EVALUATION OF THE CANADA - NWT COOPERATION AGREEMENT FOR FRENCH AND ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES IN THE NWT

TECHNICAL PAPER

A LITERATURE REVIEW: MAINTENANCE AND REVITALIZATION OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Prepared for:
the Government of the Northwest Territories

Prepared by:
New Economy Development Group
Ottawa (Ontario)

November, 1993

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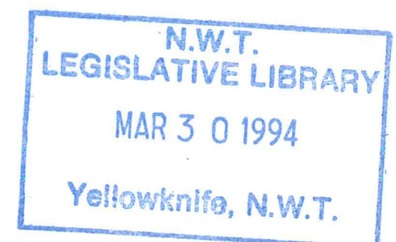
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LITERATURE REVIEW: MAINTENANCE AND REVITALIZATION OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this report is literature on maintenance, development, and enhancement of Aboriginal languages related to current conditions in the Northwest Territories and its aspirations for official languages. The purpose is to bring out perspectives and examples that may be of use to the government and peoples of the Northwest Territories in promoting the survival of these languages and contributing to their growth and enrichment.

Academic literature and popular wisdom view language as central to a culture and to the basic human consciousness of its members. This is especially true if the language is at risk. As Robert Bunge points out in his essay "Language: The psyche of a people:"

> Language is not just another thing we do as humans – it is *the* thing we do. It is a total environment: we live in the language as a fish lives in water. It is the audible and visible manifestation of the soul of a people. (Bunge 1987, p. 12)

Therefore, literature about language maintenance touches on a wide range of considerations: the linguistic structures of the languages in question, patterns of language use in social discourse, literacy, products of language, the social and economic conditions of the speakers, education, cultural developments, history, legislation, and so on. In this report, an attempt has been made to include as wide a variety of such perspectives as possible within the scope given the resources available for the task, but inevitably many broad and important topics have only been touched on. References to published material have been maximized so that readers can follow up on issues treated only lightly here. It should be noted that, while there is a vast literature on socio-linguistic theory, language planning and other related topics, there is little data and discussion on Aboriginal languages. The material that does exists is scattered widely over a score of academic

disciplines. Much of it is ephemeral, in unpublished reports, local materials, and the oral culture.

In a report on financing, organization, and governance of education for what he called "indigenous" minorities, Darnell (1980, p. 6) limits his focus to

> Those people originally found in a given location, but because of the effect of immigration are now in the minority....They are the indigenous minorities who until quite recently were ignored or rejected by the majority. They are the peoples who have felt the pressure of mass permanent immigration, especially to the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and Arctic Europe. The terms native, Aboriginal, indigenous and autochthon have more or less similar dictionary definitions.

Keeping in mind the similarity of these terms, the word "Aboriginal" will mainly be used in this chapter to refer to the indigenous people of the Northwest Territories and those similar to them by the above definition. In addition, the assumption that Aboriginal communities are under significant threat of economic, technological, and cultural domination by the majority population, even when no active or overt oppression is occurring, has been adopted. With respect to Aboriginal languages, they are by definition here, languages which are not linguistically related to the languages of the majority and are unique to the area under consideration. In other words, there is no group of speakers elsewhere who could be called upon to reinforce an Aboriginal language at risk. If the Aboriginal language dies out in its present location, or at least among the current group of speakers, it is gone forever. In this way Aboriginal communities differ from linguistic minorities in North America who are of recent immigrant stock. The latter can support their languages through continued immigration and language materials from the "old country', but the Aboriginal groups cannot.

This report starts out with an explanation of several concepts, mostly from socio-linguistics, that are useful for thinking about language maintenance. Next the current status of Aboriginal languages in Canada is considered through census figures and other broad data, indicators of factors that

influence language change, scales of language vitality, and through comparisons with other groups - especially recent immigrants to North America. This is followed by a longer section on matters relating directly to activities for active maintenance of Aboriginal languages in Canada. The main topic is language in education, but other matters are touched on such as Aboriginal peoples' values concerning their ancestral languages, policies on minority languages, literacy in Aboriginal languages, and community activities for language development. Finally, the situation of Aboriginal languages and language maintenance activities in other countries is reviewed.

2. GENERAL CONCEPTS ABOUT LANGUAGE CHANGE

This section sketches concepts about language from the theoretical literature of linguistics, socio-linguistics, and applied linguistics to provide a basis for the discussion of actual languages later in the paper. Since World War II, researchers have increasingly studied the "behaviour" or change patterns of languages. From that literature, several concepts are useful for this discussion. One is the concept of language shift. When two (or more) languages are in contact, one possibility is that they both will hold their own (maintenance of both languages); another, is that one will give way partially or completely to the other (language shift with the possible death of the language shifted away from); yet another, is that new languages will be formed. The shift from Aboriginal languages in the NWT to English is the issue here. Therefore, the mechanisms of language shift need to be looked at.

Various authors have listed a number of factors that indicate language shift will probably occur. These factors include: exogenous marriage; geographic moves by speakers (usually to urban areas or at least away from isolated rural communities); small numbers of speakers; domination of one language group over the economy, education, and civic structures of the other; and even language change forced on one group by another. However, Fishman (1972) writes that generalization about indicators is risky (pp. 121-140), and that

> ...the first contribution of the sociology of language to applied linguistics is doubtless to stress the fact that the relations and interpenetrations between language and society are "a little more complicated than that," whatever *that* may be. (p. 179)

Although it is hard to draw up general rules, one can certainly study the relations between language and society in specific contexts. Much more will be said below about factors related to the current shift away from Aboriginal languages in the NWT.

In studying language shift, it is important to look both at the community of speakers of the target language and at individual speakers. As Bratt Paulston

says, "The mechanism of language shift is bilingualism" (1986, p. 121). In the context of language shift, Fishman (1972) talks about degrees of bilingualism as a complex set of ways in which two languages might be used habitually by an individual, for example in oral and written language, in different domains or situations of behaviour, and even in mental versus overt language. He provides charts to show how this could be studied in detail (pp. 110-121). Such study is valuable to an understanding of the relations between the two languages. Comparisons of bilingualism among groups within the population, particularly between younger and older people, can indicate directions in which change might occur. However, documentation of bilingualism is painstaking, involving testing of individuals and/or detailed observation of everyday communication.

It is important to look at languages in contact as wholes. Bratt Paulston (1986, p. 121) states, "Maintained group bilingualism is unusual." According to Fishman (1976, p. 110), "No society needs or has two languages for the same functions. As a result, no society, not even those whose bilingualism has been most widespread and most stable, raises its children with two mother tongues." Bratt Paulston (1986) outlines three circumstances under which language shift between languages in contact does *not* take place: (1) self-imposed boundary maintenance (e.g. the Amish in the U.S.); (2) externally imposed boundaries (e.g. racist segregation or geographic isolation); and (3) situations in which the two languages have separate functions in society (e.g. religious use versus everyday use) (pp. 123-125). However, language shift is the norm. One must look to the social conditions, attitudes, and values exhibited in the situation in order to understand the language behaviour and its likely trends (p. 124). Research in this area involves self-reported data on language use from community members or extensive observation of language in the community.

Another way of looking at languages in contact is to consider the impact on the languages themselves. Weinreich (1968) discusses at length ways in which languages can change each other through their phonologies, grammars, and vocabularies. One possibility the formation of a new language, as Michif was formed from Cree and French. However, one language may be eroded by another slowly and, as it diminishes in vitality, it

may borrow a lot of vocabulary and lose much of its grammatical richness (Miller 1971). Some languages (at least at some point in their history of contact with another) seem to be highly resistant to borrowings (see Basso's article on terms for car parts in Apache, 1967). Borrowing is not necessarily an indicator of language decline. It may be an aspect of new language development, as in Michif or Yiddish. Or it may be part of an on-going evolution, as in English, which borrows heavily from other languages. But it may also be a clue to disintegration, or at least loss of complexity of languages as Mailhot says of Montagnais (1985) and Miller of Shoshoni (1971). The development of various forms of "Indian English" have been discussed as the product of Aboriginal/English contact (e.g., Nelson-Barber, 1982; Miller, 1982; Fleischer, 1982; Leap, 1982b).

Finally, it should be noted that both academic and popular discourse about language shift is inclined toward hyperbole and polarization of concepts simply because language is a passionate matter. According to Bratt Paulston (1986)

> Language shift, especially if it involves language death, tends to be an emotional topic; and economists and other social scientists who are not basically interested in language and culture *per se* will simply have to accept that it is fairly futile to insist on a reasoned view in matters of language shift where it concerns the opinions and attitudes of speakers of the shifting group. Linguists and anthropologists frequently belong in this category as well. (p. 120)

Indeed, Skutnabb-Kangas (1986) casts doubt on interpretations of research data on minority education because of researchers' polarized views on the matter.

To summarize this section, there are five basic points. One is that there are many factors which might influence language shift. Many of them are obvious and should be taken seriously. However, there are counter examples to almost any rule, so each situation which might involve language shift should be studied on its own merits. Secondly, the characteristics of

individuals' bilingualism in a language-in-contact situation are a valuable clue to the potential and characteristics of language shift. Thirdly, in a bilingual situation, language shift is the norm rather than bilingual maintenance. It is inefficient for a society to maintain group fluency in two languages unless they serve very different purposes that one alone could not serve. Fourth, in a language-in-contact situation, one language can be quickly and completely replaced by another (and die unless it has resources elsewhere), it can slowly disintegrate under the influence of the other language, it can influence the dominant language in local use (e.g. "Indian English'), and/or it can create a whole new language (e.g. Michif). Finally, issues concerning languages at risk are emotionally loaded. Therefore, one can expect highly polarized rhetoric and conflict between the rhetoric and actual behaviour in the communities in question.

3. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN NORTH AMERICA

This section considers the status of North American, and especially Canadian, Aboriginal languages. The first part outlines numbers of speakers of the various languages as shown by large-scale statistics. In the second part, factors which seem to influence Aboriginal language maintenance are suggested. Third, two well-known scales of vitality of Aboriginal languages are described to show how statistics can be useful in determining language status and what other information is needed for full assessment. Finally, the relationship between language maintenance in Aboriginal communities and that in immigrant minority language populations is outlined. Possible reasons for the persistence of the Aboriginal languages are given.

3.1 Numbers

It is essential to have some idea of numbers of speakers and degrees of bilingualism in order to do language planning. The problem is that getting numbers, even very vague ones, is difficult and expensive. Accurate numbers can only be gained through painstaking social, linguistic, and psychological study of individual communities to track who speaks what language, under what circumstances, and how well. Also, communities are constantly changing and with them their languages, so descriptions of language structures, vocabularies, and patterns of use need to be constantly updated. Detailed data on Aboriginal languages are scattered, depending on where social scientists have done in-depth work. General data come largely from estimates or from self-reported sources like the census. For these reasons, data sets are inclined to disagree.

Up to the 1980s, numbers of speakers of specific Aboriginal languages in North America were calculated by linguists' estimates (Chafe 1965). Kari and Spolsky in 1978 published a discussion of the vitality of the Athapaskan languages in the U.S. and Canada. Their data on the languages in the Yukon and Northwest Territories was admittedly vague and unreliable. However,

the paper is useful as a literature review of Athapaskan language studies up to that time. Foster (1982) combined sets of estimates and projected a picture of the health of the Aboriginal languages of Canada based on the numbers of speakers. He called languages with less than 100 speakers "extremely endangered" and those with more than 5,000 speakers as having "an excellent chance of survival," with several categories in between. Only Inuktitut, Cree, and Ojibwa had more than 5,000 speakers according to his figures.

Until 1981, the Canadian census gathered information on Aboriginal languages only under the two headings of Amerindian and Inuit. In 1981, however, the census categorized Aboriginal languages by individual language. Burnaby and Beaujot (1986) did an analysis of the language data and other variables for the group of people who indicated Aboriginal ethnicity. Because of the size of the project, they studied only total language groups rather than individual languages, with the exception of Inuktitut, Cree, and Ojibwa. A total of 13,145 Inuktitut and 4,060 Athapaskan mother tongue speakers were found in the NWT (p. 12). Among the Inuit in all of Canada, 74.7 per cent had an Aboriginal mother tongue (p. 23); among Athapaskan status Indians, 33.9 per cent had an Aboriginal mother tongue (p. 26). The most dramatic figures in the study came from a comparison of the proportions of mother-tongue speakers of Aboriginal languages from the censuses of 1951 to 1981. In 1951, 87.4 per cent of the Aboriginal population had an Aboriginal language as a mother tongue, whereas in 1981 it was 29.3 per cent.

Jarvis (1984), who also analyzed the 1981 census data on Aboriginal languages, did so by province. He paints an optimistic picture of Aboriginal language maintenance in the NWT, at least in relation to patterns elsewhere in the country, especially the Yukon. He found that 65.9 per cent of Aboriginal people in the NWT have an Aboriginal mother tongue, and maintenance at home is relatively high. The Inuit are strongest on both counts (p. 12).

In 1990, the Assembly of First Nations published the results of a survey it conducted on a rationalized sample of 593 First Nations (three in the NWT).

Band and educational leaders were asked to estimate the numbers of fluent speakers in the band, to answer questions about Aboriginal language use in community settings, and to create an inventory of language support programs. The results show that 48 per cent of the sample were considered to be fluent speakers. These numbers were compared with census figures for the relevant First Nations. It was found that the census numbers were consistently lower than those from the survey (p. 29). The First Nations in the survey were then ranked according to Bauman's (1980) scale of health of Aboriginal languages (see below). All three of the NWT bands in the survey came out as flourishing, the highest category (p. 30).

In 1988-89, the Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Committee (1991) and the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre conducted a socio-linguistic survey of 20 selected Saskatchewan communities with significant numbers of Aboriginal people. Using criteria similar to those of Bauman (see below), they found that Aboriginal languages in nine communities were in extremely critical condition, two in critical condition, four in serious condition, two in fair but deteriorating condition, and three in good health, but with a few symptoms of ill-health. There were two Dene communities in the sample; one was found to be in fair condition and the other in good condition (pp. v-vii). The survey was conducted on a house-to-house basis mainly by residents of the community. In addition to fluency information, the survey gathered data on the contexts of use of Aboriginal languages in the community, literacy in the Aboriginal languages, and attitudes to language maintenance. The details of the results are reported separately for each community. This makes "number crunching" difficult, but is of great value to the communities themselves.

The different ways of surveying Aboriginal language speakers yield results that sometimes conflict. But the trend is clear – lower proportions of mother-tongue speakers in all Aboriginal populations in Canada. The numbers for the NWT are relatively encouraging, especially for Inuktitut. But the strong trend nationally of a shift toward English and away from Aboriginal languages is alarming. Geographic isolation in the north is no guarantee of safety, since the Aboriginal language maintenance figures for the Yukon are among the lowest in the country.

3.2 Indicators of Language Maintenance from National Surveys

Findings concerning factors which relate to Aboriginal language maintenance from the Burnaby & Beaujot study (1986) include:

> In light of factors which might correlate with the maintenance of Aboriginal languages in Canada, it appears that every measure of contact which was studied between Aboriginal people and the majority society indicates that increased contact tends to be correlated with decreased Aboriginal language use. Thus, high levels of Aboriginal language maintenance were most common among Aboriginal people who live in isolated, small communities and who tend not to change their place of residence. Historical length of contact with Aboriginal people as indicated by east-west or north-south location does not seem to be as strong a factor: for example, Nova Scotia shows higher Aboriginal language maintenance than the Yukon....
>
> While there is negative correlation between official language knowledge and Aboriginal language use, the patterns are complex. In some areas, and for some groups, it appears that there is a considerable degree of bilingualism, while for others monolingualism among Aboriginal language speaking individuals is relatively common....
>
> Other measures suggesting contact with the majority society, such as formal education, employment, and income, all indicate higher Aboriginal language use among those with presumably the least contact – those least educated, those not in the labour force, and those with the lowest incomes....Finally, across all measures, the Inuit are seen to use Aboriginal language more than any of the Amerindian ethnic groups....
>
> Women show less Aboriginal language maintenance than men. (pp. x-xi)

Of special interest were data suggesting the possibility of a group of Aboriginal language speakers in the Atlantic provinces who were relatively stable bilinguals and whose Aboriginal language use did not correlate as highly with measures of contact such as education or income. In that group there was little difference between men's and women's Aboriginal language use. On the other hand, a group of Aboriginal languages in British Columbia had erratic patterns which suggested that the languages were at risk. Given the unwieldy nature of census data, no further speculation is possible on the reasons for the patterns.

Findings from the Assembly of First Nations study (1990) include:

> An association is evident between [location and size of population] and degree of language retention. In particular, special access [not on roads] bands make up the largest percentage of bands with flourishing languages....Among rural bands those with larger populations have higher rates of retention than smaller bands....Urban bands record the lowest language retention rates. Only six of the 52 urban bands have flourishing or enduring languages. All six bands have larger populations. Small urban bands have the most critical language conditions. (pp. 30-31)
>
> From the elder age group to young children there is a progressive 10% drop in language retention from age group to age group. First Nations participating in the survey generally attributed the loss of language in the communities to suppression in residential schools and forced integration into the provincial school system. "Most homes affected by non-usage of the language come from the previous generation that went through the residential school experience." (Blood Band) Other bands identified declines as a result of bussing to and off reserve schools or to relocations through the boarding home programs. "The federal, provincial and municipal governments along with the churches should make saving all the Aboriginal languages a priority. They should address it with the same

> intensity as when they were taking it away from us." (Gitlakdamix Band) (p. 21)

In sum, virtually all the Aboriginal languages in Canada are losing mother-tongue speakers at least in proportion to the total ethnic population. Superficially, it would seem as if geographic isolation and size of the speaker population have been the main factors in supporting the use of Ojibwa, Cree, and Inuktitut. However, these factors do not account for the decline in the Aboriginal languages of the Yukon or the strength of those in the Atlantic provinces. The survey figures can be useful in determining whether language maintenance efforts should be directed to support mother-tongue speakers or second language learners. What seems clear is the need to support the maintenance of all Aboriginal languages – even the flourishing ones – given the overwhelming trend towards language shift to English. All Aboriginal languages in all parts of Canada appear to be in jeopardy.

3.3 Scales of Aboriginal Language Vitality

The fact that many North American Aboriginal languages have declined significantly and that some have become extinct in this century has prompted North American linguists to develop scales indicating the vitality of languages. One is by Wick Miller (1972) in which he classifies languages as flourishing, obsolescing, obsolete, or dead. In the flourishing language community, English is definitely a second language, children enter school knowing little or no English, and adults rarely use English among themselves. The obsolescing language is used for social interaction but in restricted settings; not all the children learn it, and those that do, learn English at the same time. An obsolete language is rarely used but still has some speakers. A dead language has no mother-tongue speakers left (p. 2).

Bauman (1980) created a five-level scale to describe the state of Aboriginal languages with a view to suggesting appropriate strategies for their retention (more on the latter below). Like Miller, he puts the *flourishing language* at the top of the scale and describes it as follows:

1. It has speakers of all ages, some of them monolingual.

2. Population increases also lead to increases in the number of speakers.

3. It is used in all communicative situations.

4. The language adapts to the changing culture of the community.

5. Speakers become increasingly more literate. (p. 7)

His second category is an *enduring language.*

1. It has speakers of all ages; most or all are bilingual.

2. The population of speakers tends to remain constant over time.

3. English tends to be used exclusively in some situations.

4. The language adapts to the changing culture of the community.

5. There is little or no native language literacy in the community. (p. 9)

The third category is a *declining language.*

1. There are proportionately more older speakers than younger.

2. Younger speakers are not altogether fluent in the language.

3. The number of speakers decreases over time, even

though the population itself may increase.

4. The entire population is bilingual and English is preferred in many situations.

5. The population is essentially illiterate in the language. (p. 10)

The fourth category is an *obsolescent language*.

1. An obsolescent language has an age gradient of speakers that terminates in the adult population.

2. The language is not taught to the children at home.

3. The number of speakers declines very rapidly.

4. The entire population is bilingual and English is preferred in essentially all situations.

5. The language is inflexible, it no longer adapts to new situations.

6. There is no literacy. (p. 11)

Finally, he has the category of *extinct languages* for which there are no living mother-tongue speakers (p. 12).

In sum, these scales can be very useful in the categorization of current Aboriginal languages. In order to apply the scales, one needs not only numbers of speakers analyzed by age as described in the two previous sections, but other information as well. One needs data on bilingualism, functions of Aboriginal and English language use in the community, indicators of the adaptability of the Aboriginal language to new cultural developments, and the role of Aboriginal literacy in local communication. In applying these scales to the Canadian experience, one must be cautious

about the degree of bilingualism expected. In the NWT, one might include monolingualism in the Aboriginal language as a normal condition for at least some older speakers up to the third level of Bauman's scale. Also, one must view the literacy factor in these scales with caution. Literacy in Aboriginal languages has a highly varied history in Aboriginal communities. The above scales are very valuable, but they need to be seen as general principles rather than hard-and-fast rules.

3.4 Aboriginal Language Maintenance Relative to that of Other Linguistic Minorities

Aboriginal groups have maintained their languages in North America to a greater extent than any of the immigrating groups, other than the English, French or Spanish speaking. That there are still speakers of most of the Aboriginal North American languages that existed (or whose antecedents existed) at the time of European contact 500 years ago is impressive testimony to their ability to maintain themselves. In contrast, most immigrant languages die out after two or three generations even though many are supported by new incoming immigrants. Bratt Paulston (1981), using a model based on the work of Schermerhorn (1970), accounts for this survival through the particular relationship between Aboriginal populations and majority society. She calls this relationship "forced assimilation with resistance," which tends toward conflict (p. 476). She reports on the basis of Lieberson et al. (1975) that the Indian populations in the U.S. Southwest were the slowest to become bilingual and tended to maintain their mother tongue even if they knew English (p. 473). Reasons suggested in her paper for this phenomenon include: that "the indigenous groups already had a set of social and cultural institutions *in situ* through which they attempted to pursue their preconquest activities"; that "they tended to be spatially isolated" (p. 474); and that "the indigenous groups, by contrast [with the immigrants] did not seek contact with the dominant Anglos but found it imposed on them; their groups in their entirety were brought into the surrounding society with their culture intact" (p. 475).

Leap (1981) and Wardhaugh (1983) provide detailed descriptions of the U.S. and Canadian Aboriginal languages, respectively – their histories, varieties, and strategies for language maintenance in the face of the majority Anglo culture of North America. In the past, the Aboriginal populations and grant Europeans were not all that different when it came to dynamics of non-English language maintenance, formal European-style education, and literacy in English and the minority language. This pattern continued until late in the 19th century or well into the 20th century, depending on the location of the Aboriginal group. Comprehensive historical documentation is not available for all the Aboriginal groups, but the following extended quote/paraphrase from Walker (1981), using literacy as a focus, gives a sense of how the power balance between the Anglo majority and many Aboriginal groups might have developed in the past century. He begins by discussing current levels of literacy in English among English speakers as a point of departure for realistically considering literacy levels.

> It is...difficult to make generally valid statements about the nature of Native [Aboriginal] American literacy or identify the factors that have encouraged or discouraged Indian literacy over the last two centuries. One learns to read a language only at the expense of a great deal of time, effort, and aggravation. We are told that a very large minority of American high school graduates who speak English are "functionally illiterate".... That is to say that millions of native speakers of English in the United States are unable to read their own language adequately despite twelve years of instruction in literacy skills and growing up under the constant bombardment of printed English in the form of headlines, traffic signs, neon signs, television subtitles, and a whole range of printed notices. This being the case, it is remarkable indeed that [Aboriginal] Americans whose first language is not English and who have received no support whatever from the American educational system have nonetheless contrived somehow to preserve their own traditions of literacy (p. 170).

Walker continues by mentioning that Aboriginal languages were forbidden in schools for Aboriginal children over many years, and that, for example, Aleut literacy was discouraged for three generations. He points out that a "crusade" against Aboriginal languages seems to have been predicated on assumptions that: (1) English is "better" than any other language; (2) "all Americans should speak, read, and write English, despite the fact that no generation of Americans has yet conformed to that ideal"; and (3) " in order to gain full control of spoken and written English, one must divest oneself of competence in any language other than English."

Describing in some detail the literacy traditions of various North American Aboriginal groups in the past century, Walker emphasizes the varied functions that those literacies had in the social order in which they were grounded. He then gives a detailed description of the literacy tradition of the Oklahoma Cherokee as a specific but not necessarily representative example.

> We have historical evidence that Cherokees can learn to read both Cherokee and English, that in the nineteenth century most of them did so, and that in the twentieth century most of them have ceased to do so. Literacy in this society, if not in all other Native American societies, would seem to be a function of four variables: traditional learning patterns, the teaching patterns of the instructor, incentives to learn, and the social definition of the principal learning contexts.

Walker goes on to document that Cherokees usually expect only one to a family to be literate – certainly not everyone – and that a great deal of passive learning through watching goes on before the learner, generally in adulthood, actively takes advantage of and responsibility for literacy learning. Similar results have been found among the Cree in Canada (Burnaby & MacKenzie 1985). Walker goes on to contrast traditional Cherokee literacy learning with current models which focus on children, are coercive, expect every child to become literate, are impersonal, and must be learned in fragments rather than in context.

> Since the federal government took over the Cherokee school system in 1898, Cherokees have viewed the school as the White man's institution which Cherokee children are bound by law to attend, but over which their parents have little control. Most Cherokee speakers drop out of school as soon as this is legally possible. While in school, they learn relatively little due in part to the language barrier, but also due to this unfortunate, but accurate, definition of the school as a White man's institution. As a further complication, Cherokee parents are well aware that educated children tend to leave the community, either geographically or socially. To them, the school threatens the break-up of the family and division of the community, precisely the consequences which no genuinely viable and integrated community can tolerate....For the Cherokee community to become literate in English once again, Cherokees must be convinced that English literacy does not imply death of the society and that education is not a clever device to wean children away from their communities and kin. This is not a uniquely Cherokee or even a uniquely Indian situation. (pp. 170-174)

To sum up, national figures on the numbers of speakers of Aboriginal languages do not necessarily agree in detail, but they do point out a trend towards fewer speakers relative to total Aboriginal populations. Although evidence shows that the Aboriginal languages have been much more resistant to language shift than almost all immigrant languages, the decline in the proportion of Aboriginal speakers over the past three or four decades is alarming. It appears that some groups have been able to stabilize bilingualism of Aboriginal languages and English to some extent. Others have succumbed rather quickly in recent years to contact with the majority language.

In the 19th century, a number of Aboriginal groups had high levels of fluency and literacy in English and in their own languages as well; they were at least as literate as the immigrant populations around them. Currently however, language specialists are predicting the demise of many Aboriginal languages

and have devised scales which can be used to rate the viability of languages. They show that a variety of factors influence Aboriginal language maintenance. These variables include relative overall age of mother tongue speakers, official language fluency, geographic isolation, size of community, exposure to the majority culture through education and employment. Factors that indicate Aboriginal language vitality include evidence of the adaptability of the language to cultural change and the degree of peoples' literacy in the Aboriginal language.

Since Aboriginal language vitality and vulnerability is such a complex issue, data from various sources are required in order to gain a true picture of each situation. National data gathering, such as the census, is an important tool in monitoring language shift, but it has its shortcomings and must be supplemented on the local level with studies of official and Aboriginal language characteristics and use.

4. ACTIVE STRATEGIES FOR LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

Passive maintenance of the Aboriginal languages of Canada was clearly effective for the first 450 years of European immigration to Canada. In the past 50 years or so, however, factors in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations have changed so that a shift away from Aboriginal languages is becoming widespread. It is impossible to assess globally how effective active Aboriginal language maintenance efforts have been because it cannot be known what would have happened if such efforts had not been made. Also, it is impossible to be certain that an apparently successful solution in one setting would be helpful in another because there are always so many complex factors at play. This section discusses language maintenance in general, especially as pertains to Aboriginal languages. Separate consideration is given to language maintenance and schooling, since people almost universally turn first to the school when trying to prevent language shift. Finally, other considerations are discussed, particularly literacy in Aboriginal languages.

4.1 Values and Support for Endangered Languages

In an essay on maintenance policies for endangered languages, Fishman (1989), a leader in the sociological study of languages, comes to the following conclusions.

> Living cultures and languages are always changing, of course, but language shift is indicative of a culture's inability to control or significantly influence the rate and direction of its change. Efforts to foster endangered languages represent the will of endangered networks that are conscious of the dangers in which they find themselves and that are eager to influence yet other networks that are not yet conscious of those dangers, to hold on to and to increase the historically validated content, to maintain, significantly control, influence or guide their intercultural relations rather than to merely be the playthings, the by-products, the targets and the captives of such relations under

> the control of others. Few of us, even the most powerful among us, are fully masters in our own homes; but none of us is willing to settle for being strangers in our own homes, servants, dispossessed ghosts. It is not an ethnic label that we seek, but an ethnic content that strikes us as a befitting label, that seems to us to harmonize with it, that fits it in accord *with our own historic image* of "goodness of fit" rather than in accord with someone else's.
>
> Language policy on behalf of endangered languages must assure the intimate vernacular functions first, and, if possible, to go on from there, slowly building outward from the primary to the secondary institutions of inter-generational mother-tongue continuity. The entry-level work sphere is a must; the more advanced work-sphere is a maybe. Diglossia [the stable co-existence of two or more languages in a society] is a must (with safely stabilized spheres exclusively for the endangered language); monolingual economic autonomy or political independence are maybes. Widespread reconquest of the vernacular intimacy functions is a must; language spread into the higher reaches of power and modernity is a maybe. The rationalization of language policy for endangered languages is a must; the maximization of results from such policies is, at best, a maybe, because under conditions of rapid social change and dislocation, there are always multiple other forces and other conditions to contend with, above and beyond language policy on behalf of such languages. (p. 401)

This quote juxtaposes the will of the endangered language community to take control of at least the more personal domains of its life with the agreement of the larger society to permit them to do that. By pointing out that there are always considerations other than the language issue at hand, Fishman puts his finger on the inherent tensions in minority language maintenance situations. The bottom line is that parents teach the minority language to their children and/or that adults use the language for significant, intimate social functions at home and in the community. The data on

Aboriginal language maintenance discussed above show that even Aboriginal adults are doing this less and less.

Quotes, such as the following from public hearings before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, about the centrality of the Aboriginal languages to Aboriginal cultural survival are common (Cassidy 1992).

> Intervenors stressed the relationship of language and culture, but warned that many Aboriginal languages were on the verge of extinction. As one person in Victoria, British Columbia, put it, "The language is the key to the culture and once understood sheds light on the culture." In Wahpeton, Saskatchewan, Chief Lorne Waditaka argued that, "Once we lose our language, it will be hard to say that we are Dakota people." Yet the estimates given that day were that only five people on the Wahpeton reserve still speak Dakota. Said Alex McKay in Toronto, Ontario: "If other people and other groups control our language, they will control our lives and our children." (pp. 10-11)

On the other hand, people seem ambivalent about the efforts that should be made to sustain ancestral languages, although they believe in the value of Aboriginal language maintenance in principle. The Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Committee (1991) survey showed mixed responses regarding support for Aboriginal language maintenance and programs in some communities at high risk of losing the Aboriginal language (e.g. pp. 156 and 186). Similarly, the Assembly of First Nations (1990) study revealed:

> Although thirty-seven percent of bands responding were satisfied with community support, the general feeling among language personnel is that there is room for improvement. Examples of avenues for support of community members included involvement in program planning; lobby for funding; negotiate with school administration with regards to scheduling, facilities, etc.; and acting as a resource pool. It was noted that some resistance to Native language instruction is encountered

> among parents who question the value of learning a language. The attitude is expressed by one respondent, "Why learn to read and write Micmac if you only use it here" (Big Cove). The same sentiment is expressed in Ontario where some parents see more benefits from their children learning French to improve employment prospects when they enter the work force. (p. 27)

Shkilnyk, in a 1986 report for the Department of the Secretary of State on activities in Canada in Aboriginal language retention, also noted ambivalence in some situations, for example:

> Even at Six Nations, some parents remain concerned that the time spent on native language instruction will impede their children's chances for employment and socio-economic mobility in the mainstream society. (p. 45)
>
> Last June the [Eskasoni] School Board decided to institute a language program, but in September it reversed its decision. It seems that the community itself is divided on the language issue. Some parents want Micmac taught in the school; others fear it will impede their children's progress in English and other subjects. (p. 77)

Leap (1981) provides two perspectives on adult behaviour in providing an opportunity for children to learn the Aboriginal language in the home.

> Such policies [repression of Aboriginal languages and cultures by the U.S. federal government in the past 100 years] had a massive impact on ancestral language maintenance, including some results which their advocates may not have predicted. Parents who went through the boarding school experience vowed never to subject their children to such humiliation. To guarantee this, in some instances, parents deliberately stopped speaking the ancestral language to their children and insisted on a monolingual, English-only home environment. This, they felt, would make certain that no language "handicap" would cripple

> their children's educational betterment. (p. 135)
>
> Both of these examples [learning the ancestral language through traditional or more modern community functions] underscore the importance of the home as a language learning centre in the Indian community. Homes where fluent grandparents reside have always given these children a natural advantage over children who come from family units containing only parents, and not grandparents. But with the increase of day- and wage-labor and the growth of single-family residence units on the reservations, opportunities for intensive, daily contact with grandparents have begun to decline. Families with parents from differing tribal groups may add further complication to the picture. (p. 138)

In sum then, one can argue that to maintain a minority language requires the centrality of local family and community-based language use as well as, at the very least, no negative interference from the larger society. Policies and attitudes in the majority society which have actively repressed Aboriginal languages or have made adults feel that their language is useless or a deterrent to education and employment have created an ambivalence toward the Aboriginal language in the community. This ambivalence exists even though, in principle, many Aboriginal people believe that their languages are critical to the survival of their cultures. Given the importance of community initiative, the sense that there is a one-to-one tradeoff between English and the Aboriginal languages is highly problematic. Also, it puts the onus on the majority society to create a climate that is not just neutral, but is actively supportive of Aboriginal languages.

4.2 Three U.S. Texts on Aboriginal Language Renewal

Three texts have provided general guidance on Aboriginal language retention in the U.S. in the past decade or so. They are Bauman's *A Guide to Issues in Indian Language Retention* (1980), Leap's "American Indian Languages" chapter in Ferguson and Brice Heath's *Language in the U.S.A.* (1981), and

St. Clair and Leap's collection of articles, *Language Renewal among American Indian Tribes: Issues and Problems* (1982). It is interesting that nothing as comprehensive as these texts has been published on the North American situation since the early 1980s.

Bauman's scale of language vitality as quoted above is the part of his book that has been used the most. However, the book also includes comment on the history of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in the U.S. with respect to language, and discussion on ways to conceive and develop an Aboriginal language retention program. He is clear about relevant goals in various parts of the book.

> In the *Guide* the term "language retention" applies to any procedure that imparts a greater awareness of the currently or formerly spoken native language to members of the community. The ultimate goal of a retention program might be to endow all community members with fluency, but, if this is not feasible, the community can still be given a sense of how to use the language as a means of maintaining cultural identity. The factors that determine which of these goals are realistic and which are impractical come out of an objective assessment of the needs of the community. Present community needs, however, are welded to the historical factors that initiated them. (p. 14)
>
> Realistic goals will center around the issues of retaining actual language skills or of preserving language-related materials. The language skills to be maintained can be either comprehension or production skills – the ability to listen to and understand speech versus the ability to speak and make one's self understood. The goal of a program might be for all or some community members to achieve complete fluency or, if this is not realistic, for them to aim for limited fluency in all or some social contexts. (p. 31)
>
> .... There is, of course, the implication...that Indians have suffered a loss of self-esteem at the hands of white American society. Consequently, in setting the more particular aims of the

> language retention program it is necessary to adopt a comparative approach, one which will depict Indian language and culture favorably with respect to majority American language and culture....It is difficult to specify exactly broad curricular goals, since particular circumstances will dictate different emphases. (p. 43)

As an aside on this point, Dorian (1987), a researcher on the demise of Gaelic in Scotland, discusses the value of language maintenance activities even if they fail and the language disappears. The benefits she includes are increased self-esteem among members of the ethnic group of the ancestral language, preservation of information about the language through the preparation of teaching materials, and economic input into the minority community through the payment of teachers of the language. She describes such legacies from the efforts to maintain Gaelic in Ireland and Scotland.

Like many other authors writing on the topic of minority language maintenance, Bauman directs many of his suggestions for programming toward children.

> It should be obvious...that the simplest way to keep a language alive is to insure that the children speak it, and the simplest way to accomplish this is to teach them when they are infants. Parental objections that doing so will hinder children in later learning English have been found to be unwarranted. Children cope quite naturally with the communicative demands placed on them. If reason is given for them to speak two languages, then they will speak both. (p. 4)

Also like many other authors, he sees community involvement and control as central.

> Any language retention effort can be guaranteed to fail if the community is not involved in formulating policy and overseeing program activities. It is the community that must set priorities, develop goals, and choose between the alternative programs

> available to it. Because the majority of retention efforts involve some educational procedure and some specific educational institution, the community must be aware of the effects each effort will create and judge whether it has the capabilities for dealing with them. These capabilities include sufficiently trained personnel, appropriate facilities and equipment, and people knowledgeable in the language and culture. (p. 23)

Throughout the book, Bauman provides guidelines and examples concerning community involvement, needs assessment, instructional methods and curriculum development related to pre-school, in-school and adult programs, orthographies and materials development, staff training, and the use of professional consultants.

Some of the sections of Leap's (1981) "American Indian languages" paper have been referred to above. With respect to Aboriginal language maintenance, he, like Bauman, shows ways in which majority society policies have impacted negatively on Aboriginal language maintenance. In his view, it is ironic that the federal government is now the focus of efforts at language revival. He gives examples of community-based language learning opportunities for young people in traditional activities and in tribal council or community-wide meetings conducted in the ancestral language. He also describes various programs (materials development and training of appropriate adults) to assist parents and day-care workers to teach elements of the Aboriginal language to young children. Leap briefly reviews bilingual school programs for children who are fluent speakers and for those who are not. He particularly notes programs which have managed to overcome problems of parents' reluctance to have the Aboriginal language used in a school setting. The text also describes university programs which support language development efforts through training and research, especially in the preparation of young people for careers related to Aboriginal languages. Leap shows how the structure of federal funding makes it difficult or impossible for some groups to seek federal monies ostensibly earmarked for Aboriginal language support. Also, the intention of much of the funding is to ease Aboriginal-language-speaking students into English medium schooling rather than to support the Aboriginal language *per se*. Another problem is

that the government has unrealistic expectations of how quickly program evaluation can be done.

Leap says that the following basic tasks must be accomplished for any Aboriginal language maintenance effort:

> 1. basic research in the language, to provide effective sequence to the instructional effort and guidance for decisions about spelling conventions;
>
> 2. development of a functional writing system which does not ignore community preferences and gives adequate representation of the structural features of the language;
>
> 3. staff training, to provide fluent speakers with the basic skills in language pedagogy and curriculum development, so that the instruction they provide will be of the highest possible calibre;
>
> 4. the availability of teaching materials;
>
> 5. an evaluation plan, to monitor the progress of each student according to his abilities and strengths. (p. 143)

The St. Clair and Leap (1982) book is an edited collection of articles and, as such, is harder to summarize since each piece is quite context specific. As the authors say in the introduction, "the task of language renewal is viewed in terms of the results of its performance. It does not matter how well a theory or a model works in some other context if the tribal membership does not develop stronger language and culture skills as a result of participation in the language renewal effort" (p. ix).

There are articles on: language planning, the role of the linguist in Aboriginal language renewal, the context for child language learning,

Aboriginal language literacy, and historical foundations of contemporary Aboriginal language policies as experienced by the Nez Percé. There are also three articles on language development – through teacher and pupil training in community research, through documentation of the language, and through curriculum development for bilingual education programs. One neglected but important point comes up in the Otto article on language learning in early childhood education. He emphasizes that when adults greatly value a language renewal program, children feel pressured to succeed in it:

> Children will probably sense this feeling [the adults' high value for the program], and the consequences of mixed or little success in their efforts to learn the target language will be likely to increase a sense of failure; we all hate to not do well at something that our social group values highly. Since school based language teaching programs characteristically have mixed or limited success in direct contrast to the total success children feel in acquiring a first language at home and in the immediate community, children who don't do well in the language renewal program will most likely experience a double sense of failure; one of a personal nature and another of letting the social group down. (pp. 32-33)

These three pieces provide a fairly comprehensive overview of practical issues related to Aboriginal language programs. As they all point out, each program is, or should be, unique to its setting. The many examples given in these texts is perhaps their most useful aspect.

4.3 Aboriginal Language Renewal and Schooling

Explicit initiatives for Aboriginal language maintenance end up in schools more often than in any other place. Basic parameters of bilingual education are outlined in the GNWT document *Bilingual Education: An Overview and Recommendations* (1981).[1] During the past decade, the field of bilingual

[1]. Although off the topic for this report, a recent report by Jim Cummins (1990) for the Government of the Yukon on school language achievement among Aboriginal children might be of interest.

education attention has moved away from individual psychology and the comparison of classroom treatments to focus more on the socio-political context of language in education. Therefore, several documents related to various national policies on language in education for linguistic and cultural minorities will be reviewed. Sources on history of Canadian policies will be given along with studies of the kinds of Aboriginal language programs that are currently being offered. Finally, selected examples of Aboriginal language programs in schools for Aboriginal children who either do or do not speak the ancestral language will be discussed.

International Studies of Policy in Education for Linguistic Minorities

Churchill (1986) conducted a study of educational policies for linguistic and cultural minorities in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Yugoslavia). In the study, he distinguished "indigenous" people from "established minorities" and from "new minorities." Indigenous people would include Samit (Lapps), Australian Aboriginal peoples, Maoris and Pacific Islanders, Native American Indians, and others. Established minorities are peoples such as Catalans in Spain, Welsh in Great Britain, the Acadian French in the U.S. and Canadian Francophones. New minorities are groups who have migrated relatively recently.

At the core of the research is a scale of six levels of problem definition in policy relating to linguistic and cultural minorities. The scale ranges from Level 1 at which the majority society maximizes its own interests and takes the least respectful position of the minority population (i.e., that its problems are the result of a learning deficit) to Level 6 at which the minority language is accorded "equal but different" status with respect to the majority group. Few policies get beyond Levels 1-4 except for "established minorities". Comparing policies for established minorities with those for

both the "new" minorities and the indigenous groups, Churchill says:

> The profiles for established minorities appear consistent to a large extent; whereas the situation of new minorities and indigenous peoples show little consensus in terms of organizational arrangements for instruction. A taxonomy of different degrees of official commitment to the home language of the minority (where this is different from the majority) shows clear differences between jurisdictions and gives results consistent with the model of stages of problem definition. Administrative arrangements were shown to have significant effects on various aspects of education such as recognition of minority needs and the way policy responses are implemented. In the case of established minorities, a clear tendency toward separation and specialization of administrative organizations, usually with minority group staff, was discernible. (p. 152)

This is a clear picture that is reflected in the difference in policy structures in Canada for Francophones on the one hand and the Aboriginal and new immigrant groups on the other. For example, a special problem which is serious for new immigrants is the lack of coordination of relevant services (Burnaby 1992). For Aboriginal Canadians, however, the problem is almost unbelievably complex due to the fact that the federal government was administratively responsible for their education from about 1950 to the present and that a new system of First Nations-controlled education has been replacing it since about 1980.

In addition, there are the tuition agreements whereby status Indian children attend provincial schools, non-status and off-reserve Indian children attend public schools without tuition agreements, and the Yukon and Northwest Territories have their own particular relationships with the federal government with respect to educational administration. Add to this confusion a wide range of differing provincial policies and a few Aboriginal controlled school boards and you get impenetrable policy and service delivery soup (Burnaby 1987).

In line with the comments above by Leap about problems regarding federal funding (read "financial instruments" for funding mechanisms in Churchill's terms) for Aboriginal education programs in the U.S., Churchill finds that:

> ...financial instruments also often have a direct effect in that the regulations associated with them may determine who is eligible for educational provisions and, because of the pervasive influence of education on public attitudes, may have significant effects in determining who is considered a member of a minority and what the status of the minority is in society at large. Definitions of eligibility based on a "deficit model" of minority group educational problems (the lower stages in the model of problem definitions) can have a distinctly stigmatizing impact. Independently of the precise interactions of different instruments and stances, the analysis concluded that the particular problems of indigenous peoples are among those most poorly dealt with in all jurisdictions. (p. 153)

Finally, Churchill provides conclusions related to indigenous populations as follows:

> iii. Most of the common problem definitions applied to the education of new minorities and indigenous peoples are rooted in deficit or handicap models of causes. Research on causes that does not include the broader societal context of education is not likely to aid in changing the situation. A systematic effort is required to develop a better information base regarding the nature of minority problems in education with a view to encouraging public understanding of their relationship with general objectives of social policy.
>
> v. The problems of indigenous peoples stand out as the most intractable faced by education today. Priority should be given to the study of their needs, placing emphasis on their own role in defining their own needs. The tendency to deal with indigenous cultures in education as if their cultural base did not often

> depend upon a different language or upon a different register of the majority language raises serious issues requiring study. The relationship between language needs, indigenous cultures, and current schooling is very poorly known. (pp. 164-165)

The Northwest Territories, with its Aboriginal majority in the population and increasing autonomy with respect to the federal government, is likely less at risk than most other jurisdictions in Canada.

In a paper based also on OECD data, Churchill (1987) went further into the factors behind the differences in treatment of various groups and listed four "areas of taboo" that are avoided in public discussion – race religion, sex, and "primitive" behaviour. Of the latter he says:

> Certain groups suffer particularly from the rejection by prevailing dominant society of their traditional life styles. These are primarily the indigenous peoples, whose needs are perhaps the least dealt with among those studied....The issue is simple to describe: many of the assumptions of all school systems in the industrialized world are predicated on the disappearance of so-called "primitive" life styles. Hunter-gatherer societies, even when sedentary, are difficult to reconcile with an educational system predicated on the development of abstract cognitive skills using mainly written information sources to produce citizens able to function in a highly differentiated economic system. Many of the indigenous peoples have absorbed the basic motivations and attitudes of the dominant societies around them to the point of harbouring contempt for their own culture and cultural origins. Yet at the level of the individual child, formal education in many current school systems provides a definition of culture that is more than a slight modification to their own. The message is: "Cease to have your identity and assume a new one, cast off your primitive ways, reject your parents, reject your past, be a different, new person." This negative definition of so-called primitive culture has the most profound psychological and practical consequences. No modern educational system has

> found even a moderately tolerable set of solutions for the problem, which is the definition of a minority group's whole way of life as a negative value. It is a rejection that goes deeper than racism. (pp. 87-88)

This problematic is undoubtedly familiar in the NWT. While not playing down the other factors of race, religion, and sex that Churchill also singled out as important locations of conflict, the above quotation was included here to indicate that this issue has come out as important in OECD data studies, rather than just in local discussions.

Finally, David Corson (1992), a scholar on minority language policy with considerable experience in Australia and New Zealand, discusses racial injustice inherent in policies that do not give minorities a significant role in the shape and direction of their children's schooling. He notes that OECD country policies have ignored minority education since the early 1980s and that no changes have been made despite the fact that a great deal of school failure among those populations has been directly attributed to those policies. Corson concludes:

> Clearly most decisions about minority languages in pluralist societies need to be made and implemented at the level of the school....
>
> What is becoming clearer, on the evidence from those countries where additive bilingual education for minority peoples is gaining respect, is that the community of minority mother tongue users themselves can begin to rise in esteem and in political influence at the same time as the rebirth or strengthening of their language. This is a complex phenomenon and there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship between, on the one hand increasing levels of bilingualism, and on the other, an increased social standing for the minority language's users. But where the minority community itself becomes more in charge of the schooling process, the entire programme of schooling is directed towards elevating the status of the

community and questioning the role of schooling in that process. Language questions become subsumed under much more important issues, among which language is only an all-pervading and sometimes distracting factor (Garcia and Otheguy 1987). When minority language maintenance is initiated in a community, the minority members of that community become the experts; their values shape the educational outcomes. Political mobilization with real purpose can begin to occur. Community attitudes are laid bare and discussed. Local people receive formal training as teachers. Parents participate in the activities of the school to a greater degree and they acquire skills that were previously not their own. All of these things and many more contribute to the elevation of the minority group. Political consciousness awakens where perhaps previously there was none. And the language of the minority becomes available as a recognized political voice at the same time as their political will begins to assert itself.

It is likely that schools controlled and run by remote bureaucracies and staffed by teachers whose culture is not the culture of the local community get in the way of all this. When majority culture educators look at minority children they tend to focus on what these children lack and usually what they see is the absence of a high-level proficiency in the majority language. This lack becomes the focus of the schooling they offer those children. It is commonplace for observers of educational reform to claim that policies of compensatory, multicultural and anti-racist education, imposed from afar, make little difference to educational inequality. These policies ignore the root causes of that inequity which is often linked to an absence of bilingual provision within the curriculum of specific schools. Sometimes that bilingual provision can be aimed at mother tongue maintenance, sometimes at enhancing the cultural esteem of minority groups, sometimes at some combination of these aims. Only a local community can really decide what is necessary. (p. 65)

The point to emphasize, in summarizing these three pieces of writing, is that they are based on the analysis of real policies in the OECD countries and their known impacts. This is not just rhetoric. Indigenous peoples are treated with less respect in schooling than any other group, especially the established minorities. Their lifeways are conceptualized in a discriminatory way. If their languages and cultures were treated with the same regard as those of the established minorities and if they were given the same degree of control over their own education, a number of things beyond language would likely change for the better.

Aboriginal Language Programs in Schools

Aboriginal languages have played various roles in Aboriginal education in Canada over the years. In the early days, there were strongly conflicting views about the value of using Aboriginal languages in schools as opposed to using only English or French. However, certainly since the turn of this century, English- or French-only education was the norm, and the use of Aboriginal languages even informally by students was brutally repressed in many cases. Then, in the 1970s, attitudes changed and Aboriginal groups were successful in pressing to have their languages taught at least as a subject of instruction. See Burnaby (1980) and Toohey (1982) for overviews of policy in language in Aboriginal education. Also, see Tschanz (1980) for a detailed study of that topic. Of specific interest to this report is an article by Howard (1983) on the history of the use of Dene languages in education in the NWT.

i. Current National Level Studies

Two recent studies provide an overall picture of the numbers and characteristics of Aboriginal language programs in schools in Canada. One was done by the Canadian Education Association, the other by the Assembly of First Nations.

The most recent and the more comprehensive survey is by the Canadian Education Association of all federal and band schools, and of about 500 provincial schools (Kirkness & Bowman 1992). Principals or other school officials completed a questionnaire on a range of topics related to Aboriginal education. In response to a question about mission statements or policy related to First Nations education, about 60 per cent of the respondents said that they had one. Of these 28.6 per cent included the need for culturally relevant curricula and knowledge and 12.9 per cent mentioned the need to teach the Native languages (p. 30 and 32).

Questions on the survey about Aboriginal language programs yielded useful data as follows:

> Of the 458 schools in the sample, 158 (34.5%) reported that they taught a First Nations language. There were no differences across provinces. As might be expected, band and federal schools taught such languages more often (40/46, 86.9%); public schools taught First Nations languages less often 89/333, 26.7%).
>
> As might be expected, the percentage of schools teaching First Nations languages varied with the percentage of First Nations enrollment as follows: 0-9% First Nations students...18.6%; 10-39% First Nations students...41.5%; 40% + First Nations students...81.7%.
>
> The secondary schools in the sample taught a First Nations language less often than did the other school types; 18/61 such schools, or 29.6%, reported that they taught such languages. This last finding is reflected in the grade levels at which instruction was offered. Just over two-thirds of the respondents began teaching a Native language before grade 1 (102/149 responding schools, or 68.4%), and an almost equal number did not offer it past grade 8 (91/150, or 60.7%). Only 15/156 schools (9.6%) offered a Native language as high as grade 12.

There were no differences among provinces in grade levels at which instruction in First Nations languages was offered. Band and federal schools offered instruction more often at a lower grade level; 31/34 schools (91.2%) began instruction at or before grade 1, as compared to 58/90 public schools (64.5%) who responded to this item. However, the grades at which instruction in a Native language was discontinued were not different across types of school. Overall 88/155 reporting schools (56.8%) discontinued instruction at or before the end of grade 8. From these data, it would seem that band and federal schools start teaching First Nations languages earlier in the students' lives, as compared to public schools. Because they stop teaching them at similar grade levels, such schools teach them for longer periods.

The schools taught 29 of the 54 Canadian First Nations languages. Cree was the most frequent (45/158, 28.5%); Ojibway (or Saulteaux) was the second most frequent (32/158, 20.3%). Inuktitut was taught in 16 schools (10.1%) and Shuswap taught in nine (5.7%). Slavey was taught in six schools and North Slavey in a further two (for a total of 5.1%).

The remaining languages were taught in fewer than 5% of the schools....Four schools did not list a Native language, although they had indicated that they taught one.

Very few schools (17/458 or 3.7%) indicated that a Native language was used as the language of instruction, at any grade level, in any province. Thirteen of these (76.5%) were located in the Northwest Territories and were often bilingual schools; the entire curriculum was typically taught in a Native language for the primary grades; English was progressively used more in the higher ones. Inuktitut was mentioned for 12 of the 13 schools; Slavey was the language of instruction in the other one.

> Of the remaining four schools who indicated that a First Nations language was a medium of instruction, two taught culture in Cree, a single pre-school used Naskapi as the language of instruction and one school used Saulteaux as the language of instruction in all areas taught by First Nations staff. Parenthetically, it should be noted that one additional school mentioned in a note that Mohawk was the language of instruction but did not so state in the response to the item asking about it. (pp. 43-44)

In discussion of the findings of the survey, Kirkness and Bowman say of the Aboriginal languages data:

> ...there seems to be a dearth of courses that use First Nations languages as the language of instruction, or which form part of an integrated system, fully responsive to the community's needs. An interesting exception to this statement was found in the schools of the Northwest Territories, in which a number of the respondents used Inuktitut as the language of instruction during the primary years. In these schools, English is gradually introduced as the instructional language as the students progress through the system. Generally speaking, schools enrolling higher percentages of First Nations students offered more programs, more courses and planned to develop these further. (p. 56)

The Northwest Territories also earned positive comments on its policies, curriculum, teacher training, and continuing education programs (pp. 61-64). Although the sampling procedure and return rate of this survey resulted in some existing Aboriginal language programs not being represented in the figures, this material is the most complete and certainly the most recent.

The Assembly of First Nations (1990) survey was directed at a rationalized sample of bands rather than at schools directly. However, it still obtained valuable data on language programs in schools. In line with Kirkness and

Bowman's findings that schools with a high percentage of First Nations students had much higher numbers of language programs, the AFN study data show proportionately more Aboriginal language programming available to the respondents. Because the survey focussed not on schooling but on Aboriginal language, it asked broader questions, for example, about pre-school and adult programs, and community attitudes to programs.

> Respondents were requested to identify the [language] programs currently offered in their community....The majority of the elementary programs indicated do not include all grades, but are generally limited to grades 1 to 3 only. Two hundred and sixty-seven (267) programs were operating at the time of the survey of which one hundred were in elementary schools. Over three quarters of all elementary programs were situated in schools on reserve. Only twenty three per cent or 23 programs operate in schools situated off reserve. Preschool programs account for a further 77 programs, of which 90% are on reserve....While only 34% [of responding bands] do not operate an elementary program the vast majority do not offer either secondary (69%) or adult education programs (81%). All bands responding to the survey stressed the need to have their language taught in school from nursery to grade 12. Further, that Native language should be accredited and given the same standing as French. Native children should have the option of taking a Native language instead of French.
>
> Many of those supporting an Aboriginal language in the school system expressed concern that the language not be allowed to become an academic subject only. Comments were made that children can understand words but didn't know how to use them properly. It was pointed out that school teaching of language is not in keeping with the traditional method of learning through participation.
>
> Respondents reiterated that language must be part of overall education based on First Nations culture and traditions; and that

language cannot be separate from spirituality. All bands stressed the vital importance of having elders actively involved in planning and assisting in cultural and language instruction.

....Of the 267 programs operating, 165 are classified as core subject. Classes are therefore generally limited to twenty-thirty minutes a day. Forty four per cent of language instruction for preschool is either immersion or bilingual. In the elementary grades twenty-two programs (or 20%) of all elementary instruction was immersion or bilingual. As noted previously such programs do not extend to all elementary grades but are confined to early primary levels.

Aboriginal language instruction as offered in most schools is more of cultural awareness rather than language instruction. As stated by one band "Language class appears to be seen as an acknowledgement of Native heritage rather than a serious attempt at fluency" (Fort Nelson band). (p. 24)

Although flourishing and enduring language communities have in excess of 60% fluency in all age groups, basic resources are needed. Approximately 20% in these categories do not operate a language program; 30% do not have a writing system and the same amount do not have access to curriculum materials. Almost one half of the language programming is confined to the elementary level.

Although declining and endangered language communities have reasonable access to resources and programs, assistance is needed particularly in adult education.

Critical languages have the fewest resources in that only 20% of the bands operate a language program. Approximately 50% do not have access to fluent speakers, a writing system or language instructors. (p. 35)

In further discussion on this topic, the authors compared their findings of Aboriginal language programs with those of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

> ....These statistics are consistent with INAC reports on Aboriginal language programming for the 1987/88 school year. INAC reports that of students that did receive instruction in the Aboriginal language, seventy-five percent (24,630) were taught as a single subject....Only 4,769 students received subject and part time instruction using a Native language while 1,362 received instruction full time (Immersion). Bilingual programs were concentrated in Ontario and immersion programs in Quebec. (pp. 36-37)

Importantly, the report states that "where Aboriginal language is the primary language of instruction, the goal is one of transition to the official language rather than maintenance of the mother tongue" (p. 33).

The report continues by calling for more programs in provincial schools. It states that "resources including instructors and curriculum materials are needed for intermediate and advanced language programming," and for further teacher recruitment and training (p. 37). Funding for Aboriginal language programming is very unfavourably compared with that for French (p. 36). One further finding of the survey dealt with where the Aboriginal language was used in the community. Of all the locations noted by respondents, the school was the place where the Aboriginal language was used the least, even for communities that had flourishing Aboriginal languages (p. 33). The report rather pessimistically concludes that "the fact that First Nations languages are not used in most of the communities surveyed effectively negates efforts of language personnel" (p. 37).

To sum up, despite much activity in Native language programming in schools for Aboriginal children, the patterns of provision reinforce Churchill's (1986) findings that policies for indigenous groups are largely at the lower levels of his scale of policy development. That is, most programs are for the youngest children, last only a few years, are inadequately funded, and even

the bilingual programs are seen to be transitional to fluency in an official language. Bauman (1980), Dorian (1987), and Corson (1992) would see that there is value in those programs that seem more focussed on learning "about" the language than actually learning to speak it well. Although there are many more programs available now than there were in 1980, the current survey data would give the same impression as Clarke and MacKenzie got in their study of Native language programs in 1980, namely that Aboriginal language programs give only lip service to pluralist approaches and that they are actually assimilationist in intent.

ii. Specific Examples of Aboriginal Language Programs in Schools

Before leaving this topic, references are provided to sources of more detailed information on Aboriginal language programming in schools. Several reports give broad descriptive information. In one, Phillips (1985) discusses educational programs, policies, and funding related to Aboriginal languages for each province (but not the territories) in a study widely focussed on Aboriginal language retention. She gives high marks to Quebec for its policies on Aboriginal language development (p. 67), crediting these measures for the high level of Aboriginal language maintenance in that province. Csapo and Clarke (n.d. but probably 1984) survey Aboriginal language programs in B.C. Their report contains considerably more discussion of issues than straight data. Also, Shkilnyk's 1986 report on consultations with Aboriginal communities across the country about Aboriginal languages and programs contains a great deal of information about school programs. This is a rich source of information on individual communities, but does not point out generalizations, trends and overall issues.

There is much published material as well as ephemeral discussions of Aboriginal language programs in specific communities. A few are mentioned here as examples, starting with those for children who come to school speaking only or mainly an Aboriginal language. Perhaps the most quoted study is that by Rosier and Holm (1980) of a Navajo medium-of-instruction program at Rock Point, Arizona. This program was highly remarkable for

three main reasons: 1) it was community controlled, 2) it used Navajo as the medium of instruction in a true bilingual maintenance model, and 3) its academic outcomes were compared in detail with those of a comparable Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school where English was the exclusive language of the school. The Rock Point students outperformed their counterparts in the BIA school in virtually all measures, including English.

Stairs (e.g. 1985, 1988a) has published several articles on the use of Inuktitut and English as medium of instruction in the Kativik School Board in Arctic Quebec. She emphasizes the cultural context and its incorporation into the school program. Drapeau (1983) discusses in detail the theoretical basis for a Montagnais medium program for the early grades at Betsiamites, Quebec. Through a case study in Kashechewan, James Bay, of community attitudes to language and education, Faries (1989, 1991) supports the value of a model which promotes the idea of full bilingual maintenance programs for Aboriginal children who speak their ancestral language.

Burnaby, Nichols, and Toohey (1980), as consultants to the Ontario Regional Office of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Ontario Ministry of Education, and several Aboriginal organizations, conducted a study of English and Aboriginal languages in education in all the schools in northern Ontario that were not at that time accessible by road. Most of the children in those communities came to school speaking only or mainly an Aboriginal language. Recommendation were made on the teaching of English as a second language and on Aboriginal language in the schools. A procedure was outlined for informing communities about their options concerning Aboriginal or official language as medium of instruction and the implications, and for supporting community decision making on language in local schools. In addition, many suggestions were made about Aboriginal language development, right down to the development of typewriters for local Aboriginal writing systems. Finally, implementation through pilot programs was encouraged. Not many of these recommendations were implemented although the study was indirectly useful in getting Aboriginal language programs in the provincial schools for children who do not speak their ancestral languages fluently. Also, English-as-a-second-language teaching was improved as a result of the study.

Only four Aboriginal medium-of-instruction programs for Aboriginal language speaking children have been identified. One was established for Cree speakers in northern Manitoba for a number of communities (Kirkness 1976) and lasted in one for almost ten years. The Cree School Board in northern Quebec, when it was first established in 1976-78, planned to put in place a full Cree bilingual maintenance program, but community concerns about that plan were great enough that it was never implemented (Burnaby & MacKenzie 1985). It appears that the Board is considering that route again in the face of increasing language shift (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1990 pp. 79-80). The two programs that are still in place use Inuktitut as a language of instruction in the Kativik School Board (see Stairs 1985, 1988a) and in the eastern Northwest Territories.

In some ways, programs using an Aboriginal language as a medium of instruction for Aboriginal children who come to school not speaking an Aboriginal language (full or partial immersion) are the most interesting of all. They demonstrate the will and commitment of the community to maintain the language despite concerns that children will not succeed academically under such circumstances. An early example of such a program was one that was established on Manitoulin Island and lasted for about two years (Wasacase n.d.). There has been a Mohawk immersion program at Kahnawage in Quebec since 1982 (Shkilnyk 1986 pp. 61-62) and one at Six Nations for Cayuga and Mohawk more recently. This latter program started first as a private school since funding through normal channels into existing schools proved difficult. Battiste (1987) describes a Micmac program that, while not being full immersion, involves the Micmac language extensively as part of the Aboriginal cultural orientation of the program as a whole. In a masters thesis, Fredeen (1988) outlines a model for Cree immersion education in Saskatchewan.

Support for Aboriginal Language Programs in Schooling

As Leap (1981), Bauman (1980), and a number of other authors have indicated in publications discussed above indicate, there are various dimensions to the support needed for Aboriginal language programs

including: development of policy, basic language resources, and classroom materials; teacher training; and processes for student and program evaluation. The main problem in creating an overview of literature in this area is that relevant publications are widely scattered in the fields of educational administration, language in education, teacher training, anthropology, linguistics, applied linguistics, and others. An additional problem is that reference to these topics frequently consists of only a brief mention in publications which have other, more general foci. Therefore, the items described below are just a sampling of relevant publications.

i. General Aboriginal Language Program Needs

In the Assembly of First Nations' (1990) survey, Aboriginal language planning and resources was one of the areas of concentration. The summary of the data is as follows:

> The ability to carry out effective planning and programming is tied to the resources available to communities....Approximately one third of bands responding did not have access to basic language program resources, i.e. language/oral history recording or to a writing system. As well, in excess of one third did not have access to a language organization or cultural education centre, therefore did not have accessible assistance for planning or implementing a language program.
>
> One hundred and eleven (73%) of all bands responding operated or participated in a language program. The remaining forty one (27%) did not. Three major problems encountered were:
>
> (1) Lack of funding
> (2) Lack of trained instructors
> (3) Lack of curriculum materials and resources.
>
> Other problems identified in establishing and operating programs included disinterest on the part of the community

members and resistance by local authorities. The difficulty encountered in addressing the condition of Aboriginal languages was summarized by one First Nation in the following statement:

> "A history of Canadian government suppression and oppression of the Native Language has created an attitude of apathy and fatalism about the need and utility of Native languages by the Native peoples themselves - the heart and soul of Native language must be nursed back to health, rejuvenated and restored to the status of the official language in Native communities." (Kahnawake) (p. 22)

With respect to provincial government processes on policy for Aboriginal language, two papers by Aboriginal provincial government employees about their respective provinces' policies have come to hand. One is by Lickers (1988) in which he lays out the steps necessary to ground policy development in appropriate research. The other (Paynter & Sanderson, 1991) shows how the Manitoba government has worked with the Manitoba Association of Native Languages, Inc. to develop a training program for Aboriginal language instructors through off-campus certificate instruction.

ii. Teacher Training and Employment

Teacher training for regular Aboriginal classroom teachers, for Aboriginal language instructors, for teacher aides for Aboriginal classrooms, and for non-Aboriginal teachers who teach in Aboriginal schools is a major issue. The *Summary Report of the Task Force on the Educational Needs of Native Peoples of Ontario* (1976) is quoted here at some length. It is important both as a longitudinal indication of community interest and with regard to the degree of implementation of its recommendations. This report touches on most of the issues raised in publications on teacher training for Aboriginal education and does not disagree with many. The Task Force resolved that:

1. A teacher training program be developed with the aid of

Indian education specialists, so as to make it more appropriate to the educational backgrounds, heritage, and needs of the people of Native ancestry.

2. Faculties of education near Native communities take the initiative in providing opportunities for Native people to train as teachers at various locations throughout the province.

3. The province give priority and special assistance to Native students and teaching-aides wishing to obtain their teaching certificates.

4. Educational institutions establish a recognized course for Native pre-school instructors with a built-in component for Native language instruction.

5. (a) Present Native teacher-training courses be continued and improved;

   (b) Information regarding these courses be more readily available.

6. Bands, Metis and non-status Indian association locals, school boards, Department of Indian Affairs, and the Ministry of Education co-operate in the creation of opportunities for Native peoples to gain experience in the field of education with a view to training as teachers and teacher-aides.

7. (a) All teaching staff employed in schools serving Native students be required to participate in cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness sessions, as well as workshops on up-to-date teaching techniques;

   (b) Teachers of Indian children receive courses in Native

culture, history, and philosophy taught by Native people.

8. (a) Additional fully-qualified Native teachers be hired in all elementary and secondary schools serving Native students;

   (b) These teachers have a working knowledge of the Native language of the area.

9. (a) Fully-qualified teachers of Native languages be classified as specialists and receive a salary commensurate with this position;

   (b) Teachers of Native languages be granted provincial certification as language specialists.

10. Incentives be provided to encourage highly-qualified teachers to practise in Native communities.

11. Native teacher-aides be paid a better salary.

12. Special teachers be provided for Native students with learning difficulties.

13. Research be conducted into the effects of Native teaching staff on the academic performance of Native high school students. (pp. 14-15)

In recent years, some of the recommendations on access to teacher training programs, potential for up-grading from teacher aide and Native language instructor status, consultation with local Native organizations, and salary scales for teacher aides have been implemented, often because the federal and provincial governments have designated Aboriginal groups as an important target for affirmative action in general, not just in education. However, neither the full intent of most of the recommendations, and virtually none of the recommendations relating to non-Aboriginal teachers have been realized.

According to the Assembly of First Nations' survey (1990),

> A total of 486 full and part time staff are employed in providing language programming in the bands surveyed. Many of these teachers are concentrated in a small number of bands and language programs, i.e. bands with populations in excess of 3,000, or in bands that operate immersion language programs. For example, 37 of the 105 certified full time instructors; 13 of the 15 certified contract; 33 of the 108 full time uncertified; 16 of the 38 full time curriculum developers; and 12 of the 17 contract curriculum developers are employed by five bands. (p. 26)

Whereas Aboriginal language teacher training and employment circumstances can be seen in light of political and social will outside of the Aboriginal community, Stairs (1988b) locates issues in teacher training within the goals for Aboriginal education. The parameters of these goals have been suggested in the discussion above. Stairs says:

> At one extreme are those who emphasize economic survival and see the schools' primary responsibility as providing skills for competition on the terms of mainstream southern society. This group favours essentially second-language education at all levels, claiming that Arctic Quebec Inuit culture outside of the schools is sufficiently intact not to be threatened by mainstream Canadian education, and that Inuktitut is sufficiently strong not to require formal instruction. At the other extreme are those who emphasize ideational survival: cultural survival based on Inuit values, thought, and social models. This group favours full first-language education at primary levels, with continuing and expanding use of Inuktitut at higher levels, pointing to the rapid language loss experienced in other apparently sound Native language education situations (major loss in as little as one generation in parts of the western Arctic and nearby Labrador). This group and many in between the two extreme views claim that effective learning for Quebec Inuit, given their still viable

> first-language social context, rests on a strong base of Inuk identity and the language which represents it....
>
> Clearly the changing balance on this issue immediately affects the jobs and training of Native teachers. In northern Quebec the issue of language policy is so crucial to the continued survival of the group, that the results of systematic studies, from the region and elsewhere, do little to change convictions. Most difficult and anti-intuitive, for instance, is for parents concerned primarily with English competence to accept that early Inuktitut competence will help and not hinder. Trained Inuit educators are often caught in the debate as defenders of first-language instruction and so, apparently, of themselves. (p. 85)

Stairs speaks from her close involvement in one of the most highly community-based teacher education programs for Aboriginal people – a program that it is mostly on-site, community and culture-oriented and integrally related with on-going language and cultural research. Therefore when this kind of conflict is seen to be continuing in Arctic Quebec, then one should pay close attention to the pressures on other Aboriginal teacher education programs. On the one hand, the teacher education program for the Kativik School Board, to which Stairs refers, has been highly community oriented and should be effective from that point of view. On the other hand, other jurisdictions in which the Aboriginal language seems strong (e.g. in the neighbouring Cree School Board) are apparently likely to dismiss the danger to the maintenance of the Aboriginal language until decline in use becomes a visible issue.

The most comprehensive study of Aboriginal teacher education programs in Canada was conducted by More (1980). His evaluation of the programs was positive and optimistic, and the overview of the situation was useful. One would hope for an up-date of the information. By contrast, Clarke and MacKenzie (1980b) are openly critical after conducting a review of teacher education programs for Aboriginal teachers. They cite the general lack of provision for Native language and cultural content in these programs and the absence of Native community control as problematic. Williams and Wyatt

(1987) document successes and raise concerns related to the employment of trained Aboriginal teachers from a program specially designed for them. At times, the community is seen to resist such employment on several grounds. No good overview or detailed study of the training of Native language instructors has been conducted, although such training is implicated in many of the articles in Burnaby (1985).

iii. Materials, Research, and Evaluation

Basic components of Aboriginal language programs include background research on the language (including a writing system), teaching materials, and means of evaluating both programs and students. There is a large literature on the development of linguistically based information about Aboriginal languages (e.g. grammars, dictionaries, and texts, etc.), but this literature is scattered and hard to compare since it is very language specific. It will not, therefore, be addressed here. Literature on technical aspects of orthography development is similarly dispersed, but will be considered in general under the discussion on literacy which follows below.

In his chapter on orthographies and materials development, Bauman (1980 p. 46) says:

> In the fullest program, one that includes a rigorous native language teaching component, three types of materials will be necessary: resource materials, which are used to prepare other sorts of materials and which serve as standards of accepted usage; instructional materials, such as textbooks and audiovisual materials, which will be used by students in the classroom; and literacy materials, such as books, newspapers, and pamphlets, which provide opportunities outside the school for practising and applying reading skills and which preserve cultural information. It is important to understand that the materials must be appropriately balanced between the two languages used in the community. Materials in English concerning Indian language and culture can be a crucial part of a valid retention

strategy. The weight given to English language materials will depend, of course, on the language proficiencies of community members.

In the Assembly of First Nations' survey (1990), materials and resources for Aboriginal language maintenance were assessed.

> Bands currently operating a language program were asked to rate their satisfaction with various program elements, and support for the program....Availability of teaching aids [materials] was rated somewhat unsatisfactory or highly unsatisfactory by 57% of all respondents. The other major problem area was availability of trained instructors with 69% of responses scoring either somewhat unsatisfactory or highly unsatisfactory.
>
> ...Respondents stated that most curriculum material is developed by the teacher with little outside support or resources. Existing curriculum material is apparently very basic for this reason. Educators note that children in today's society are exposed to advanced technology on a daily basis, therefore it is difficult to stimulate interest when curriculum material is hand coloured or is based on cut outs from a Sears catalogue. Most of the teachers participating in the survey stressed the need for curriculum resource assistance. At present there is little or no co-ordination or communication system for teachers to share resources and experiences. (p. 26)

It is important to note that Aboriginal language teachers, by necessity, create most of their own materials simply because none other exists. However, Native language teachers are also likely to be much less trained than regular classroom teachers, not to be supported by a union or professional association, underfunded, seen as teaching a marginalized subject, and treated suspiciously by a principal and superintendent who have no means of assessing what is going on in the classroom because they don't speak the

language.

Four examples of materials development illustrate different dimensions of the problems of Aboriginal language teachers. Most of these teachers are substantially undertrained and have to teach with virtually no published materials in their field of the sort that most teachers rely on. Mitchell (1985) shows how community members who are fluent Aboriginal language speakers can be involved in creating materials for an Aboriginal language reading development program. Shkilnyk (1986 p. 61) gives an indication of how local leadership can mobilize scarce Aboriginal language resource people to develop teaching materials for an Aboriginal language immersion program. And Leavitt (1991) and Stairs (1991) describe how culturally appropriate behaviour can be integrated into teaching of all sorts for Aboriginal students.

Finally, evaluation is an essential part of educational programming, although it is often neglected. Regarding the evaluation of programs, More, in 1984, reported on a review of research into the quality of Aboriginal education in Canada and, in doing so, commented on the standards of the evaluations themselves. He found that the studies he reviewed were of mixed quality, that none distinguished between education and schooling, that the findings tended to be biased, and that not enough attention was paid to the educational goals of the community (pp. 25-26). Hébert (1987) conducted a similar study but focussed specifically on the evaluation methods used. She concludes that there should be greater awareness of evaluation methodology and that training is required if the participatory approaches to evaluation – which she favours – are to be used. Hébert further concludes that models of participatory evaluation need to be elaborated and that quality control needs to be exercised. An indication of the quality of a participatory approach can, she believes, be judged by the evaluation's sensitivity and awareness of community contexts, goals, and educational means (pp. 245-247). Relating specifically to evaluation of Aboriginal language programming, Ahenakew (1988) discusses the importance of assessment in the mission and activities of the Saskatchewan Indian Languages Institute.

With respect to the evaluation of student progress in language learning, a great deal has been written in the U.S. about the assessment of the language proficiency of Aboriginal children in that country. This has occurred largely because of provisions of funding for education for target language groups within programs. Unfortunately, most of this literature skirts around the problems of assessment of proficiency in the Aboriginal languages, although lip service is paid to the importance of those languages in the children's backgrounds. One such study (Manuel-Dupont 1987) gives a thorough review of language assessment literature in general and to contextual issues in Aboriginal education more specifically, but does not mention the measures that would be required if the children's Aboriginal language proficiency were to be evaluated.

Bauman (1980) gives some general guidelines for program and individual student assessments:

> With young children especially, a few procedures should be followed in conducting program evaluation tests.
>
> 1. Test sessions should be short and should concentrate on important elements of the language for which instruction has been provided.
>
> 2. Tests should be simple. Introducing too much complexity in language tests tends to make them intelligence tests. Any instructions should be rehearsed beforehand with practice items.
>
> 3. Test sessions should be enjoyable and non-threatening. Make sure that children are not surprised by any aspect of the test or faced with ambiguous choices.
>
> 4. Develop tests specific to the instruction provided. Since bilingual classrooms make significantly different demands from English-only classrooms, standardized tests based on national norms cannot adequately (or

realistically) measure achievement.

5. Oral abilities should be tested orally. Do not use tests that require the child to read and write to assess speech. Use instead pictures, tape recordings, and verbal instructions.

Since program goals will be drawn more broadly than just teaching language ability, evaluation should extend to these goals also. If, for example, a program objective is to increase children's self-esteem, then appropriate attitudinal tests should also be devised. If the program hopes to increase attendance, then appropriate records should be maintained during the course of instruction.

Tests are always devised to measure progress toward stated program objectives. In situations where test results indicate that these objectives are not being met, two courses of action are possible. First, the assessment might indicate that the program objectives are too ambitious and should be scaled down. This possibility is very real in a new program, which must feel its way slowly to a set of realistic goals. Second, the assessment might indicate that different instructional methods are necessary to bring all students up to criterion. The important point to keep in mind is that without the evaluation methods the program cannot perform either of these changes and carries the risk of becoming ineffectual or stagnant. (p. 45)

Because education is considered to be central to language maintenance, the above section has contained the most material. It is also the hardest to summarize. Not only are schools involved, but also the communities they serve. These communities should direct school policies; language resource people in the community to become teachers, curriculum developers and sources of ways to use the language; colleges and universities to train teachers and help with language resource development; and governments to develop general policy and implement it.

International policies for language in minority education have been examined and it has been found that indigenous groups are often treated with the least respect regarding the value of their languages.

Aboriginal language programs in Canada seem to conform to generalizations about OECD country policies, in that the programs for Aboriginal language are concentrated at the early grade levels. There is little follow-through in the higher grades. Examples of programs for Aboriginal language speaking children and Aboriginal children who do not speak their ancestral language were mentioned. Finally, comments were made on supports for Aboriginal language training such as teacher training, materials development, and evaluation.

4.4 Literacy in Aboriginal Languages

Widespread literacy in the general population of speakers of any one language is a very recent phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is a technology that is now taken for granted. In the support of Aboriginal languages, it has been pressed into service in various ways. In this section, the history, challenges, and usefulness of literacy in Aboriginal languages will be considered. There is no evidence of the existence of a writing system (at least not one from which readers could recover exact words from an unknown text) for any of the Aboriginal languages in North America before the time of early European contact. However, a writing system of some sort for virtually all North American Aboriginal languages has since been developed. Walker's review of Native American writing systems (1981) emphasizes those that were developed by Native American's themselves and/or were widely adopted by Aboriginal communities. There are many more systems which have been created for a variety of purposes and with a more restricted range of use. Zaharlick (1982) points out that there is controversy in some Aboriginal communities concerning whether the Aboriginal language should be written at all, as well as whether written Aboriginal languages should be used in schools. She notes that proponents of writing in Aboriginal languages see one of its values to be the preservation of the languages (p. 44).

Recent Canadian views on literacy in general have been reflected in the 1990 reports of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of the House of Commons. The declaration of the year 1990 by the UN as International Literacy Year helped to focus public attention on literacy issues concerning the official languages. In one report (1990a), Aboriginal language retention is treated separately from "literacy', which is considered to be literacy in English or French. Literacy in Aboriginal languages is not explicitly mentioned (pp. 28-29)[2]. In a later report by the Committee (1990b) on a study concerning literacy and the Aboriginal community (based both on document review and on Aboriginal community consultation), literacy both in the official languages and in Aboriginal languages is discussed. The report contains an overview of the history of Aboriginal and European language literacy among Aboriginal peoples in Canada (pp. 13-19) with recognition of high levels of Aboriginal language literacy among some groups at various times over the past several centuries (p. 15). Chapter 3 is devoted to the link between Aboriginal self-esteem and the inclusion of Aboriginal language and culture - although not explicitly literacy - in school curriculum. Another chapter discusses relations between literacy and language. In it, the importance of Aboriginal language maintenance is expressed. The differential impact of the highly literate official languages and the less literacy-based Aboriginal languages is cited as a reason for Aboriginal children's problems in school, and some respondents are quoted as seeing illiteracy in the official languages as the price Aboriginal people pay to maintain their languages (Ch.6).

Any sense one has about the extent of literacy in Aboriginal languages has virtually always been based on estimates and/or extrapolations from other data. The Assembly of First Nations' 1990 survey on Aboriginal languages provides the best data presently available on levels of Aboriginal language

[2]. Perhaps it was a result of this Standing Committee report that several studies of literacy among Aboriginal peoples were instigated. In such a study in British Columbia (Rodriguez & Sawyer 1990), the authors use `Aboriginal literacy' to mean only literacy in English, although a case study is cited of a Chipewyan language literacy project in the NWT. A similar study in the NWT (Employment Development Division, Department of Education 1991) took the same approach but presented more factual information about literacy levels in the Aboriginal languages (pp. 12-13). Clearly, both reports were addressing what they had been mandated to deal with, but there is the concern that recent political focus on official language literacy has co-opted the term `literacy' to mean only official language literacy and that the value of and interest in literacy in Aboriginal languages in the minds of the public will suffer accordingly.

literacy. Although it too is based on estimates and on a sample, rather than on data from all communities, at least the estimators are local community members and the data are recent. Respondents in the survey's stratified sample of First Nations were asked a number of questions about literacy in Aboriginal languages in their communities. Overall, the results worked out to seven per cent Aboriginal language literates among the total number of people surveyed. This literacy rate compared with 38 per cent of speakers fluent in the relevant Aboriginal languages, and with six per cent passive bilinguals (p. 21). In the survey, seventy per cent of the communities said that they had access to a writing system; seven per cent said that they did not know whether or not they did (p. 23).

For purposes other than the academic interests of linguists, the most common reason for the development of orthographies for Aboriginal languages in Canada in present times is to support educational programs. Bauman (1980) says

> For almost all Indian languages the problem of developing materials is compounded by the lack of any adequate writing system for the language. Most Indian languages even to this day do not have *practical* orthographies,....Orthographies for most languages do exist: linguists, who have been working with Indian languages for more than a hundred years, have developed *specialized* orthographies for most if not all of the major languages in this country. The potential problem with these orthographies is that they often use letters not included in or modifications of the set of letters in the English alphabet. (p. 46)

The academic linguistic literature contains many discussions on the technical aspects of orthography development and grammatical descriptions of Aboriginal languages. Since Aboriginal languages started to be used in schools in the early 1970s, much of the linguistic work has been aimed at school use of the languages and has been more or less explicitly funded for that purpose. In Quebec, a special program was developed to train a

number of fluent speakers of the Aboriginal languages of that province to be community language development and research resource people – "techno-linguists." Part of their training included courses in education so that graduates could work knowledgeably on classroom materials as well as on orthography development and dictionary compilation. Although the program was discontinued, most of its graduates continue to use the skills learned in the service of their languages (MacKenzie 1985, Shkilnyk 1986 pp. 64-65). In recent years, programs for the training of Aboriginal language instructors have been the location for a good deal of the formal Aboriginal literacy instruction and development for native speakers (e.g. Hilbert and Hess 1982). Leap (1982a) provides a helpful insight on the role of non-Aboriginal linguists and other professionals in the current climate of local control over language resources and their development.

A collection of twenty articles on subjects related to the development of orthographies within the social context of Aboriginal communities and on the actual implementation of orthographies has published (Burnaby 1985). These papers originated out of a concern among some linguists and educators that technical aspects of Aboriginal language orthography development was being emphasized in published literature to the exclusion of these issues. Of special relevance to the NWT in this collection are two articles on Dene literacy (Chambers; Rice), one on Inuktitut (Mallon) and a number of others about Cree. The foreword to the book lists common themes arising from the various articles. These include: problems concerning the relationship between orthographic characteristics and the structure of the spoken language; matters relating to the design of orthographies in light of their intended use with learners, especially if those learners were literate in an official language already and/or were learning the Aboriginal language as a second language; design of Aboriginal literacy teaching programs, methods and materials; problems of typing and printing material in the orthographies; questions of choice between previous orthographies and newly created ones for individual languages (see also Shykilnyk 1986, p.73); the social acceptance and teachability of orthographies in view of the cognitive style of members of the community; and questions about the amount of written material available and how to increase it (Burnaby 1985, pp. ix-x). Mailhot's article in this book noted a

strong sense of community ownership over orthographies which make it difficult to standardize orthographies for use across several communities. This problem, even occurring within communities, comes up elsewhere in the literature (e.g. Shkilnyk 1986, p. 45; Assembly of First Nations 1990, p. 22).

Finally, for the purposes of further study of the Aboriginal languages of the NWT, Shearwood (1986, 1987) has developed a complex framework for understanding and analyzing the functions of literacy in all the official languages of the NWT for its Aboriginal citizens. No original data from the field was used, but the framework is sophisticated and the review of literature on literacy functions and on literacy in Dene languages and Inuktitut is extensive.

In sum, it is possible to work on Aboriginal language maintenance without literacy, and some communities seem to feel that this is necessary. However, it is hard to conceive of this in an age when universal literacy is taken for granted, even if it is never achieved. Languages of international communication, such as English and French, create expectations about written resources and about standardization of spelling that it took those languages centuries to come to terms with. At the school level, learning in school is closely associated with learning to read and write, and Aboriginal language programs are expected to follow suit. At present, literacy is looked to not only as a tool for teaching the language but also for recording material in order to document its richness. This is especially the case for those languages that appear to be facing extinction. But creating a writing system that can be accepted in a community, especially on a short timetable, has many problems and takes a great deal of work.

4.5 Other Areas of Aboriginal Language Development

Since education is the focus of a large proportion of the Aboriginal language maintenance activities and since education touches a broad spectrum of human activities, most of the literature reviewed for this study has been dealt with in the above discussion. However, there are a few more useful pieces which should be included here. The focus is on community activities

and resources.

The Assembly of First Nations survey (1990) asked respondents to rate where in their communities the local Aboriginal language was most frequently used.

> ...Seventy three (or 48%) of the bands reported the Native language as the primary language between band staff and band members. Sixty six (or 43%) of the bands reported it as the primary language in cultural ceremonies. English or French was the primary language used in church activities with 74 (or 49%) of the respondents; and in band schools with 61 (or 40%) responses. Bilingualism was identified as being the most commonly used in social activities by 63 (or 43%) bands.
>
> Approximately twenty per cent of First Nations responding did not have access to band/tribal newspapers or to radio and television. Further Aboriginal languages are never or rarely used in government reports and in the justice system. The highest degree of use is in community meetings; 42 bands almost always use the Aboriginal language and an additional 47 occasionally use it. (p. 21)

When these results were broken down by the level of fluency in the Aboriginal language in the community, it is clear that those communities which have the highest level of fluency are those with the most Aboriginal language services – newspapers, radio/television, community meetings, government publications, and in the justice system (p. 33).

On the basis of the survey results, the AFN publication made its recommendations on Aboriginal language retention according to the categories of Aboriginal language fluency in the community. For communities with flourishing Aboriginal languages, it proposes a prevention strategy involving an increase in public communications, increase in Native language publications, and immersion or bilingual education programs. For those communities with enduring Aboriginal languages, it encourages

expansion activities such as promoting Native literacy, language instruction targeted to young children, and immersion or bilingual programs. For declining language communities it suggests fortification of the language in terms of promotion of use by the community, language instruction for young children, and encouragement of language among youth through bilingual education. In endangered language situations, the report looks to restoration work through community based instruction, language "nests" (see below under New Zealand), and oral history research. Finally, for those communities in which the Aboriginal language is in critical condition, revival strategies are called for - linguistic research, reconstructions of the language if no speakers are available, and the training of future teachers (pp. 33-34).

Further references to community Aboriginal language development include the following. Lena White (1983, 1984) describes how a community survey of Aboriginal language use on the Walpole Island reserve was conducted and the activities that were developed at the community level to encourage Aboriginal language use. Burnaby (1984) describes data about Aboriginal languages across Ontario, including various statements of objectives for Aboriginal language development, and community activities involving Aboriginal languages. These areas of activities include: religion; commerce; access to the telephone; broadcast media; training of Aboriginal language instructors; adult language classes; court, hospital, government interpretation and translation; typewriters; Native language awareness; Native cultural centres; research; and community language use. Leadership from the Aboriginal community is essential to the initiation and success of language support activities. Examples are many: Lena White (1983, 1984), Maria Seymore (Alice Williams 1989); Reginald Henry (1985), Sr. Catherine Tekakwitha (1985); Arnold Guérin (1985) and many others. Finally, it was noted above that evaluation of language development among Aboriginal children tends to focus on English language skills only. Study of Aboriginal language behaviour in a wide range of contexts is needed if resources that begin to parallel those of more prominent language groups are to be gathered. A useful area of knowledge is natural child language acquisition strategies, especially since children are still in the process of mother tongue language acquisition when they enter school at ages four to six. Upper and

McKay (1987) provide rare data on the language development of a child growing up in an Oji-Cree speaking family.

In summary, this section has highlighted the literature that deals with active measures for the maintenance of Aboriginal languages. General research has been surveyed for useful concepts, and research on actual levels of Aboriginal language maintenance in the North American context has been discussed, along with factors that might affect such maintenance. The centrality of community control over Aboriginal education has been emphasized, but this has been contrasted with evidence that conflicting social forces make it difficult for Aboriginal communities to be united on their approach to Aboriginal language maintenance, either in principle or in practice; examples of Aboriginal language maintenance related to schooling, research, general language development, and community activities have been described. It is clear that the whole notion of language maintenance is very complex and involves many areas of thought, activity, research, and administration. However, within this range of language related matters, there is considerable opportunity for community-building around language if there is the will to do it and if the wider community, at the very least, does not hold it back.

5. LESSONS ON ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

An overview of Aboriginal language maintenance activities in other countries helps to place the Canadian situation into a wider context. The U.S., as the country most like Canada in its history and ethnic constitution, has been taken into account extensively already and is not dealt with further in this section. The situation regarding what Churchill (1986) called "established minorities" in OECD countries will be discussed first. Then, some cross-national comparisons of relevant languages will be taken into consideration. Next, a description of "language nests" for Maori children in New Zealand will be described in detail because that is the one program that other authors seem to point to as being more successful than others. Finally, some further references will be given on Aboriginal language maintenance outside of Canada.

5.1 Language Development for Established Minority Groups

In light of extended discussion above about differences in language policies in OECD countries by Churchill (1986), not much attention will be given here to languages such as Irish, Basque, or Catalan. Churchill clearly showed that they have been treated better than indigenous minorities as far as policy is concerned. Even with that advantage most have not done any better than the Aboriginal languages in Canada overall. Irish will be referred to in one comparison mentioned below between Aboriginal languages and others. Certainly the very special situation of Hebrew language revival in Israel is not suitable for consideration here, given the unique political, social, and migration situation in which it was developed, even though it represents an exciting example of language development world-wide.

The former Soviet Union presents an interesting area for comparison with the North American situation. Its policies towards its ethno-linguistic minorities (some of which one would consider to be Aboriginal by Churchill's and others' definitions) seem very liberal in light of some of the conditions for Aboriginal languages discussed above. Minority language medium

education was encouraged in the 1930s and '40s up to the university level and a wide range of ethnic language publications were supported (Lewis 1977). However, Fishman (1989) reports, on the basis of data from Lewis (1972) and Silver (1974), that Soviet federal initiatives at Russification counteracted the potential of minority language development despite its general support at the local level.

> ...The Soviet Union has attained universal Russification within sixty years, thus denying us [the U.S.] the world's speed record with respect to language shift. However, the Soviet Union, as inheritor *par excellence* of both Marx and Herder, has at least, thus far, only attained universal *familiarity* with Russian as a second language. Only a very minor proportion of the total ethnically non-Russian population has given up its own mother tongue for Russian (Lewis 1972, Silver 1974), even though just that shift is very noticeable among smaller nationalities, particularly those most urbanized and those most impacted by "planned" (forced) migration into or out of their own areas. Thus, language shift in the USSR, with its national republics, national regions, and national districts (all of the purportedly "autonomous"), is primarily language displacement rather than language replacement. (p. 404)

Lewis' (1976) paper about language minorities up to the time of the Renaissance in the territory now best known as the former Soviet Union provides an interesting historical account of bilingualism and bilingual education.

5.2 Short Reviews of Aboriginal Language Maintenance in Other Countries

The Assembly of First Nations' 1990 study on Aboriginal language conditions in Canada provides a brief review of the literature on Aboriginal language developments in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand (pp. 6-9). Beyond providing descriptions of policies and programs, it is difficult to work out

what might be comparable between these countries and Canada. The only useable part is data on Aboriginal language maintenance in Australia. It seems that Australia once had 250 Aboriginal languages divided into about 600 dialects. Currently, according to this report, only 50 are in a relatively healthy state (p. 7). Therefore, it seems that Canada has done something rather better than Australia, but what that something is remains to be identified. MacPherson (1991), in reviewing Aboriginal education in Canada from an administrative and legislative perspective, also did a brief review of experience in New Zealand, Australia, and the U.S. He considered language and cultural issues to be part of that perspective. MacPherson concludes that the situation for Australian Aboriginal peoples is "truly abysmal" (p. 15) and that "the actual operation of Indian education systems in the United States is quite poor, just as it is in Canada" (p. 17). He is more enthusiastic, however, about the language and cultural potential of the Kohanga Reo, or "language nests", in New Zealand (p. 14) and suggests that Canada study that approach (p. 44).

5.3 Detailed International Comparisons Involving Aboriginal Languages

Three articles which compare indigenous groups on the basis of language, at least in part, are considered here. The first is Benton's (1978) detailed description of language education for indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, and Micronesia (Oceania overall). He said, at that time,

> ...the development and direction of bilingual programs in Oceanic countries can be seen to be closely related to political decisions which have been made or are being made by governments of these areas, and to various social forces which affect the speakers of indigenous languages. French and New Zealand policy has hitherto been based on amodal assumptions, where only the valued Great Tradition has been that of Western Europe and expressed through the French and English languages, respectively. While the close economic, ideological, and political ties which exist between metropolitan France and the French territories in the Pacific are maintained, the

> importance of the French tradition is likely to increase and bilingual education will become correspondingly less relevant, even to the speakers of indigenous languages. The situation in New Zealand is less clear-cut. National policy has hitherto been of the amodal type, transformed perhaps into a unimodal policy as English has been indigenized. The existence of a second Great Tradition [i.e. Maori] has been recognized by some scholars, but not by the policymakers or by the bulk of the population. Even the increased official interest in the Maori language is often motivated by a desire to keep a ... segment of the population happy, rather than by a recognition of any inherent value in the tradition of which the language is one expression. (p. 159)

Eight years later, in comparing language policies in New Zealand and Ireland – including the intervening rise of the Kohanga Reo since 1982 (p. 67) – Benton (1986) sees the Irish and the Maori language situations as fairly comparable. According to Churchill's framework, this is a considerable step up for the Maoris, from indigenous to established minority status. According to Benton:

> Unfortunately, once they have arrived, the oafs in boots [the English in Ireland and the Europeans in New Zealand] are very difficult to get rid of, and the damage they do is far from easy to repair. The Irish experience has shown clearly that compulsory acquisition of a language does not necessarily lead to its continual use. The revival or maintenance of a language is a social enterprise which cannot be delegated to one social institution, the school, with any reasonable hope of long-term success.
>
> In both Ireland and New Zealand committed language enthusiasts are in a minority, which in part explains the confusion in aims and vacillations in practice on the part of government officials and politicians ostensibly supporting the

Irish and Maori languages. In New Zealand the position is complicated by the dual role of Maori – at one level it is a national symbol, at another the language of a particular ethnic group. But the Irish situation is not radically different from this: both the Maori population and the residents of the Gaeltacht [Gaelic speaking community] have had to come to terms with the twin ascriptions of backwardness and privilege, and with being "preserved" for the benefit of their compatriots and the tourist industry. Native-speakers of Maori and Irish alike have also to contend with the possibility that their languages will be "taken over" by second language learners who in many ways are far removed from Gaeldom and Maoritange.

A key lesson of the Irish experience which is also being learned in New Zealand is that although the language cannot survive without the help and co-operation of the schools, a bilingual society will come into being (or remain in being) only if the efforts of the school are supported in the home and by many other social institutions. The establishment of the Board na Gaelige in Ireland, and similar proposals being made in New Zealand, indicate that these facts are now recognized by some policy makers and advocates of language revival. The extent to which this recognition will be reflected in administrative practice and social action remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, many people in both countries, while warmly accepting the symbolic and ceremonial functions of Irish and Maori, continue to regard proposals for reviving the everyday use of these dying languages as a romantic dream, and nothing more. Public policy in both countries, more often than not, seems to be based on such a view. It may well be that linguistic forces, like economic forces, are not susceptible to conscious control by individuals or by nations, except when such attempts at control follow in fact the general direction of the force. The propaganda of modernization would certainly support such a view, and classify the Maori and Irish languages as relics of an irretrievable

past.

> If this be so, those working for language revival through the schools and in the wider community are perhaps exemplifying the spirit of the Maori proverb "Kia mate ururoa, kei mate wheke" (*it is better to die fighting like a shark than to be clubbed to death like an octopus*). After all, some sharks do get away. (p. 72-73)

In light of Churchill's 1987 considerations of the roles that racism, sexism, religious discrimination, and discrimination against people with "primitive lifestyles", one asks oneself about the depth of Benton's analysis in this comparison. If the results are indeed about equal, what role is classism playing in the Irish case and what role is racism and anti-"primitivism" playing in New Zealand? What role is sexism or religion playing in either? Also, one must be constantly aware that the Canadian situation is substantially different from both cases. Canada has two official, internationally powerful, national languages, which monopolize the national spotlight on linguistic issues – which neither Ireland nor New Zealand has. In both Ireland and New Zealand, the situation involves only one additional language to the dominant English, whereas in Canada there are over fifty Aboriginal languages. The Aboriginal population in Canada is a minuscule proportion of the total Canadian population in comparison to the proportion of Maori or Irish language speakers in New Zealand and Ireland. Therefore, in Ireland and New Zealand, the Gaelic and Maori languages play something close to the role that French plays in Canada – not at all like the role of the Aboriginal lanugages in Canada. To further complicate matters, Canada has a substantial racial and cultural minority immigrant population which neither Ireland or New Zealand has. Therefore, no matter what the truth of Benton's analysis, its models cannot be easily transported to Canada without consideration of the social context.

As a final note in this discussion of cross-national comparisons is Jordan's 1988 article relating Canadian and Australian Aboriginals and the Sami of northern Europe. While there is a great deal of interesting material in this

discussion, especially on education, the focus of the article is on comparative political relations.

5.4 Kohanga Reo or "Language Nests" in New Zealand

For reasons outlined above, one must be concerned about the applicability of the "language nest" concept in Canada. Nevertheless, its success, its community-based concepts, and the potential for mobilizing community resources in aid of Aboriginal language maintenance without much external help in terms of orthography development and the like, make it an attractive example. Benton (1986) describes the "kohanga reo" as follows:

> ...the *kohanga reo* ("language nest") movement in New Zealand....emerged from a meeting of Maori leaders in 1981, sponsored by the Department of Maori Affairs, to discuss Maori concerns and suggest courses of action. The loss of the language was a major topic, and the idea of an all-Maori pre-school group, which could compensate for the inability of younger parents to speak Maori, attracted enthusiastic support....
>
> The first "nests" were established early in 1982, and the Department of Maori Affairs issued leaflet and guidelines explaining the aim of the enterprise and how it should be undertaken. Small cash grants have been made by the Department to help set the groups up, and further assistance has been made available through Department of Labour work schemes for unemployed school leavers and adults. However, the organizational burden and ultimate financial responsibility rests with the local group. This has been important, as not only has it ensured that local control and initiative have been maintained, but it has also barred the Department of Social Welfare from arbitrarily imposing child care regulations on some individual centres – they have been able to classify themselves as groups of relatives rather than child-care institutions, and thus escape many bureaucratic nets. The Department of Maori Affairs

has been theoretically distanced itself from the movement by setting up an autonomous trust to be the national co-ordinating body.

The "nests" are described in Maori Affairs documents as "a whanau or family method for proper child development"; parents are assured that through these centres: the highest possible level of child growth is assured. In addition, the centres will produce children who can command both the Maori and English languages by the age of five years" .... It is assumed that no one in New Zealand can avoid learning English; Maori is therefore the only language which is permitted in the centres – as official guidelines put it "there must be rules applied to visitors and certainly to the supervisors that at all times only the Maori language is spoken and heard by the growing child" .... Parents are urged to bring their children to the centres as soon as possible after birth, and let them continue to visit the *kohanga reo* after they start school at five.

From four to five experimental centres early in June 1982, the number of functioning *kohanga reo* had increased to 287 by June 1984.... Even in this short period of time, the "nests" had enabled parents to put considerable pressure on the school system. Newspaper headlines like "bilingual influx worries teachers"...soon became comparatively commonplace. There is a rather bitter irony here – 30 years ago, a high proportion of Maori children arrived at school unable to speak English, but little thought was given then to using Maori as a teaching language. Now, the presence of children who have become bilingual before entering school is the cause for some alarm. One reason is that these children now live in urban areas; another that parents have become conscious of the fact that their pre-school efforts can quickly be destroyed by an English-only school system, and they themselves are sufficiently confident and well-organized to try to do something about this. (pp. 67-68)

5.5 Other Aboriginal Language Development References

Some other references which might be of interest are: Lipscombe and Burnes (1982) on Aboriginal literacy in Australia; Harker and McConnochie (1985) on education and culture in Australia and New Zealand; Benton (1981) on languages and education in Oceania; Pentikainen et al. (1979) and Asp et al. (1980) on cultural pluralism and the Sami in Finland; and Kalantzis et al. (1988) on language issues with the culture and power situation in Australia.

In sum, there may not be a lot to learn from other countries with Aboriginal populations that is directly applicable to Canada. These groups seem to be having at least as much difficulty as Canada. Further, it is clear that solutions must be unique to each Aboriginal group, reflecting the many unique factors which are involved in each community. Nevertheless, the "language nests" of New Zealand present a refreshing picture of success in an otherwise less than optimistic set of circumstances.

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