), offers a way for minority groups to do participatory research to better understand the philosophical foundations which make their group unique. This knowledge in turn can be invaluable in making the curriculum for each group culturally relevant.

Culture is closely connected to the spoken language of a society. The monolingual American society has shown a distinct preference for its one language basis. In America, the spoken language is closely associated with nationalism and patriotism. Language in America is a political animal and not just an educational entity. It is difficult in America to discuss the merits of multi-language learning environments and teaching methods without rousing political issues. Yet, in order for tribes to keep their languages alive and dynamic, an educational purpose must be documented and validated. Research must lead to a multi-language format proven to be educationally beneficial to Indian people while at the same time defusing the political and negative bias present in today's educational philosophies. Articulate people can best define themselves. The term culture and what it means to a minority group such as the Blackfeet Tribe will ultimately be best defined by

articulate Blackfoot-English speaking people.

Delimitation

This research is a case study done with Blackfoot elders. Therefore, it was delimited to the Blackfoot Reservation. In addition, because the study was concerned with language, the interviews in the study were conducted in Blackfoot to gain the most benefit from information transferred from the elder to the researcher.

Definitions

Bands--Exogamous groups within the greater tribe tied together primarily through family and friendship connections. The greater bands: Pikuni; Kainai, Small Robes (extinct), and Blackfoot of the Blackfoot Confederacy were further divided into numerous smaller bands that remain identifiable even today. During the establishment of the Blackfoot Reservation the bands were often purposely allocated land in different areas of the reserve to break down the band alliances.

Blackfoot--English term used to describe the Pikuni tribe. The term became popular form in 1930's when the first established government under Wheeler-Howard Act was put in place. Official United States charter for the newly established government was "Blackfoot Tribal Business Council." Term "Blackfoot" is not used to refer to the tribe in the Blackfoot Language.

Culture--This difficult to define term is used by minority groups to describe characteristics they hold in value about themselves and group.

Elder--Older members of the tribe that exhibit lifetime experiences of special note. Not all older members of the tribe are given the special distinction, but older people are in general held in esteem by the tribe.

Head Start--A federally funded national emphasis program for economically disadvantaged children designed to prepare pre-school children (ages 3-5) for public school

systems. A comprehensive approach to early childhood development on education, health, parent involvement, social services, and disabilities and nutrition, which gives children a literal "head start" on their schooling.

Piegan (as in they can)--French speaking corruption of the tribal name Pikuni (Bee Kun ee). First outsiders to meet with the Pikuni were Frenchmen from Hudson Bay Company. They are called "real white men, (Nitsitapikoan)" by the Piegan/Pikuni since they were the first white people the tribe met. Today, the term Piegan is used as the correct English form when referring to the Pikuni.

Reservation--Legal definition of the land reserve protected under federal trust statutes for tribal inhabitation. In Montana, the Blackfeet Indian Reservation is approximately sixty square miles of land (1.5 million acres) held in trust for the tribe. This is a small part of the estimated 21 million acres owned by the tribe prior to 1888.

Self-Determination--last in a long list of buzz words, or one liners, to describe latest philosophical shifts in treatment of Indian tribes. The term actually began in the Eisenhower administration as part of the "termination" movement of the time. Currently, the term means the process of tribes moving towards independent behaviors.

Traditional--Term used by assimilated populace of the tribe to refer to those knowledgeable about themselves and their tribe. Often used to define fluent speakers of the tribal language; tribal religious people, and anyone in the tribe maintaining, or displaying, tribal cultural elements.

Tribal Immersion Schools--not unlike any school in America, except all instruction is carried out exclusively in a tribal language without English. Schools have excellent records of student achievement and community acknowledgement.

Tribe--a biologically bonded group of people homogeneous in culture, genesis, religion, and language. All are under siege.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an abundance of literature related to the history of the Blackfeet Indians. However, much of this has been written from a non-Blackfeet perspective. It is important to recognize that research is limited in presenting the worldview of the Blackfeet (South Piegan) people from their perspective. The influence of institutionalism cannot be overlooked as having a major effect on a group of people. "Institutions must be kept from becoming oppressive or useless or taking the place of the vitality and life of people" (Horton, 1990, p. 49.).

Dr. Claude E. Scheaffer (1951) carried out extensive field work amongst the Blackfeet and Kootenai Indians in the 1950's. In 1962 suffering from a terminal illness, he contacted a colleague, Dr. Hugh Dempsey, at the Glenbow Provincial Museum in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Upon the death of Dr. Scheaffer all of his field notes were delivered intact to the Glenbow Archives. Scheaffer's field notes covered the full spectrum of tribal lifeways with heavy emphasis on language. Much of this literature review is based upon the sources in this collection.

Blackfeet (Piegan) People

The Blackfeet are the children of people put on earth by Apistotokiwa, the Maker. The Nizitapi, or Real People as they call each other, originated on a homeland covering today's southern Alberta and western Saskatchewan, in Canada, and central Montana in the United States. Today, the tribe resides on a reservation in Montana, adjacent to Glacier National Park and to the Canadian-United States border.

The Blackfeet belong to a confederacy of the Blood; North Piegan; Siksika tribes of Alberta, Canada; and the Small Robes. The Small Robes, two thousand strong in 1835, were exterminated by smallpox and warfare. "For nearly two centuries the three Blackfoot tribes have been known to White men by their separate names. They are the Pikuni or Piegan (pronounced Pay-gan'), the Kainah or Blood, and the Siksika or Blackfoot proper which are often referred to as the Northern Blackfoot to distinguish it from the other two tribes" (Ewers, 1958, p. 5).

When George Catlin, the artist, visited the Blackfeet in 1832, he estimated the confederacy population at 16,500 members. German Prince Maxmilian zu Wied and Carl Bodmer, an artist who visited a year later, noted the population closer to 20,000 members. Bodmer's and Catlin's depictions illustrate why Catlin called them "the most powerful tribe of Indians on the continent" (Ewers, 1958, p. 60).

In the tribal language, the term Blackfeet is never used to describe the tribe. The name Blackfeet is an exclusively English term. The tribal name is Amskapi Pikuni. Pikuni derives from an old form meaning, "Spotted Robes" (Holterman, 1996, p. 132). Occasionally, elders will evoke, Sokeetapi (Prairie People), and Apikunipuyi (Speakers of the Same Language) as descriptive names. Tribal speakers refer collectively to confederacy members as Nitzitapi, or "Real People." Another popular form of address is Nixokowa, which means my relations (Holterman, 1996, p. 32).

Creation Story

Blackfeet origin tradition confirm the tribe's residency in their homeland for thousands of years. They were people of the plains and buffalo. Percy Bull Child, a Blackfeet author of "Sun Came Down," presents creation stories and the connection to the Apistoki, Sun, the powerful, as told to him by his elders.

Creator Sun created the world starting with a mud ball. Then he created a snake, the only living thing. Soon there were too many snakes, so with his powers he made the mud boil from beneath of dirt surface. One female snake escaped into a crevice.. As time went on she had her eggs, and more snakes came about again. Again, Creator Sun dealt with them by using natural causes. Creator Sun invented green grass, and soon the huge ball of earth was covered with green

grass, deeper and deeper where it would not quit growing. Getting bored and discontent with his creations, Creator Sun wanted to create an image of himself. He created a mate, the Moon. A little one was born looking just like Creator Sun. As time went on seven more little ones were born, later becoming the Big Dipper. The mother snake related how she came to survive and what Creator Sun did to the other snakes, until one day one male snake could not take it any more. He wanted Creator Sun to pay for his damage to the snakes. Each day Creator Sun, Moon, and the seven children would rest, get up, and go out daily to keep busy and then come home as a routine. Life was enjoyable and happy for this family.

A handsome, tall, slim man appeared to the moon while she went out on her journey and chores. She was startled but got over it. Soon she knew everything that had happened to the snakes. She became totally attracted to this man who had some power left from Creator Sun. She would stomp outside of his den to meet him. Creator Sun knew there was something going on with Moon, so he followed her to the den to confirm his suspicion. He then told his seven sons of the affair and wanted them to be prepared for whatever might take place. On her next visit to the den, she found her snakeman's head cut off, and she went into a rage. Creator Sun then set fire to both of them, and his sons helped keep the sparks from flying. However, one spark must have gotten

free, because this spark of power gave her life again. She came after her family using chilling screams of terror and threatened to kill her youngest son, Rawman, to get even with Creator Sun.

She chased Creator Sun and their seven sons for a long time, never catching up to them. Creator Sun gave each of his sons something to toss at her to prevent her from catching Rawman. The first one used a bladder of water; the second one used a stick; the third one used a beautiful bird; the fourth one used a small rock; the fifth one used advised to use his fingers; and the oldest used a bladder of air. These have become the rain, forests, whirling winds, lightning and rain, mountain ranges, canyons and oceans of waters. Each time these items were thrown before her to slow her down. When floating through the ocean, Creator Sun and sons were ascending into the sky. She came up from behind them using the last of her power. This time she grasped Rawman. Creator Sun threw his flint hatchet at her and cut off one leg. This freed Rawman. At this time, he tried to take her power away from her. Still she threatened them. The chase was too tiresome, so he created night and day for separation. She could not see them at night, and they could rest freely again. She sat there for four nights and days trying to heal her leg back together. Consequently, now no one sees the moon for four nights until a new one appears. The elders say that as told by Percy

Bull Child, "This life we all have will then come to its end when Severed Leg the Moon catches Creator Sun and their seven sons, the Big Dipper" (Bull Child, 1994, p. 36).

The creation stories have true meaning to the Blackfeet people. From this point in time, a new beginning of creation takes its course, and each time lessons are learned. After Creator Sun finally rested from the chase, he remarried Mother Earth. Soon they created Mudman as their son. Due to his loneliness, they created Ribwoman to be his mate. Offspring came about, more and more, until such time groups of people went in all four directions-- north, west, south, and east. Before Creator Sun left humans alone to fend for themselves, he selected various humans to bring back important ceremonies. One was the Sun Dance, brought back by Scarface. Napi, the Old Man, was also put on earth to teach Blackfeet how to live like Creator Sun and Mother Earth in a sinless life. Napi did teach the people many lessons until he started making mistakes by misusing the power entrusted in him to help the people. He can transform into many characters and gets carried away with his jokes and pranks. Napi does himself in by his own foolishness. He misuses the power given to him and becomes mischief. Soon this turns into wickedness (p. 229).

Creator Sun takes pity on his people each time they are in a bind. For example, when the people were getting sick

and start dying of colds, he empowered individuals with doctoring powers to heal. These supernatural powers did not come to just anyone through dreams or visions. Only certain ones gained or acquired the power for different purposes. As Blackfeet pray, prayers are started out by "Ihyo, Nahtosi" to the Creator Sun, the Holy One, and the Maker of all living and non-living things.

Ceremonialism

The Piegan people have lived spiritually. They do this through ceremonies handed down by Creator Sun. Careful instructions were given in conducting ceremonies that were sacred to this earth life form. For example, sweat lodge is used for purification, but the fire for it must be built in a certain way and only certain kinds of materials can be used. Special procedures apply to the willows, the pit, the rocks, and the direction in which it is faced.

The Medicine Lodge of the Piegan was an annual event for everyone in the tribe to partake. A lot of preparation took place prior to erecting the lodge. A medicine woman had to make a vow to hold a Medicine Lodge ceremony. The cutting of buffalo tongue, fasting, singing, dancing, offerings, praying, and greeting the sun each morning provided strength and power. The significance of the vow was important. The symbolism of four had meaning to ceremonies. The four directions, four sweat lodges, four

rounds of songs all had symbolic meaning.

Bands and Societies

There were many bands and societies in each of the Blackfoot tribes. The Piegan tribe maintained many bands with names that changed as a split from one band created a new band of Piegans. The field notes of Claude Scheaffer recorded in 1951 by informants Adam Whiteman and interpreter Louis Bear Child began to recollect these bands through interviews.

Around 1878-80, there were 12 bands of Piegans identified with their respective leaders or chiefs. These were Skunks (White Calf), Fat Roasters (Three Suns), Blood (Fast Buffalo Horse), Lone Eaters (Running Crane), Buffalo Dung (Middle Calf), Black Doors (Middle Bull), Hard Top Knot (Double Runner), Moxkami (Heavy Runner), Don't Laugh (Big Road), Worm or Bug (No Runner), All Chiefs (Horn), Little Robes (Bad Trail), and Small Brittle Fat (Big Snake). This is only one point in time, and the names and even the bands changed periodically. (Scheaffer Field Note, 1951)

Bands derived their names from how they conducted themselves. The names referred to certain deeds or an individual. For example, the Small Brittle Fat (Inaksikakixpuyiks) were described by Chewing Black Bones (an elder informant) as the band whose name was derived from a man who carried a small piece of tallow about with him all

the time. His failure to share it with people gave rise to this name.

The Buffalo Dung (Kamixtaiks) evolved through a tale of Red Old Man eloping with the wife of a chief. Since the Crows capture horses and trophies, upon their return, Red Old Man gave her four buffalo chips as a supernatural protection against her former husband's vengeance. These people became the Buffalo Dung people.

The Small Robes band's leader was Bad Trail (Calf Robe or Eagle Head). This band which usually camped near Sweet Grass Hills and around the Rocky Mountains was large. They were a group of Piegans who were friendly to everyone and never fought with tribes across the mountains. The original leader used to wear a small calf robe around his shoulders so the people nicknamed him Small Robe. He took the name and used the name for all his people in the band. Bad Trail his son became the leader. He was a medicine man who could foresee the future. This band was wiped out by smallpox in trading with the Whites. The band numbered about 50 lodges or 150 people when they were seen by Jim Bridger, a trapper and explorer, in their lodges effected by the disease (Scheaffer Field Notes, 1951).

The bands were groups of individuals or families that camped with each other. Societies were groups that kept order around the camp and were formulated for a specific purpose. Sometimes a leader obtained the vision or power to

bring a group together.

A society of great significance is the Matoki, which is still in operation today in Canada. This is an all women's society. The leader of the rite is called nanstamiaki, "center-pole-owner-woman." The purpose of the rite is to insure good fortune and to restore health to individuals. A version of the origin for this society occurred when a tribal member saw four old bulls doing a dance. This happened when the Bloods had broke camp and were moving to another site. One of their members went back to the old site because he had left something behind. Upon returning to the old site, he saw four bulls coming toward the camp and dancing. He glanced away briefly, and when he looked again he saw a woman wearing a buffalo headdress. Glancing away again, he saw their lodge, a pole erected in the middle, and all the buffalo headdresses were hanging on the center pole.

Naming

As told by tribal elders to the informants in the early 1900's, giving a name to a person was a very important characteristic of a Piegan person.

When a man has a child born and he is not able to give this child a name himself, he will call a Chief or some old man to come to his lodge. He will tell him that he has got a child and that he wishes to raise this child, that he wants it to have good luck, not to fall ill, and that he would like him or her to be useful (Scheaffer Field Notes, 1951).

Many names were derived from battles or war successes, from a deed against an enemy, or after the old man's dreams and what he heard from the spirits and powerful beings. For example, a man may want his son to be named after a gun he reaped from the enemy. Then the old man would suggest Takes Gun because this deed meant a lot to the man with the child. Then he would pray that the child would have good luck and would be safe from all illness and that the child would be useful when grown up. Names can change also throughout a person's life depending how one acquires recognition and accomplishments to earn another name.

Dog Days

The descendants of the ancient ones inhabit the lands along the eastern front of the Rockies from the northern part of what is now Alberta, Canada, to the southern portion of present day Montana; it extends east along the river now named Mussleshell to the Fort Peck Reservoir and north into the far reaches of today's Saskatchewan. The Pikuni have always been in this area in which they now reside although this area has been greatly reduced after years of losing title to much of their original territories. This is the land the Creator gave to them where Napi (Old Man) lived with them at one time and where Mythological character Kutoyis (Blood Clot) and Scarface were sent among the people to bring hope and strength. According to the notes of

Claude Scheaffer, one-time curator of the Plains Indian Museum in Browning, Weasel Tail gave the following succession of leaders beginning with Scarface. He listed Scarface; Scabby Robe; He Helps Other Tribes; Sitting Up At Night; Back Fat who was chief when horses were first acquired by the Blackfeet, Spotted Calf, Blue Face, Seen At A Long Distance the Chiefs present during the Treaty of 1855, Seen At A Long Distance who was the son of , Red Crow (younger brother of Seen At A Long Distance), WolfFlap Ears (or Many Horses), and his son of the same name. Other chief descendants were Generous Woman, Little Dog, White Cow On Hill Side, Little Plume, Fast Buffalo Horse, Running Crane, Big Swan, Boy Chief, Red Paint, Brings Down The Sun, Four Bears, Screaming Owl, Lodge Pole Chief, Big Stone, Rising Head, Big Lodge Pole, Three Suns and White Calf. (Scheaffer Field Notes, 1951)

The Pikuni during the dog days probably lived more so along the rivers and streams of their lands, and traveled shorter distances than in the days of the horse. Tepee rings dating back to the dog days are found in areas that served as herbal or paint gathering points. The nomadic travels of the people would bring them to certain areas every few years for these harvests.

Warfare amongst tribes was of a different type during dog days. Most warfare amongst tribes was usually of a ritualistic exchange with members of the tribe lining up

against each other slightly out of the range of bows. The battle would continue on throughout the day with some advances made, as well as retreats. Small raiding parties usually were more deadly. (Scheaffer Field Notes, 1951)

Horse and Gun Days

Within the oral tradition of the Blackfeet are several accounts of the first encounter with the horse. Called "Elk Dog" by the Blackfeet, the horse served to change the Blackfeet's culture and lifestyle greatly. These accounts of the Blackfeet indicate the horse was obtained from southern tribes. Most accounts in the oral tradition indicate that the gun was obtained from the Cree Tribe to the north. Most accounts give credit to the Spaniards for introducing the horse to northwest tribes following their early 1600's invasion of what is now New Mexico (Berg, 1960).

Another interesting account of how the horse was introduced to this area is chronicled in the book "Mysterious Horses of Western North America" by W.A. Berg. According to Berg, the daughter of Montezuma, Iztcuitl, escaped the 1520 sack of her father's land along with Cortes' veterinarian, Juan Alvarado. Together with Cortes' favorite Appaloosa horses and a party of servants, they eventually migrated over the next 20 or 30 years to the Columbia Basin of the northwest. Berg argues that this

party along with its horses ultimately served as the ancestral group of horses for the Nez Perce and Yakima Indians. It is from this group, recorded by early white explorers as having enormous herds of spotted horses, that Berg speculates western Indians such as the Blackfeet obtained their horses. It is known amongst the oral traditions of the Nez Perce that chief threat to their herds were the Shoshoni and Blackfeet. Regardless of how they originally obtained their horses, by the period 1700-50 the Blackfeet were sufficiently mounted to become noted horsemen and were hunting buffalo from the horse (Ewer, 1958, p. 22).

During an encounter with the Shoshoni, the Blackfeet saw the horse for possibly the first time. The mounted Shoshoni attacked the Blackfeet and bashed several in the head with clubs causing the Blackfeet to lose several of their best men. Thereafter, the Blackfeet sought to acquire the horse. They first called the horse Big Dog and later named it Elk Dog (p. 22). One oral tradition tale, recorded by Schaeffer, has the Blackfeet enlisting the assistance of a Gros Ventre ally, who could understand Arapahoe, to steal a stallion and five mares. After spending several hours observing the horses and how they were being handled, the Gros Ventre convinced the Blackfeet that he could enter the camp, mount the stallion, and ride it away and that the mares would follow. The Blackfeet, planning a more direct method, finally relented and allowed the Gros Ventre to

carry out his scheme. Unfortunately, the horse onto which the Blackfeet jumped failed to heed his commands and, instead, ran back through the camp where the novice rider was riddled with arrows. Other Blackfeet raiders ultimately used more conventional methods and stole the horses.

A numerous of oral tradition tales survive in connection with the Blackfeet's first encounter with the wondrous Elk Dog. Several are told in a metaphoric style alluding to mythological gifting by the gods of the horse. No doubt the important impact of the horse upon the Blackfeet made them most thankful for its appearance despite the fact that theories of how the horse actually was transferred from the non-Indian to the Indian are still open to speculation.

In the matter of the gun, again oral tradition speaks to the first encounters. According to record, the Blackfeet were fired upon by the Cree with guns. Subsequently, the Blackfeet managed to capture one but could not fathom how to make it work. Finally, the chief told the members of the band to dream how the gun worked, or how they could get it to work. They remained unsuccessful in determining its workings, in spite of collective dreaming. Finally one individual dreamt the Blackfeet visited the Cree with an abundance of special gifts and were rewarded by having the Cree show them how to use the gun. Upon hearing the dream, the chief instructed his people to prepare for the visit as

outlined in the dream. This they did. After presenting the Cree with the gifts and after feasting and visiting, the Blackfeet were soon in possession of several guns, ammunition, and knowledge of how to operate the new weapons. With several Cree consultants along, they immediately used the weapons on their southern enemies the Shoshoni. As the two tribes closed on each other in the traditional fighting stance of the Dog Day warfare, the Blackfeet chief instructed his gunmen to close to approximately 60 yards and to fire. The results were profound, and soon the Blackfeet were extending their territorial domain to the south and west (Ewers, 1958, p. 24).

Pre-Agency and Agency Period

The first government agent was assigned to the Blackfeet in 1833. It is doubtful that the agent actually saw a Blackfeet. The Laramie Treaty of 1851 is significant to the Blackfeet although they did not participate in it because it clearly stated the territorial boundaries of the Blackfeet. Also, it established the precedents of government to government relations between the United States and the Indian tribes. Following the signing of the Laramie Treaty with the Sioux Tribes, government agents entered Blackfeet Territory to make arrangements for a treaty meeting with them.

Isaac I. Stevens was in charge of the negotiations. He

was instructed to contact all "American" Indians and inform them of the meeting. Stevens traveled as far north as today's Calgary, Alberta, contacting the tribes. On October 17, 1855, the Judith Treaty, or better known as the Lame Bull Treaty, was signed. It was to establish peaceful relations with the Indians amongst themselves and with the U.S. government. Education and agriculture were also to become part of the lives of Indian people, and \$15,000 was gifted to them at the time to begin (Ewers, 1958, p. 219).

It was not until the 1860's that the Blackfeet had to deal with serious treaty making again. In 1869 after a series of unratified treaties, the Blackfeet boundaries were pushed back from the Missouri and Sun Rivers, and an agency was established at the present site of Choteau, Montana. This agency was known as the Three Persons agency and was the one and only agency site picked by the chiefs themselves. Shortly thereafter, the Blackfeet lost more of their territory to the federal government and were moved north along Badger Creek to the agency known as the Running Crane agency. Again, after a few years, they were moved down the creek to the site now known as Old Agency. While at this agency, several major changes occurred that had a profound effect on the Blackfeet. By the year 1882, it was common knowledge that the huge herds of buffalo were on the verge of extinction. The traders, government officials, and, indeed, the Indians themselves realized that a major

change was about to take place.

By the winter of 1884, the buffalo were gone. When the Smithsonian Institute sent investigators to the Blackfeet reservation in 1885, they could find no more than 15 animals and they were on a ranch. The Blackfeet had been disarmed and placed on rations with food such as hogsheads, rancid bacon, beans, rice, and coffee. Flour was also given as rations, and bones were found in it. The Blackfeet believed that they were poisoned by this during the Starvation Winter. With the buffalo gone, a large number of Blackfeet settled in for the winter around the outskirts of the agency.

Thereafter, in 1888, the Blackfeet lost an enormous amount of territory in the Sweet Grass Hills Treaty. The Blackfeet lost lands stretching over one-fourth of the current state of Montana. It is not surprising to many that the State of Montana officially became a state one year later, having acquired enough land to make it worthwhile to become one. The Blackfeet were never fully compensated for this loss until the 1970's. The state territories were pushed as far north as Birch Creek. Later, in 1896, the Blackfeet lost more land when they sold a large portion of their western frontier for Glacier National Park (Kipp, 1994)

The role of the federal government was to make peace and act as a trustee of the tribes once their affairs were

settled. This role is questionable especially where the Blackfeet people were concerned. In a short period of time, two major catastrophes for the Blackfeet people took place.

The Baker Massacre occurred in 1870. This was another dark moment in Blackfeet tribal history as recorded. In a freezing dawn attack on January 23, 1870, troops of the Second United States Regiment of Cavalry under Major Eugene Baker's command massacred the camp of Heavy Runner; 173 Blackfeet were killed. They were mostly women and children, and 140 were taken prisoner. When it was discovered that the prisoners had smallpox they were set free upon the freezing prairie. Major Baker set out to search for the Mountain Chief band, to take revenge on him and his younger brothers because Baker believed they had if not they then "the younger" brother killed Malcolm Clark, a prominent pioneer. Although this killing was the result of a family quarrel, the authorities used it against the tribe. Many Blackfeet today are direct descendants of the victims, and recounts of the event are part of tribal history.

The winter of 1883 was the most severe in years. With no rations available to sustain the people, approximately 1,600 Blackfeet died. This inglorious winter is undoubtedly the darkest period of Blackfeet history. The tribe was reduced to its weakest state of being through starvation and the bungling government administration. Agent John Young has been blamed publicly by many people like James Willard

Schulz, published author. James Willard Schulz adopted member of the Blackfeet and married to a full-blood Blackfeet woman. A well educated man. The annual agency reports to Washington, D.C., stated the Blackfeet were becoming self-sufficient on cattle and sheep. When Agent Young finally realized the seriousness of the Blackfeet starving and the lack of rations to give to the people, he initiated a letter-writing campaign to the national office for help, and he requested to personally meet with officials. However, budget appropriations and rations had been reduced and the national office did not respond in any way. One letter dated September 13, 1883, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs abruptly stated that:

Referring to your letter...that the balance to be delivered will not be enough to prevent suffering and the destruction of the stock herd, you are advised of the fact that the total appropriations made by Congress for the Indians belonging to your agency has already been exhausted...and as it is not in the power of this Department to make any further provisions for their support...Nothing further can be done. (West, 1959, p. 8)

This dreadful point in history can only be reflected as another event breaking down the morale of a group of strong people who once faced death bravely.

These events are worthy of note because to date the Blackfeet are faced with a state of total helplessness, and these events contributed to this condition. The buffalo had always been the main stay of Blackfeet life. Through fur trading and whiskey dealing, however, the Blackfeet began to

realize the scarcity of the buffalo. Upon settling on the reservation, the government set about trying to replace the Blackfeet nomadic lifestyle based upon the buffalo with what they considered a more compatible farming and ranching support system. Throughout this forced transition, which was often incompetently handled by the government, one element became more and more clear to the Blackfeet. This was the fact that assimilation was both a means of salvation and disease. Education and assimilation began to mean the same thing--the destruction of the Blackfeet way. This is further intensified by the impact of liquor being illegally smuggled and sold to the Blackfeet causing havoc because of its effects.

Formal Education

Formal education entailed introducing the educational system designed by the new Americans for the Blackfeet people to learn through indoctrinating ideas with concepts unfamiliar to them as a group of people. Formal education with Indian tribes is documented as early as 1819 when the United States Congress approved legislation for "the purpose of providing against the further decline and final extinction of the Indian tribes adjoining the frontier settlement of the United States, and for introducing among them the habits and arts of civilization" (Howard, 1965, p. 8) which amounted to an annual sum of \$10,000 to enable the

President to establish education among the Indians.

Some of the first dealings with education took place on October 17, 1855, at the junction of the mouth of the Missouri River and the Judith when the Blackfoot tribes were gathered with other tribes to discuss peace with Governor Stevens. The Governor declared, "We want your children to be taught, and we want you to send word to your Great Father, through us where you want your farms to be, and the schools" (Ewers, 1958, p. 219).

The treaty that resulted from this meeting was known as the Lame Bull Treaty of 1855. In return for land concessions by the Indian tribes, the United States agreed to expend \$20,000 annually upon useful goods and provisions for the four tribes of "The Blackfoot Nation" (p. 219) for a period of 10 years and to expend an additional sum of \$15,000 annually during the same period in establishing and instructing these Indians in agricultural and mechanical pursuits, in educating their children, and "in any other respect promoting their civilization and Christianization" (p. 219).

Intermittently, attempts were made to educate the Blackfeet in those early times by priest and religious orders. The Jesuit Order, or Black Robes introduced catechism work in the 1840's at the St. Peter's mission on Sun River (Howard, 1965, p. 54).

It was not until 1873 that a school was built at the

agency for white and Indian children. This school was later closed down due to attendance problems, and the teacher unable to complete the year (p. 10). At this time Agent Wood seemed to be an exception to other agents, who placed no faith in educational efforts with the Blackfeet. Wood established a curriculum for the school and then recommended a boarding school be built (p. 10). In his report, he stated, Agent Wood advocated for the boarding school system as being the method used to civilize the children.

The agency moved to Badger Creek in 1877, and a school was once again opened. The reports for that year indicated some marked success was made in teaching English. The curriculum broadened in 1878 to include arithmetic and sewing. Attendance was better. "Quite earthshaking at the time" was the reporting that two Indians learned to read that year (p. 11). The next 11 years shown rapid growth in educational efforts.

When a review of the "problem" was made, it was found in the early 1900's that only 11% of the school age children of the reservation were enrolled in school. In 1890 the Holy Family Mission opened its doors to 106 children. During this time, off-reservation boarding schools were also being established. Captain Henry Pratt, was credited with originating the idea of the boarding school concept by starting the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, where 90% of the original enrollees were full-blood Indians.

The idea behind the non-reservation boarding school was to immerse the children in a new setting and to totally civilize these children into the white culture. By removing the children away from their parental influence, it was hoped that their attitudes and beliefs could be changed. The schools used strict and regimented military-style discipline. In many cases, these were very young children who were removed from their homes.

Boarding Schools

In 1889, 45 Blackfeet students attended Carlisle Indian School. Other Indian schools were established in Chemawa, Oregon; Genoa, Nebraska; Flandreau, South Dakota; Chilocco, Oklahoma; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; Lawton, Oklahoma; Pierre, South Dakota; Riverside, Oklahoma; Wahpaton, North Dakota; and Concho, Oklahoma. Various other boarding schools were located on Indian reservations such as Busby Indian School on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation (Parsons, 1980, p. 35).

Boarding schools were built on the Blackfeet Reservation. The first of these was Willow Creek in 1892. It had with 101 students by end of the second quarter (Howard, 1965, p. 19). It was three miles west of the agency site of Browning. The administrator for this school showed some unique qualities in that he "judged the Indian child with perceptive acuity; he maintained that the children had great affection and strong attachments to the

family, and that the breaking of these ties cause spiritual depressions which takes time to overcome" (Howard, p. 19). A fire destroyed this school in 1893.

In 1904 the boarding school at Cut Bank Creek was completed, and 125 Blackfeet children were enrolled. In 1915 the Bureau of Indian Affairs started phasing out supervised instruction and turned these schools over to public school districts.

Rural Schools

The first of the rural school concepts were established at Heart Butte, Old Agency, and Starr School. It was not until the 1930's with the Public Works Administration that more rural schools were built. They were Croff, Coldfeet, Big Badger or Swimsunder, Chief All Over, Higgins, Durham, and Upper Birch Creek school. The Bureau of Indian Affairs originally operated these schools. As the public school system became able to provide instruction and buildings, the government signed them over to the districts (Parsons, p. 36).

Other rural schools were established at about the same time at Babb (new), Babb (old), Badger Fisher, Big Lake, Blackfoot, Burd, Camp #9, Carway, Cut Finger, DeWolfe, DuBray, Fisher Flats, Galbreath, Grandview, Hamby, Hamilton, Hilton, Heavy Breast, Heavy Runner, James Douglas, Kraft, Little Badger, Mad Plume, Malcolm Clark, McKelvey, Milk

River, Paisley, Peskan, Pontresina, Reevis, Samples, Seville, St. Mary and Van Selden schools. However, these schools were closed due to the weather, poor roads, finances, and teacher shortage. Some were family sponsored or referred to as one-room or home-schools but soon disappeared (p. 36).

During the school year 1940-1941, 24 schools were opened on the reservation. They enrolled 989 Indian children. Of these schools, 20 were rural schools enrolling 453 children; 13 of these schools were all-Indian. As Consolidation of services came about in the 1960's, rural schools, soon closed and children were bussed to the public schools. By 1964, only five rural schools still existed (p. 37).

A review of the curricula throughout the educational process of Blackfeet, reveals that no effort was made to incorporate Indian values and beliefs in the educational process. "The curriculums consist of Basic R's, home-making, vocational training, and preparation for higher education. Much time was spent on the work of civilizing Indian children [while] required much more than constant drill in the three R's. It required painstaking indoctrination in the basic fundamentals of the white man's culture" (Ewer, 1958, p. 309). Time and effort was paid to converting the attitudes, looks, and thinking of young Blackfeet minds. This trend continued even when education

became somewhat Indian-controlled.

Holy Family Mission

Long before the last battle between Indian and whites had been fought, long before the agency era, and long before the reservation era, the Black Robes worked among the Indians. The Black Robes were Catholic missionaries. Although the Blackfeet were assigned to the Methodist, the Catholics did not waste any time in Christianizing the Blackfeet.

The Holy Family Mission is worthy of some mention due to its approach in working with the Blackfeet. The first mission was called St. Peters and was established at Choteau, Montana, in 1859. "Here, at St. Peter's Mission, the priests and Brother V. Magri studied the language and taught a few Indian boys" (Parsons, 1980, p. 4). It has been documented by lengthy Blackfoot dictionaries that many other priests have studied the language in order to communicate with the people. The mission remained at Choteau but closed intermittently until 1879. Again, the school opened, but Brother Hamilton related difficulties in dispensing education due to "two facets of the Blackfeet culture: the nomadic and restless spirit of the Indian, and the dislike for being too far from loved ones" (Howard, 1965, p. 55).

In 1884 the Ursuline Order of Nuns arrived at St.

Peter's Mission to start initiating the girls into school. When the agency moved, plans for the Holy Family Mission were made, and the school was relocated to Two Medicine in 1890 since the agency at the time was at Old Agency.

One teacher at the Swimsunder school in the early 1930's stated that he went to the Holy Family Mission to learn the Blackfeet language. The paradoxical idea about the studying of the Blackfeet language is that Blackfeet children attending the Holy Family Mission were punished and "beat up" when using their native language. Yet, here were a group of religious people learning and studying the language, acquiring knowledge about the language. It was used by the priests as a means to accomplish "cultural invasion" (Freire, 1970).

The curriculum at the Holy Family Mission was patterned after other educational systems. It involved academics such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography; religious training; and moral guidance. Half a day was devoted to academics. The rest of the day and evenings was spent on practical training and chores. The mission school made every attempt to education all the children, but it still could not reach everyone. In one given year, more than 208 children were not receiving any formal education. The Holy Family Mission operated for 36 years among the Blackfeet.

Public School

The rural day schools were supported by the federal government, but at times some of the schools were supported by families to try and maintain education for their children. The federal government relinquished its responsibility to educate Indian people and shifted the teaching to the State. The growing number of white children in Browning associated with their parents having jobs at the agency center provided impetus for the public school system. Consequently, Blackfeet children were soon being integrated into the public school system.

In 1905 permission for the public school was approved in the county located at Choteau, Montana, which was the county seat. The public school started as a one-room school house with 21 students. The next year, a two-room school was needed. The curriculum at those times emphasized reading, writing, and spelling. Music and art were also taught. In 1918 a new 18-room brick building was constructed (Howard, 1965, p. 34).

The public school system progressively expanded to meet the needs of the Browning center area. Rural schools were closing due to lack of funds, of teachers, and of resources. The Cut Bank Boarding School functioned as a boarding dormitory for children needing to attend school in Browning. The public school system eventually did consolidate almost all the schools into big districts at Browning and Heart

Butte.

An interesting program was implemented in 1931 called Illiteracy Clinic, a phase of formal education that was carried around the reservation. The program was sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the National Illiteracy Crusade, Inc. This effort was directed at wiping out illiteracy in the United States. More than 240 adult Blackfeet Indians participated. The class schedule included a morning session, break for lunch, afternoon session, break for supper, and an evening session. The emphasis was on instruction of reading and writing with some craft work. A stipend was provided. As a result of the program, more than 200 Indian people learned to write their names. These classes were held at the public school (Howard, 1965, p. 30).

In all the dealings with educating the Blackfeet children, there is no mention of their cultural heritage of the importance of instilling their native language background, and of supporting family connections. This mentality is still evident today.

Community-Based Programs

There have been many informal education programs initiated on the Blackfeet Reservation over the course of time to supplement formal education and in some cases to fill gaps in the existing educational structure. Two of

these are the Blackfeet Head Start program and Moccasin Flat Immersion School. A third is Blackfeet Community College. These three community-based programs provide extensive Blackfeet language learning for the community.

Blackfeet Head Start Program

Head Start is a federal program for preschool age children from low-income families supported by the National Head Start Bureau. Project Head Start was conceived out of the War on Poverty in 1965. The Office of Economic Opportunity was given responsibility for administering 65 reservation Head Start programs. The major focus of Head Start was to break the cycle of poverty by providing comprehensive educational services in areas of education, nutrition, health, social services, parent involvement, and disabilities.

The overall flexibility of the Head Start program design further empowers families to determine how and what is relevant in their child's education. It provides a model for a comprehensive early childhood program, involving families and community members in all aspects of the program and offers technical support.

The Blackfeet Head Start program began in 1965 with one classroom in Heart Butte. Today there are five centers located in Browning, Heart Butte, Seville, Starr, and Babb with a total of 16 classrooms serving more than 300 children. Head Start also operates other services for

children ages 0-3 years in the Parent Child Center, where 60 families are supported. Child Care services for the community is operated as well. More than 500 children under the age of 5 years old are utilizing Head Start services.

The mission statement of the Blackfeet Head Start program is:

The Blackfeet Tribe Head Start program is located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation is an early child development program designed to assist families by providing comprehensive developmental services to children and families. The Blackfeet Tribe recognizes the importance of resources and involvement of parents in an environment benefitting preschool-age Blackfeet children.

The Blackfeet Tribe Head Start program is mending the broken circle of the Blackfeet Indian language. If our children can once again speak and understand their own tongue, the beliefs and values our elders taught us will once again be transmitted to the young, and our language, beliefs, and values will survive. In order for this to happen, students and adults must first see that Blackfeet language has a place in Head Start and in the public schools. By doing this the language will gain renewed respect and students and adults will be proud to speak their language. Our native tongue is the quality which identifies us, as being of the Blackfeet Nation, or of native peoples of all tongues.

The concept of empowering families to make decisions on the lives of their children and to become the prime educators is unique among the providers of education on the reservation. Many services, skills development, and training are available for parents of Head Start children. Tribal elders are used as resources in the classrooms and as support for the children in nurturing their development.

