

The Birth of a Very Large Baby

by Karen Virag

In April, it is common for writers to wax on lengthily about starting over and new beginnings. So, in this spirit I, too, wish to announce a recent birth. I speak not of the actual birth of a bouncing human baby or of a metaphoric birth related to spring, but to the birth—and not a moment too soon!—of a new Alberta Teachers' Association specialist council: the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council.

The primary purpose of the council, which is open to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers alike, will be to facilitate professional development related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) education. As well, the council could advocate for FNMI students and their issues and develop Aboriginal resources for teachers across Alberta to use in their classrooms. It is hoped that the council will also foster relationships with elders and

spiritual advisors in each community to bridge the gap between the community and local schools.

Below is a list of the first interim executive members, as of March 2008:

- Mike Bruised Head, Southern Region (including Calgary)
- Marieka Cardinal, Central Region (including Edmonton and Red Deer)
- Vanessa Malegana, Northern Region
- Jamie Medicine Crane, Southern Region
- Sherryl Sewepagaham, Central Region
- Elaine Ward, Northern Region
- Denise Legge, ATA Provincial Executive Council liaison
- Jacqueline Skytt, ATA staff advisor

Karen Virag is the ATA's supervising editor, as well as the administrative secretary of the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee.



Yuet Chan

10th Annual UN Student Conference on Human Rights: “Recognizing the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”

by *Marieka Cardinal*

As a member of the ATA First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council, I was encouraged to nominate an Aboriginal student from Holy Trinity Catholic High School, in Edmonton, to attend the 10th Annual United Nations Student Conference on Human Rights: “Recognizing the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” in New York City. I nominated Alistair Ness, a Grade 12 student who is trying to learn more about his Aboriginal ancestry. Alistair has been learning to speak Cree, and is studying traditional dance and working on his regalia. Alistair became interested in his ancestry at St Hilda Junior High School, and continued through his involvement in the Braided Journeys Tribal Council, an Aboriginal student group at Holy Trinity. Alistair attends powwows, and has been a delegate at the Dreamcatcher Aboriginal Youth Conference at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton.

Alistair and I were in New York December 5–7, 2007. Approximately 70 students from the United States, Canada, the Dominican Republic and Mexico attended; 13 of those students were from Canada, and five were of Aboriginal descent. Of the three students representing Alberta, Alistair was the only student of Aboriginal descent.

The conference began at the United Nations

International School with a webcast presentation by Pauline Gordon, assistant deputy minister of education, culture and employment, Northwest Territories. Ms Gordon shared her residential school experience and described her journey to becoming a teacher and then an administrator. She explained the importance of integrating her language and culture into the school system.

On Thursday, we heard a number of student presentations on the rights of indigenous people. The students were then divided into six working groups to discuss drafting sections of the Student Plan of Action. Alistair’s group discussed the right to culturally sensitive education, and they brainstormed ideas for ensuring that indigenous languages are maintained. At the end of the day, the students elected a chairperson and four moderators to present their draft action plan to the president of the UN’s General Assembly.

Marieka Cardinal is an Aboriginal school liaison and guidance counsellor with Edmonton Catholic Schools.

Check out the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council website at www.fnmiec.teachers.ab.ca.



Alistair Ness (right) at the 10th Annual United Nations Student Conference on Human Rights, in New York

The Kíkway Kikiskiyîtin Project

by Jerel Gibbs

The Beginning

In the Cree language, *kíkway kikiskiyîtin* is a question that asks, What do you know?

The Kíkway Kikiskiyîtin Project was launched by the Northland School Division to determine whether Aboriginal students would perform better if assessment were rooted in culturally authentic examples. The following is our story.

In 1998, the division initiated the Kíkway Kikiskiyîtin Project to develop performance assessment tools to support cultural teaching and learning in mathematics and reading. The project was developed under the direction of two pedagogical supervisors: Cindy Jenkins and Karen Penney. In the spring of 1999, the first divisionwide administration of the performance assessment tasks was conducted at the Grades 3 and 6 levels. Tasks for Grades 2 and 5 followed in 2000, and tasks for Grades 4 and 7 in 2001. The Kíkway Kikiskiyîtin Project became a Cycle 1 Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) project and was approved as a Cycle 2 project to complete the task development for Grades 4 and 7.

The Process

Four times each year teams of teachers received inservice in curricular and assessment strategies. They were then asked to design, field test and prepare the performance assessment tasks, which were designed to allow students to solve problems in a culturally familiar context. Aboriginal activities included counting moose and designing menus including bannock and stew. In addition, hands-on problem solving and written communication in mathematics allowed students to demonstrate what they knew.

The tests were administered in April of each year, and grade-level teachers marked the tests in May. The markers used rubrics developed by the teachers who had created the tasks. Exemplars were chosen for each of the scoring rubrics. All of the tasks, rubrics and exemplars became part of a manual given to all grade-level teachers in the division, who used it to assess students' understanding of the grade-level mathematics strands or story structure in language arts.

A statistician collated the results and tracked trends. Parents received individual student results, principals and the board of trustees received divisional results, and principals also received individual school results.

The Tasks

In mathematics, the teams developed five tasks annually for outcomes required at each grade level in the program of studies. Two tasks were developed for the number strand (number sense and number operations), and one task was developed for each remaining strand. The tasks were complex, and students were expected to solve the problems by applying knowledge gained through classroom instruction and a variety of mathematical processes. Students were evaluated on their problem-solving skills and communication processes.

The reading performance assessment task focused on quality children's literature. Each year, four books (representing a range of reading difficulty) were available at each grade level. Students answered questions that required them to demonstrate their comprehension and an understanding of story structure. Copies of the four books were left in the classroom each year; by the end of the multiyear project, each classroom had a library containing multiple copies of 20 titles.

The Outcomes

Although the Kíkway Kikiskiyîtin Project was primarily intended to help teachers assess students' math and reading comprehension, the provincial achievement test results in Grades 3 and 6 rose steadily over the course of the project. Teachers began to use the tasks as part of their own ongoing assessment, and they learned the value of teaching and assessing from a cultural perspective.

AISI annual reports noted that the project provided

- tasks that interested and engaged rural northern and Aboriginal students,
- a "show what you know and can do" kind of test rather than a multiple-choice measure,

- the establishment of classroom libraries containing excellent children's literature,
- a service document linking assessment to classroom practice,
- a generic reading task that could be incorporated into instructional practice and used as part of quality classroom assessment,
- clearly defined rubrics linked to the curriculum and assessment of learning,
- an opportunity to draw on the experiences of all people in developing the tasks, and
- extensive inservice to support the implementation of the project.

The reports also noted that the Kikway Kikiskiyitn Project enjoyed considerable success within the division for the following reasons:

- The project had a strong participation rate and buy-in from most of the division's teachers.
- Time was dedicated to the project, and there was a clear focus for the teams and markers.
- The teachers involved in the project became a community of learners in assessment and curriculum.
- All schools had access to quality assessment tools and materials that were developed and used by Northland teachers for their students.
- Teachers had an increased understanding of assessment for, of and as learning.
- Teachers gained a better understanding of curriculum by unpacking curriculum and pulling out key understandings.
- The project provided excellent staff and

professional development for the teachers administering the tests and for those developing and marking the tasks.

- Teachers had time and opportunities to discuss professional interests with colleagues.
- There was an increased sense of Aboriginal cultural identity as the jurisdiction worked together to improve student learning.
- Students had increased confidence in their own learning and test taking and improved their provincial achievement test scores.

The Kikway Kikiskiyitn Project allowed the Northland School Division to demonstrate how Aboriginal children can learn through appropriate classroom instruction and effective assessment focused on their culture.

Future Directions

The Kikway Kikiskiyitn Project wrapped up at the end of the 2005/06 school year. The project binders remain in the schools for teachers to use with their students throughout the year. This means that Northland School Division classrooms contain five years' worth of locally developed tasks, scoring guides and exemplars in Grades 2-7 mathematics and reading.

At this time, work is proceeding to develop those materials into a published document.

Jerel Gibbs is the AISI pedagogical supervisor for Northland School Division No 61.

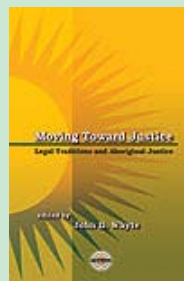
Books on Aboriginal issues

Founded in 1992, Purich Publishing is a Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, based publisher specializing in books on Aboriginal, legal, and western Canadian issues. Purich has published an extensive array of books on Aboriginal themes, including the ones below. For more information, go to www.purichpublishing.com



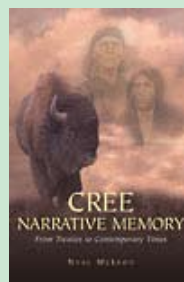
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 144 pages, includes a
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The ATA is proud of its workshops and publications related to FNMI education. This section lists FNMI workshops and provides an extensive list of FNMI resources available in the ATA library.

FNMI Workshops

Taking Root, Branching Out Workshop Series

The Taking Root, Branching Out workshop series is designed to help teachers better understand the histories, cultures and world views of FNMI people. This background will help teachers not only ensure that Aboriginal students succeed in school and meet prescribed learning outcomes but also deal with prejudice and discrimination. It is strongly recommended that these workshops be taken in sequence and—because changing pedagogical practice takes time—over a period of several months.

Workshop 1: Understanding Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples

This half- or full-day workshop provides foundational information that examines FNMI cultures, histories and world views. The workshop will model appropriate local protocols and provide opportunities to experience learning strategies that work effectively with Aboriginal learners. Participants will receive *Education Is Our Buffalo: A Teachers' Resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education in Alberta*.

Workshop 2: Communicating with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students, Parents and Caregivers

This workshop focuses on intercultural perspectives and communication styles as they apply to local cultures. Through interactive activities, participants will explore respectful approaches to communicating with FNMI students, parents and communities.

Workshop 3: Addressing Prejudice and Discrimination Relating to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students

This workshop builds on the important idea that, in order to learn, all students need to feel safe in school. Unfortunately, many students experience racism, discrimination and prejudice in school, which significantly diminishes their potential to learn. This workshop explores techniques that teachers can use to help all students learn to be more respectful of the cultures of others. Although the strategies examined relate to curriculum outcomes in social studies, they are applicable to all teachers, regardless of subject.

Workshop 4: Increasing Resiliency in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students

This workshop is intended to help teachers increase the resilience of FNMI students, thereby enhancing their chances of success. Participants will examine their school's current FNMI policies and practices and learn about the Circle of Courage, an approach to addressing the needs of Aboriginal learners, developed by Martin Brokenleg. The workshop will challenge participants to improve their teaching practices and enhance student learning.

Workshop 5: Education Is Our Buffalo

The ATA supports the development of safe and inclusive classrooms. In recent years, teachers have become more aware of stereotyping of and outright discrimination toward Aboriginal peoples. Teachers can counter these problems by increasing their awareness and understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives. To this end, the ATA has developed a workshop to complement *Education Is Our Buffalo: A Teachers' Resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education in Alberta*. The workshop helps teachers examine the history, world views, cultures and current perspectives of Alberta's FNMI peoples, with the ultimate goal of helping Aboriginal students succeed in school. This highly interactive workshop models pedagogical approaches for meeting the learning needs of a wide range of students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. *Education Is Our Buffalo* will be



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provided to workshop participants free of charge. It is strongly recommended that a full day be devoted to this workshop.

Book a Professional Development Workshop

Contact Janey Kemp at Barnett House by phone (447-9485 in Edmonton; 1-800-232-7208 elsewhere in Alberta) or by e-mail (janey.kemp@ata.ab.ca). The fee for each workshop is \$200. The minimum time is half a day. These workshops are available to ATA members.

Library Resources

The following resources are available in the ATA library. To access the ATA library catalogue, go to Professional Development on the ATA website (www.teachers.ab.ca). You can also contact the library directly to borrow items by calling 1-800-232-7208 or by e-mailing library@ata.ab.ca.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework

Alberta Education, February 2002
42 pages

In [*First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*](#), Alberta Education sets out the basic principles required to improve individual and community well-being and the self-reliance of Aboriginal peoples, and to clarify federal, provincial and Aboriginal roles and responsibilities.

Improving Academic Performance Among Native American Students: A Review of the Research Literature

W G Demmert, Jr
Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Appalachian Educational Laboratory, 2001
87 pages

This bibliography summarizes major research findings in recent reports and articles on the education of Native Americans. It is organized into the following categories: (1) early environment and experiences; (2) Native language and cultural programs; (3) teachers, instruction and curriculum; (4) community and parental influences on academic performance; (5) student characteristics; (6) economic and social factors; and (7) factors leading to success in college or college completion.

Learning About Walking in Beauty: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms

Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2002
300 pages

In 2000/01, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, in association with the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies, undertook a national survey to determine how knowledgeable young people are about the history, cultures, attitudes and current concerns of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The 12-page survey was administered to 519 young adults enrolled in first-year university and college courses across Canada.

Learning About Walking in Beauty contains the results of that survey. In addition, the report presents a pedagogical framework for learning to walk in beauty together. The report also reveals that Canadians want Aboriginal perspectives integrated into the school curriculum from the earliest grades to high school.

Mapping the Healing Journey

Solicitor General of Canada, 2002
103 pages

[*Mapping the Healing Journey*](#) is the final report of a research project intended to identify the common characteristics of the many healing programs that have been established to help Aboriginal people in Canada overcome a long legacy of oppression and systemic racism.

Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada

John Bird, Lorraine Land and Murray MacAdam, eds
Toronto: Public Justice Resource Centre and Irwin Publishing, 2001
276 pages

This book is divided into three sections. The first offers a historical overview of the original sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples and examines how colonialism undermined Aboriginal self-government. The second section analyzes recent court decisions and treaty agreements in an attempt to determine the extent to which Aboriginal peoples have achieved self-government. The third features the personal stories of Aboriginal people in their struggles against colonization. An online review is available [here](#).

Native Residential Schools in Canada: A Selective Bibliography

Amy Fisher and Deborah Lee, eds
Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 2002

[*Native Residential Schools in Canada*](#) lists materials available from the National Library of Canada pertaining to Native residential schools in Canada. The bibliography includes books, scholarly articles, school histories, personal accounts, theses, videos and Internet resources.

Our Children—Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, December 2002
56 pages

Our Children—Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge is the final report of a working group commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada to recommend what must be done to establish a high-quality K–12 education system that will equip

First Nations children to participate fully and confidently in their own communities and in Canadian society.

Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners

Alberta Education, October 2005
215 pp

[*Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners*](#) offers information and sample strategies that classroom teachers can use to help their Aboriginal students be successful learners. It provides information on Aboriginal cultures and perspectives, discusses the importance of family and community involvement, and provides advice on teaching students with learning disabilities.

Periodicals

Canadian Journal of Native Education, published by the University of British Columbia

Otipemisiwak, published by the Métis Nation of Alberta

Other Resources

Aboriginal Writers' Circle

On the first Thursday of each month, the Aboriginal Writers' Circle meets on the lower level at McNally Robinson Booksellers, in Calgary. The writers' circle was created to encourage Aboriginal writers in Calgary to sit together and share their writing and storytelling experiences. Join editors and contributors from *New Tribe* magazine and find out what you have to offer the world of the written word.

Contact McNally Robinson Booksellers in Calgary for more information and to confirm times: 120 8 Avenue SW, Calgary; phone (403) 538-1797; toll free 1-866-798-1797; website:

www.mcnallyrobinson.com.

Inuit Magazines for Children and Youth

Kaakuluk is a new bilingual magazine for the children of Nunavut. Published in both English and Inuit, stories about Nunavut and being a Nunavummiut are designed to help elementary students appreciate reading. *Pivvut* is a teen-focused magazine with the same mission. The magazines are a collaboration between the Nunavut Bilingual Education Society and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. Approximately 2,500 copies will be distributed to territorial schools.

April 30–May 1, 2008: Saskatoon. First Annual Women and Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium and Trade Show: “Begin the Journey to Success”

Areas to be covered include economic development, the green economy, market housing and traditional knowledge. The hands-on workshop will focus on such things as business plan development, creating opportunities for wealth, funding, the environment, housing, training and internships. For more information, go to www.fsin.com/economicdevelopment/wayesconference_index.htm.

May 12–14, 2008: Edmonton. National Indigenous Sexual Abuse Conference: “Controlling Our Own Destiny”

For more information, contact Amisk & Associates, 16726 109A Street, Edmonton, AB T5X 2T8; phone (780) 472-0581; website: www.nisac2008.com/index.htm.

June 8–10, 2008: Victoria, BC. Canadian Apprenticeship Forum- Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA)

The conference features a keynote address by Bruce Kirkby, author, explorer and host of *No Opportunity Wasted*; presentations from renowned Canadian business and labour leaders; showcases and demonstrations; breakout sessions focusing on the latest developments in key areas; opportunities to reach decision-makers in the Canadian apprenticeship community; and networking activities with approximately 450 delegates from across the country. The conference closes with a joint plenary session hosted by CAF-FCA and the Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC), examining policy issues related to Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship and skilled trades. AHRC will be hosting the National Aboriginal Trades Symposium on June 10–11, immediately following the CAF-FCA.

For more information on the CAF-FCA 2008 conference, please contact Debbie Miller at

(613) 235-4004, ext 207; e-mail debbie_miller@caf-fca.org.

June 21, 2008: Across Canada. National Aboriginal Day

National Aboriginal Day is a day for all Canadians to celebrate the cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. This year's theme is “Embracing Our Future.” National Aboriginal Day is part of the annual nationwide Celebrate Canada! event, with celebrations centring on National Aboriginal Day, through Canadian Multiculturalism Day and concluding with Canada Day.

As former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson said, “It is an opportunity for all of us to celebrate our respect and admiration for First Nations, for Inuit, for Métis—for the past, the present and the future.”

Although the official day is June 21, celebrations in Edmonton begin on June 19 and continue through June 24. For more information, go to <http://eventful.com/events/alberta/national-aboriginal-day-2008-embracing-our-future-/E0-001-009157783-7>.

July 29–31, 2008: Yellowknife, NWT. The National Aboriginal Women's Summit

Approximately 300 participants are expected to attend from throughout Canada. This will be a wonderful opportunity to expose the fine traditional arts of the North. For more information about how you can take advantage of this exciting opportunity to display and sell your arts or crafts,



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please contact Gail Cyr, special advisor to the minister responsible for the status of women. Phone (867) 920-3106; e-mail gail_cyr@gov.nt.ca. For more information, go to www.nwac-hq.org/en/NationalAboriginalWomensSummit.htm.

**September 29–October 1, 2008:
Calgary. The 8th World Indigenous
Women and Wellness Conference**

This is an excellent opportunity for participants from across the globe to share information, innovative initiatives, models, research and best practices on family violence and indigenous peoples. This conference unites people from a range of disciplinary fields and nations who are engaged in developing responses to global challenges of Aboriginal and other indigenous peoples. The purpose is to identify common themes and key issues, and explore ideas for the future.

For more information, go to www.awotaan.org.

**December 7–11, 2008: Melbourne,
Australia: The World Indigenous
Peoples Conference: Education
(WIPC:E)**

WIPC:E is a triennial conference of international significance that attracts peoples from around the globe to celebrate and share diverse cultures, traditions and knowledge with a focus on world indigenous education. The purpose of WIPC:E is to provide a forum to come together, share, learn and promote best practice in indigenous education policies, programs and practice.

The conference will be held on the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation. For more information, go to www.wipce2008.com.

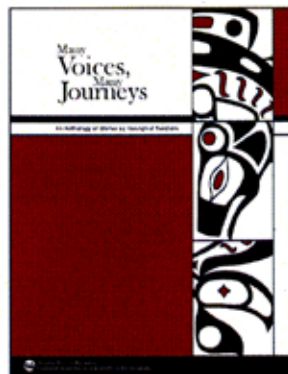
The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission has launched a new website. Check it out at www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca.

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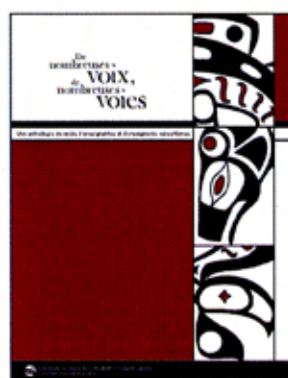


Many Voices, Many Journeys

An Anthology of Stories by Aboriginal Teachers

Stories, poetry and art that tell of the journeys of Aboriginal teachers in the Canadian public education system are featured in this publication. These stories of frustration and anger, sorrow and grief, excitement and awe, relate the life experiences of our Aboriginal colleagues. Stories are powerful teachers. From these stories, poetry and art come many lessons which should help to create a more inclusive caring community for all teachers and students in our schools.

Published in 2007
\$15



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Une anthologie de récits d'enseignants et d'enseignantes autochtones

Des récits, des poèmes et des dessins retraçant le parcours d'enseignantes et d'enseignants autochtones dans le système d'éducation publique canadien composent cette publication. Ces récits de frustration et de colère, de chagrin et de tristesse, d'enthousiasme et d'admiration relatent les expériences vécues par nos collègues autochtones. Ils constituent de puissants outils pédagogiques. De ces récits, poèmes et dessins se dégagent de nombreuses leçons qui devraient nous aider à créer une communauté bienveillante et plus intégratrice pour l'ensemble du personnel enseignant et des élèves dans nos écoles.

Édition de 2007
15 \$

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