Native Students In Museums:

A Neglected Aspect of Museum Education

It is well recognized that the museum is in large part (especially that part which gains most public attention) an educational institution. Another premise upon which there is wide agreement is that educational institutions (especially as they are manifested as formal government-sponsored systems) have failed to serve that segment of their clientele who happen to be Native people. ¹

In contrast to the abundance of literature and verbiage directed at the issues involved in the latter setting, however, there is a distinct lack of attention paid to the fate of Native visitors in the museum defined as an educational setting.

Minorities in general and their relationships with museums have been objects of relative neglect, even during the museum reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The attention which has been directed to this area, in the more abundant American literature for instance, tends to focus on the Black minority, while, along with its Canadian counterpart, tending to ignore the issues involved in the education of Native people.

Recently there has indeed been attention focussed on museum/native relations, but only as a result of some relatively spectacular confrontations dealing primarily with collections per se ² and having little to do with the quality of education Native people receive in museums.

Therefore, this paper will attempt to relate the findings of the literature concerning Native education in the school system to the educational setting in the museum. It is also the purpose of this paper to establish a theoretical foundation and a series of premises which will serve as a basis for a projected field study concerning the quality of education for Native students at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

The first section of this paper will take a cursory look at the widely accepted findings in the literature on Native education; i.e., the difficulties encountered and their effects on Native students. The second section will make application of this theory
to the philosophy and the educational setting within the museum.

If any one major concept has emerged from the literature on Native education it has been that it is the system itself which fails Native students, and that the converse is merely a symptom of the underlying acausal difficulties. High "failure" and "drop out" rates among Native students must not be defined as the fundamental problems; for to do so would be akin to treating a compound tibia fracture with a band aid. In other words, to be effective, perceptions of the problem, and remedial action, must involve some movement toward major structural re-adjustment, not merely half-hearted attempts at superficial cosmetics.

The American and Canadian records are identical here; both educational systems have been identified as abysmal failures in the their relationships with Native students. 3.

The major underlying problems inherent to the system which have resulted in the colossal failure of the system fall under eight major categories. Again and again the literature cites assimilationist philosophy, staff attitudes and behaviour, inappropriate curriculum, language difficulties, other cultural differences, lack of attention to special needs, lack of parental involvement and control, and class bias as the important factors which prevent the success of Native students. Despite the fact that

Despite the fact that the Department of Indian Affairs for instance espoused the goal of "integration" for its education policy, as R. Hawthorn (1970:30-2, 41) (more recently supported by Frideres 1978a:31) points out, there is little if any indication in specific policy direction or action that government policy has been anything but one of de facto "assimilation". Certainly Native critics such as R. Cardinal (1969:55-7) and the National Indian Brotherhood (1972:25) assert that education served only to produce "little brown white men". 4.

In a 1963 study in the Northwest Territories and northern Quebec cited by Abler and Weaver (1970:212) (see also Wolcott 1967:128) it was found that educational aims were confused and objectives for Native students were lacking in specificity. It becomes obvious that the fuzzy ideals in Native education actually translate into some extremely negative realities.

The literature has identified administrations and more par-
particularly teachers as major factors in the failure of the school system with its Native clients. Criticism is focussed on the lack of teacher motivation, knowledge, preparation, sensitivity, and even simple awareness of the realities in the cross-cultural setting.

Hawthorn (1970:108) indicates that the non-Native attitudes toward Natives in the community are highly significant in terms of levels of aspiration, achievement, self-image and personal identity. In addition, E. S. Cahn (1969:49) is among those who believe that school administrations are continually subverting pedagogical concerns regarding Native students in favour of bureaucratic expediency.

As one example of this, in a move obviously designed to keep the problem under wraps, a study on the streaming of Native students in The Pas was rejected by the administration. The reasoning was that such a study was not an appropriate undertaking for teachers and the Native Studies Committee.

Teachers are accused by K. Woodley (1978:153) of intransigence and unwillingness to make adjustments to accommodate Native students and their differences. R. Slobodin (1966:126) and Hawthorn (1970:120-1) find a great deal of ethnocentrism in teacher attitudes and in their evaluation of Native students. This type of outlook is accounted for, according to K. S. McKenzie (1969:16) and M. V. Zintz (1969: 79 ff), by the typically middle class socio-economic background of the teachers which too often is untempered by any special preparation for cross-cultural teaching.

B. Bodner (1971:27-8) and G. D. Spindler (1974:69) are among those who assert that typically low teacher expectations have a marked negative effect on the success of Native students. This situation among teachers is critical of course because as R. A. Clifton (1977:200) maintains,

...differential academic performance between Indian and non-Indian students may result directly from the interactive patterns the students have with their teachers and indirectly through the affective states that develop from such interaction.

J. Wyatt (1968:16) and J. S. Frideres (1968b:265) are also critical of teachers' self-imposed isolation from parents and the Native community. Of course, this contributes significantly to the alienation Native people feel from the education system. It
seems clear, therefore, that teachers and administrations do indeed become significant negative factors in the success of Native students within the system.

The curriculum, its content, structure and methodology have also been singled out as problematic for Native students. Fundamentally, the curriculum has failed to deal with Native history, culture, contributions and contemporary situations. If at all, these tend to be treated in an overly simplistic or distorted manner (Sealey 1973:199, LaRonde 1975:40). Text-books in particular are still characterized by anti-Native biases, perpetuation of stereotypes and use of negative evaluative terminology (McDarmid and Pratt 1970).

On the whole however, aspects of Native history, traditional culture, and the realities of modern life are ignored to such an extent, that the curriculum becomes totally irrelevant and meaningless for Native students. 7.

Curriculum materials without the heavy middle class American or Euro-Canadian bias are almost non-existent (Frideres 1968b:265). Indeed, D. B. Seally (1973:199) has stated that it is the...

...white cultural bias of reading programs which have so effectively condemned large numbers of Native people to a life sentence of semi-literacy.

Even the methods employed in curriculum plans are often less than appropriate due to lack of relevance to the Native student's background experience (Wyatt 1978:20).

One of the major reasons why this is the case relates to language. It is recognized by anthropologists that the language dichotomy means differences not only in the superficial verbal form, but also significant divergences in thought processes and logical structure (Whorf, 1975). In the classroom situation, many authors have identified language as a significant difficulty for students. 8. Some critics such as K. S. McKenzie (1969:14) go so far as to insist that the lack of fluency in a common language is in fact the single most greatest barrier to academic achievement among Native students. As M. Castellano (1970:53) maintains,

...the verbal symbols and the theoretical constructions which the Indian child is asked to manipulate bear little or no relation to the social environment with which he is most familiar.
Further, it is not simply "English as a second language" but the lack of a requisite "standard English" as a first language which causes difficulties. Parents from The Pas Band for example are continually frustrated by teachers who maintain that their child is having difficulty in school because of a "language problem," when in fact the child speaks no Cree at all. The problem here is not one of E.S.I.L., but of "sub-standard English," however neither teachers nor parents seem to understand this.

Here we have only one example, even apart from the language barrier itself, which underlines a severe lack of real communication between schools and Native people (Woodley 1978:146, Spindler 1974:72). Again one of the major causes of this failure is that teachers and administrators tend to isolate themselves from the Native Community (Hawthorn 1970:143).

This brings the discussion into the realm of cultural differences. In a 1970 Saskatchewan study, R. Green (Abler and Weaver 1970:212) found that educational systems have failed to recognize that problems affecting school performance go beyond language and into underlying value conflicts. It was also noted here that only minor adjustments were being made to take these differences into account.

In this regard, there has been a general failure within the school system to adhere to a basic pedagogical tenet when dealing with Native students. That basic tenet of course is the necessity of moving the student from the known to the unknown. Few if any schools begin educating the Native child with his/her particular socio-cultural background in mind (Sealey 1973:202, Laroque 1975: xi).

Given the rigid nature of the educational structure and the often extreme reluctance of teachers to modify their own cultural value positions (Zintz 1969:29, Woodley 1978:153), the "disarticulation" between the cultures becomes another important impediment to the success of Native students.

Very often however, the concept of the "culturally alien school system" is used indiscriminantly, and very rarely is defined operationally. Despite the fuzzy nature of this criticism, it is recognized in the literature that there are sometimes diametric factors coming into play; factors such as value differences, communication modes, learning styles, community expectations, con-
ceptions of reality, philosophy, life goals and social relationship patterns. These factors result in real "culture shock" for the Native student, and combined with the inflexible nature of the school system, these disparities from Native culture have definite negative effects on the Native client. In agreement with M. Nagler (1970:29), E. LaRoque (1975:58) states:

Most schools in North America are middle-class oriented and the teacher's teaching methods and curriculum naturally patronize middle-class children. The school system is so built that it often cannot relate or respond to children whose backgrounds do not subscribe to the middle-class culture.

Out of the severe cultural bias within the school system emerges the concept of "cultural deprivation" which is used to rationalize lack of success among Native students. Of course, as many authors such as LaRoque (1975:57) and Wolcott (1967:128) have pointed out, this tends merely to be an ethnocentric approach which often is taken to mean that the child does poorly because of a lack or inferiority of culture rather than simply possessing a culture which just happens to be different in kind only from that highly specious one propagated by the school system. Again, the burden here is placed on the student to do all the accommodating. The school system actually demands assimilation as a prerequisite for success.

Compounding the effect of this cultural conflict is the fact that the system tends to be relatively inflexible when it comes to making adjustments to suit the culture specific needs and characteristics of Native Students. For example, the Kelsey School Division in The Pas has refused to be flexible on its policy requiring swimming lessons as a part of the mandatory high school physical education credit. The Pas Indian Band has made representation to the Board that many Native students, particularly girls, do not feel comfortable in swimming attire due to some cultural conceptions of modesty. Seeing that many Native students refuse to attend the swimming classes, this eliminates their chances of graduating. The inflexibility shown here is seen as only another way in which the School Division tries to "keep Native students from graduating".

In many cases problems involving cultural difference are
interpreted as "value incongruence". The argument is made that Native values which form the basis for such varied aspects as motivation, behaviour, interpersonal relations, attendance etc. are so different from what is expected and promoted by the school system as to cause confusion and alienation among Native students. With support from A. D. Fisher (1973:244), E. P. Dozier (1972:24) maintains that...

For most Indians these white American values can only be achieved by destroying good relations with neighbors and arousing anxiety in themselves; they are therefore not worth striving for.

In this regard the school system at present seems only to present the Native student with a single either/or choice; whether to be "White" or "Indian" (Castellano 1970:57, Laroque 1975:11, Hawthorn 1970:47). Given the "push out" rate, the vast majority of Native students obviously decide against schooling and its concomitant value system in favour of maintaining their community relatedness.

Beyond the cultural bias of the system there is of course an equally strong socio-economic class bias operating within the schools as J. Porter (1965:196) has pointed out. To the extent that the vast majority of Native people have relatively low (lumpenproletarian) socio-economic status, this bias operates physically and psychologically against their success. As J. J. Singleton (1973:279) points out, contrary to the popular idealized notion, schools operate to reinforce rather than change ascribed social status.

It is a widespread conclusion in the literature that an important cause of the above problems is the general lack of parental involvement and control within the educational process. V. J. Kirkness (1973:171) asserts that the system's failure to involve Native parents has been its gravest failing of all, while J. S. Frides (1978a:33) maintains that this isolation of Native parents from the decision-making process has in fact been systematic and intentional. Recent examples such as the struggle of the local Band to gain representation on the Grey-Bruce County School Board in Ontario seem to confirm this assessment.

The above discussion has identified the characteristics of
the school system which impede the progress of Native students within that system. The actual effects of these problems on Native students themselves have also been widely identified in the literature. Age-grade retardation, failure, lack of motivation, absenteeism, push out rate, low self-image, withdrawal, loss of identity, "deculturation", low feelings of political efficacy, alienation, cultural dissonance, confusion, hostility are those which are most often cited.

However, it is the reduction of positive self-image among Native students which has overwhelmingly emerged as the most commonly identified effect. 14.

As a result of his/her differences which are devalued by the system, an inability to succeed within the system, outright discrimination, and a socio-economic position, the Native student is able to learn one thing very well from the hidden and overt curriculum -- that s/he is inferior and should be ashamed of themselves and their culture. With agreement from D. Cardinal (1970:109), G. Walsh (1971:22) states:

It is difficult to imagine how an Indian child attending an ordinary public school could develop anything but a negative self-image. First, there is nothing from his culture represented in the school or valued by it. Second, the Indian child often gains the impression that nothing he or other Indians do is right when compared to what non-Indian children are doing. Third, in both segregated and integrated schools, one of the main aims of teachers expressed with reference to Indians is "to help them improve their standard of living, or their general lot, or themselves", which is another way of saying that what they are and have now is not good enough; they must do and be other things.

As J. F. Bryde (1971:107) asserts, this effect of course acts as a "vicious circle" in which low self-image and failure feed on each other.

R. A. Clifton's (1977:193) assertion that "there is little empirical evidence which suggests that Indian students have feelings of alienation and negative self-concepts" is not in fact in keeping with the weight of all available evidence. On the contrary, there is a great deal of empirical evidence to back up the subjective evaluation of the situation. Clifton is contradicted directly by K. S. McKenzie's review of studies on self-esteem.

Clifton (1977:195) himself supports the fundamental conten-
tion that self-image is critical to how successful a person is in interpreting and interacting with the social world. Further, D. B. Sealey (1973:201) has maintained that, as a function of the structure and operation of the educational system and society itself, the self-perception of Native students will inevitably be a negative one.

Clifton (1977:194) himself has cited a central Alberta study in which it was concluded that Indian students have less positive self-images than their non-Native counterparts. E. S. Cahn (1969:42) has reported in the American context that Indians in the twelfth grade (where personal experience has indicated that Native self-images are most positive) have the poorest self-concept of all minority groups tested. A more recent Canadian study by D. W. George and R. A. Hoppe (1979:95) indicates again that early high out-group preferences by Native students correlates with low self-image. G. K. Hirabayashi in a 1963 study (Abler and Weaver 1970:215) showed that Metis students tended to have self-images even lower than Indian students.

The contrary findings of Clifton do not seem to counterbalance the available evidence on this point. It seems clear that the school system has demonstrably negative effects on the self-image of Native Students.

Coupled with low personal self-image is the internalization of a negative concept of group identity. The school system has been widely accused by Native and non-Native critics alike, for acting purposefully to destroy Native identity. At the very least, schools do nothing to help support Native identity.

In the context of Inuit education C. S. Brant and C. W. Hobart (1968:190) have stated:

...since education as such is seen as important, and since the distinctive aspects of Eskimo life and culture are completely ignored, the only possible conclusion must be that there is nothing in native lore or tradition which is worth learning. Thus this curriculum tends to be destructive of respect for Eskimo values and for father, mother, and others highly able in native skills but not formally educated.

Many are now beginning to see this situation in terms of colonialism theory. H. Adams (1975:161) in adapting the thoughts of Paulo Freire, asserts that "...the colonialized's perception
of himself is that of the oppressor submerged in his (own) consciousness... Cultural identity dissonance is something that confronts every Native student within the system.

In terms of political socialization of Native students, the serious inhibition of feelings of political efficacy is an additional effect of the school system. As M. Skilbeck and A. Harris (1976) maintain, the curriculum is inescapably political and that the outcomes of the system are similarly political. Despite Clifton’s (1977:) criticism that Hawthorn’s (1970:116) assertion in regard to political socialization of Native students is “hopelessly ambiguous”, there is a great deal of support for this criticism. 16. Again after Paulo Freire, H. Adams (1975:161) maintains, if “liberation of the oppressed” is to be successful and not merely manipulative, people must be given a political consciousness. The school system is failing all its students by its neglect of political socialization. However, Native students have a relatively greater need to be educated in directions other than toward the status quo.

The deleterious effects of the school system on self-image, group identity and political socialization of Native students seem to be the basis for the other negative results. These include alienation from both the local community and larger society, psychological damage, frustration, withdrawal, “marginality” (Spindler 1974:76), depression, guilt, rejection, anxiety, hostiltty, anomie, “cultural dissonance” (Hawthorn 1970:107), and lack of motivation. 17. The visible results of the above such as absenteeism, age-grade retardation, “cross-over” and “push out” rates are really just the visible aspect of the iceberg. 18.

It must be clearly understood here, that the typical profile of the Native student as shy and withdrawing, uncommunicative, under-motivated, low-achieving, attendance problem, and even hostile is as much if not more a function of the system and its effects on Native students than a reflection of supposed cultural traits. The system cannot shirk its fundamental responsibility for the situation as is stands by acting only to remedy the superficial problems. Without analyzing and redressing the major underlying causes nothing in fact will be solved. It is the cause and not the effect that needs treatment.
Given the outline provided in the above discussion, it now becomes possible to compare the education of Native students in museums with that provided by the school system as a whole. Initially, it would seem that there are a number of differences between the two types of institutions, but in fact these differences tend to be more superficial than significant.

The first obvious difference of course is that museums educate with objects rather than books. Since a great many of these objects are in fact of Native origin, the museum seemingly starts out with a major advantage, at least in terms of "curriculum content" and "materials". This situation unfortunately is not always a positive one for Native people. In fact, museums have been severely criticised for the manner in which they care for, utilize and exhibit Native material culture. Native people and professional critics have portrayed museums as being insensitive, even racist, in the direction of their collection, research, exhibition and education functions. 19.

Another supposedly important difference between the museum and the school is that, ideally, the former is structured for informal learning. This characteristic would seem to relate much better with Native learning modes. Such a hope however tends to be illusory.

Museum galleries many in fact be designed to foster "informal learning", but the informal utilization of the galleries by Native people is minimal. Native people, being part of the lower socio-economic levels in society, are severely underrepresented among museum visitors (Elias 1973:47, Dixon 1974:106) as they are among the clients of all the so-called "cultural attractions" of urban centres (Nagler 1970:28). Most Native students, when they come to the museum at all, visit as part of a class scheduled for a specific and highly structured "programme" or tour. The majority of school programmes in museums tend to be very highly structured, even lecture-oriented, guided tours. In such a situation, the only change from the "desk-bound learning" results from the lack of places to sit! Any advantages for Native students in their facility with informal learning patterns is in fact negated by the rigid structural nature of the museum and its education programmes.
On the other hand, the theory of museum education, if it held true in practice, should mean that museums would actually be very conducive to the learning of Native students. In general, Native students are much more familiar with modes of learning involving informal observation, manipulation and trial and error experimental replication. Such patterns suit many Native students much more so than the highly verbalized, temporized, and English language dependent pattern within the Euro-Canadian school system (Rohner 1965:335, Wyatt 1978:20). As Hodges (1978:154) states, anthropological field work repeatedly has described the relative ease with which children of the non-industrialized world acquire the knowledge, skill, and values necessary for adaptation to their own culture through informal mechanisms.

Museum learning is also ideally much more oriented to the concrete. Again this should lend itself to successful learning by Native students. Indeed, as R. S. Macarthur (Abler and Weaver 1970:223) reports, "Native pupils perform best on tests highly loaded on the "reasoning-from-non-verbal material". D. J. Hodges (1978:151) maintains that the museum can provide sensory manipulative and exploring activities which are impossible in the standard classroom. Coupled with Hawthorn's (1970:112) assertion that Native children characteristically have experienced a lack of objects in their world, the museum should be able to play a very significant role in the development of the Native child.

Museums theoretically do have informal, "non-school", non-traumatic approaches to education (Harvey and Friedberg 1971:23, Hodges 1978:153). Therefore, they should work well for Native students as a bridge between the informal and formal learning modes (Hodges 1978:156).

Nevertheless, it is a rare museum indeed which allows visitors to go beyond the "do not touch" signs. There may even be some indications that the perceptions of Native people by museum security staff inhibit what possibilities for manipulation that do exist! (Garry Robson, personal communication).

Furthering the positive informal nature of the museum is its lack of emphasis on the "invidious structural distinctions" among learners based on evaluation and "grades". H. Adams (1975:157-8) sees the evaluation threat as a means of introducing anxiety in
order to achieve oppressive control over Native students in the educational setting. Museums on the other hand have the reputation for inspiring inner-directed as opposed to outer-directed grade-based motivation. According to D. J. Hodges (1978:156),

...for minorities, when experience with education has been largely evaluative and punitive, inner-directed learning is important.

Another obvious advantage museums have in dealing with Native students is content (i.e. Native artifacts) which are related to their cultural heritage, as opposed to the school system which usually has inappropriate content and materials (McKenzie 1969:17). Obviously the museum, despite the criticism it has received on this point, has dealt with and placed a relatively high value on Native culture (Ribeiro 1955:55), when other educational institutions have tended to ignore or even depreciate the Native heritage.

In sum, as a repository for the Native cultural heritage, museums would seem to be the ideal setting in which to deal with poor self-images and the identity question, for example. Despite these apparent advantages, however, museums do have the tendency to confuse even further such aspects as the identity question for example. Since they deal usually only with the past cultural heritage of Native people, there is a real danger of adding to the confusion between "culture" and "heritage" as LaRouque (1975) has discovered in the school system.

Bringing a Cree student into the museum and saying, while pointing to caribou skin clothing, pot sherds and bows and arrows, that "this is what Cree Indians are like" will more than likely confuse than edify. Immediately the student will realise that neither s/he nor his/her parents are at all like the exotic Cree people represented in the exhibits. How then will this help with the identity crisis of the Native student? Chances are it will not help at all.

Museums must be able to make a very clear distinction between modern Native "culture" and Native "cultural heritage". To continue to fail to make this important distinction is to continue to do Native people a disservice. It is laudable to set the museum up as an opportunity for self-discovery" (Taylor 1976:155,
Hodges 1978:156), but surely past cultural traits are only one element of an holistic identity.

This situation of course implies that museums must begin to deal with the modern social setting of Native people and not ignore the whole concept of constant cultural change as they have tended to do in the past (de Borhegyi 1964:123). As E. LaRoque (1975:14, 19) has pointed out regarding the school system, this neglect of culture change among Native people is a serious problem, but that there are also some difficulties in trying to reverse this tendency. In attempting to exhibit modern cultures, particularly those that are characterized by poverty and anomie, A. E. Parr (Loomis 1974:i) cautions:

Exhibits of contemporary poverty displayed by museum methods in a museum setting may also, quite possibly, have only the effect of making the terrible conditions appear less terrifying. By making them seem more impersonal, we may destroy their impact. Before being carried away by our indignant sympathies we must be quite certain that our aid will help the cause and not hinder its advancement. For this we need some very sophisticated research into the emotional qualities of the museum ambience.

Despite these problems however, the theory is that museums do allow significant progress toward self-discovery and the development of a positive self-image among those groups represented in the museum's collections. It is also held that museums are a learning setting in which non-mainstream cultures can learn successfully.

On balance, however, there is very little real difference in education in the classroom as opposed to that carried out in museums. Therefore, it should be possible to apply much of the literature on Native students in the school system into the museum context.

The major factors causing difficulties for Native students in the education system as a whole have been identified above. The first -- assimilationist philosophy and structure of the system -- although not finding a direct analogue within the museum system, does manifest itself in the evident expectations museums have of their visitors.

L. Flint (1959:102) indicates that museums have always had difficulty in dealing with the differences among the wide range
of visitors. Out of expediency then, museums have structured their programmes for the "average North American middle class audience". As D. J. Hodges (1978:148) maintains,  

...some of the visitors, especially children and ethnic minorities, are seen as nuisances, or burdensome distractions, from the real purposes of museums.

Hodges (1978:149) is also critical that museums have spent little or no effort in attempting to find out who their visitors are, and indeed what needs these visitors have. H. Varine-Bohan (1976:139) states:

All too often present-day museums are regarded by their curators as providing "lessons" for a homogenous but perhaps non-existent public, a public which exists mainly in the curator's mind: a group of well-bred, culture-loving, beauty-loving, logically-minded people with plenty of time to spare, inexhaustible physical stamina and, above all, at least an arts degree.

By default then, the characteristics and needs of potential minority group visitors are assumed to be identical to those of the middle class. In the end analysis the structure and philosophy of the museum assume assimilation before minority groups are able to make most effective use of the institution.

The second major factor is the relationship of museum personnel to Native students. Those in teaching positions in museums (docents) have been characterized in the same way that Zintz and others have been critical of classroom teachers. Museum docents tend to have the same specious upper-middle socio-economic class background bias. Consequently they often lack the needed empathy, sensitivity and skills to overcome cross-cultural barriers (Reibel 1971:29, Silver 1977:19).

P. Houlihan (Newsome and Silver 1978:107), Director of the Heard Museum in Phoenix Arizona, indicates that there is indeed a significant problem in the area of the cross-cultural attitudes and sensitivity of docents. At the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature for instance, this writer has informally observed a certain lack of cross-cultural sensitivity, and ultimately a lack of accuracy as well, among some docents. This is indicated by the use of value-added terminology, some superficial and some fundamental inaccuracies, as well as some musty "old wives tales" replete with attitudes of Western superiority. There also seems to be some
additional difficulty among docents with the important underlying concept of "cultural relativity" which places prime importance on evaluating cultures in their own context and not that of the observer.

D. J. Hodges (1978:148) indicates that, compounding these problems there is a certain "resistance to reform" among museum educators which parallels that among classroom teachers identified above.

In the final analysis, museum docents are little different from the average classroom teacher in terms of social background, and level of cross-cultural knowledge and skills. It so happens for instance that a significant number of docents are retired teachers.

A third major factor relating to the lack of success for Native students within the school system is the inappropriateness of the curriculum. Further to the above discussion, despite the fact that the materials used by museums to educate Native students would seem to be ideal, there are several difficulties involved here. D. J. Hodges (1978:154) asserts that a White middle-class Western bias permeates museum exhibits.

Take for example the Hamilton-Wentworth Police's proud display of Riel's leg shackles, or the lack of Riel's hair prominently exhibited in the Glenbow Alberta Museum. The underlying symbolism here is very powerful. Museums cannot escape the charge of displaying colonialist and even racist bias despite the fact that they are indeed using "Native artifacts".

E. LaRocque (1975:4, 8, 13) has been critical of the school system for its reliance on "beads and feathers" to the exclusion of the philosophical and intellectual aspects in its treatment of Native culture. In the museum setting, there has also been criticism that these so-called "soft" aspects of culture have been ignored in exhibits (Tuwan 1949:325, Beckow 1979:15). Of course, this results in a superficial, overly simplistic picture of Native culture which does not approach the holistic ideals of museum anthropology.

The "curriculum" of the museum has also been condemned for its neglect of the concept and reality of cultural change among Native groups (de Borhegyi 1964:123, Mason 1960). The tendency to employ the ethnographic present in label copy compounds this
problem leading to misconceptions among visitors about the context of the exhibit (Arth 1975:323).

From the Native perspective, the Trent University Native Student Association (1976:6) have asserted that museums tend to mock, misrepresent and misunderstand the true nature of Native cultures. Museum professionals such as J. L. Swauger (1975:115) are also critical of the validity and significance of many exhibits. There is criticism that exhibits in fact often are ethnocentric and even racist, perpetuating stereotypes and fostering attitudes of Western superiority (Sturtevant 1969:644, de Borhegyi 1964:123, Mason 1960:341).

Again, the museum in its curriculum orientation, if not content, just as the school system, may indeed be a negative factor for Native students in certain respects.

Put very simply, the next major factor -- the language problem -- is an identical element in both the school system and the museum. The English only, or English and French, language of labels, publications and school programme tours in the vast majority of museums would seem to indicate that Native children would have similar difficulties in this realm. On the assumption (a shaky one) that museum programmes are not highly verbal (depending instead on the visual), the language factor would have reduced importance in the museum setting. Still, it is extremely rare to hear Native languages on museum tours, or to see Cree or Eskimo syllabics on labels or in publications (although the Manntoba Museum of Man and Nature has experimented with these scripts).

The fifth debilitating factor regarding the school system discussed above was identified as "cultural differences". Given the fact that very often those in control (from the docents to curators and administrators) are as a rule culturally different from the Native student, it is not really surprising that the museum setting is structured to accommodate a culture which is entirely different from that of the Native student. Harvey and Friedberg (1971:x) indicate that ...

Any museum that truly wants to serve any community of people must come to terms with the cultural actuality of that community.

Museums have more often than not failed in this regard.
Indeed, J. Kinaird (1972:15) accuses museums of...

...failing to overcome not only their blatant disregard of minority cultures but their outright racism, which is all too apparent in what they collect, study, and exhibit and in whom they employ.

Basically very little thought or effort is directed toward the cultural stance of the museum vis-a-vis its Native visitors.

In some respects the museum, despite the fact it is using the Native culture’s own material culture, does come into conflict on the philosophical and value level of Native culture. One aspect of this value conflict is the issue of exhibition of burial material and other sacred items. Many Native people believe that it is sacrilege to exhibit bones and/or sacred religious materials in museums. In terms of burial exhibits for example, it is interesting to note that in the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature the only other bones beside those of Native people, displayed are those of animals. The fact that the human bones are only plaster copies does not alter the very powerful implications here.

Mr. Gary Robson, a Native person employed by the Native Education Branch to work with museum materials in the schools, maintains that many Native students feel distinctly uncomfortable in dealing with this burial exhibit (personal communication). There has been a great deal of concern expressed by Native people about the exploitation of burial materials by museums, both in Canada and the United States. At issue are differing values.

Philosophically Native people cannot condone the display of certain items by museums. On the other hand, museum workers have difficulty in comprehending the metaphysical force of the Native arguments.

Again cross-cultural communication difficulties come into play. Harvey and Friedberg (1971:x) have reported that there is in fact an "...extreme difficulty of communication between members of the museum establishment and representatives of militant minority groups." No museum would deny that such material deserves to be treated with "dignity and reverence". However, Native people are critical of museum displays because of their very lack of "dignity and reverence". It is obvious, despite the fact that both are using the same terms, that there is not necessarily a mutual cross-cultural understanding of meanings. What is
perceived as appropriate behaviour and attention to "dignity and reverence" in one culture will not necessarily be viewed as acceptable by another.

Communication between museums and Native groups is also complicated by the two parties operating on different levels. Native people may bring emotional and political arguments to bear, but the level of museum response tends to be on administrative, legal and economic levels.

Just as the school system neglects the needs of its Native students, the museum has failed to respond to the characteristics of its clientele (Kinaird, 1972:15). Newsome and Silver (1978:178) maintain that traditional museums are distant "emotionally, physically and psychologically from all but the people who run it..." Hodges (1978:149) further accuses museums for neglecting the first premise of any education: i.e. to know the student so that progress can be made from the known to the unknown. However, museums have generally failed to look at who attends, who does not, and why. As a result, according to Hodges, museums end up being at odds with the needs of a significant segment of its potential audience. P. T. Houlihan (1973:20) indicates that museums are simply not keeping abreast with the needs and new demands for services of the public as a whole and of minority groups in particular.

The final factor identified which helps to militate against the success of Native students in the education system is the lack of parental involvement and control. According to D. J. Hodges (1978:150) there is a very wide gap between what museums are doing and what minority groups expect of them in terms of establishing programme and exhibit priorities and content. Newsome and Silver (1978:104) point out that even museums dealing primarily with the material heritage of Native people themselves are controlled by non-Natives with no input from those most closely connected with that heritage.

A major reason for this of course is that museum boards often lack minority group representation (Elliot and Kinaird 1972:11). Members of minority groups are also seriously underrepresented on museum staffs and among volunteers. Partially because of this lack, Native students do not relate to the museum as they might if they could recognize models and familiar values within the institution. As a result, ends up being a "White institution"
not one which acts to preserve their own interests (Newsome and Silver 1978:178, 655).

Compounding these problems is the unwillingness of museums to undertake any meaningful reforms. As Hodges 1978:148), supported by Newsome and Silver (1978:179), maintains,

Inertia Prevails. Archtypical museums have gone relatively unchallenged, and unchanged for decades.

Museums have developed the strategy of changing "just enough to not to have to change at all" (Hodges 1978:149, 155). Of course, this commitment to the status quo is deleterious for minorities in their relationships with museums.

Since from the above discussion it can be established that the school and the museum are very close in terms of the problems they present for Native students, it might be expected that the effects of the two institutions would also be quite similar.

Identity and self-concept have become important issues in the museum setting as well. Harvey and Friedberg (1971:20), following Ralph Ortiz, indicate that, in any education process which uses art and culture history as its basis, as museums do, identity does become a crucial issue.

In the context of Anacostia, a Black neighbourhood in Washington D. C. which now has developed and controls its own museum, J. R. Kinaird (1972:103), the Director, maintains that this minority group is very concerned indeed about who they are and where they came from, what they have accomplished, what their values and and what are their most pressing needs. In other words they are concerned with defining their identity. In the case of Native people it is obvious that they are not at all satisfied with the non-Native concepts of Native identity propagated by museums. Museums have tended to cater to a public who...

...went to learn about headhunters, cannibals and practisers of self-mutilation, and these filled him (the visitor) with terror, perplexity or even disgust -- never with a feeling of fellow-interest in the dramatic fate of the people in question, or of understanding for their artistic creation. (Ribeiro D. 1955)

Again, it seems to come back to the political question of just who actually controls museums, and what is exhibited, and how. Although museums claim objectivity in their presentations of minority
cultures, D. J. Hodges (1978:155) asserts that,
The beneficiaries of this illusory quest for objectivity, itself a bias, are society's dominant groups, not those groups compromised in power. To maintain the status quo is to continue to malign minorities.

Some museum professionals such as P. T. Houlihan (Mewsome and Silver 1978:104) are now beginning to understand that museums have been usurping the power of Native people to make cultural statements about themselves.

Beyond the essential political question of control, there may also be some preliminary evidence that school programmes in museums, their structure and delivery, may actually result in the lowering of Native students' self concepts. However, a great deal of further research must be carried out in this area.

Although some of the more salient effects of the school system on Native students are not immediately apparent, those such as age-grade retardation, failure etc., there are significant analogues to other effects such as the push-out rate, absenteeism, withdrawal, confusion, and hostility.

As D. Elias (1973) has indicated, Native people are one of the museum's most alienated groups of potential clients. The absenteeism and high push out rates in the school system translate into simple non-attendance at museums. Again, defining the museum as an educational setting, it is the institution itself which is failing to attract, or indeed actually repelling Native people. There are obviously a very complex series of inter-related reasons for this situation. One of the major factors, according to many such as M. Eisenbeis (1972:113) and B. Dixon (1974:130), is that museums project an image which gives the impression of being elitist institutions established for a particular part of society.

Experience also shows that some visitors believe that special preparations are necessary in order to be able to visit museums. Generally, on the basis of available experience, it can be said that the museum is regarded as an institution that is accessible and intelligible only to certain sections of the population. (Eisenbeis 1972:113).

Again a great deal more research is needed into exactly what types of effects museums have on minority groups.
From all the above therefore, it becomes clear that museums as educational institutions are in large part equivalent to the formal school system in terms of impediments for, and effects on, Native students. Because of this evident similarity an attempt will now be made to translate the remedial actions recommended for the school system into the museum education setting.

In terms of philosophy, those critics such as Zintz (1969:30) and Wolcott (1967:129) have maintained that there is a need to clarify philosophy and objectives for Native education. Of course, the only realistic way to go about doing this is to consult and involve Native people themselves. The call for "Indian control of Indian education" has become the foundation of most suggestions for reform. Evidence of the efficacy of this basic solution (Smith 1979) grows as more and more Native groups assume control over the education of their own children.

In the museum context, such a parallel solution implies the involvement of Native people in all facets of museum activity; from developing acceptable collection policy to developing and delivering appropriate educational programmes. As Harvey and Freidberg (1971:3) maintain, museums must plan with not for minority groups. More "recognition" of minority cultures in museums is not enough. Newsome and Silver (1978:178) assert that control of museum activities by minority groups themselves is essential if any real success is to be obtained.

The examples of Native control of museums which have occurred to date give ample evidence that this is a solution which is effective in meeting not only Native concerns, but the more general concerns of museologists and society as a whole that significant aspects of valuable heritage be properly preserved and available for educational purposes.

Native control of museums and what they display helps to solve the value incongruence dilemma. With Native people in control of collection, preservation, research, and education it is much more likely that Native values will be taken into account by museum activities.

Such a solution also goes a long way toward solving the problem of legitimizing museums in the eyes of Native people (Hodges 1978:156). E. Steven (1975:19-20) vouches for the ef-
fectiveness of this strategy among Blacks in New York. Minority controlled museums have demonstrated clearly that they are indeed a "significant educational force" among not only minority children but majority audiences as well.

The next major strategy to emerge from the literature deals with the teacher factor. Given the major role of teachers and their importance to the success of students, it has been widely recommended that classroom teachers receive a much intensified training in the anthropological perspective on cross-cultural issues, proper cross-cultural methodology, and some expanded knowledge of the culture, history and contemporary problems of Native people. 23. This strategy includes recruiting more Native teachers, even if this necessitates waiving of stringent qualification barriers (N.I.B. 1972:15, A.I.H.S. 1974:38). In J. Wyatt's (1978) terms, Native teachers can become effective "cultural brokers" who are able to interpret the majority culture and mold appropriate experiences for Native students.

Because docents have been identified as being quite similar to their classroom counterparts, the same recommendations must apply. Museum critics have also made the point that docents need further training, and that minority groups such as Native people must be brought into the institution in order to better reflect the multicultural Nature of the community served by museums, and to provide a more sympathetic presentation of museum education programmes. 24.

The school curriculum has also be the focus of a number of recommendations for fundamental change. Beyond the primary task of removing class and culture biases, not to mention outright racism, from the curriculum, it is commonly recognized that the curriculum must be made more "relevant" to the life experiences, philosophy and needs of the Native student. 25. The National Indian Brotherhood (1972:26) puts it succinctly:

Indian children will continue to be strangers in Canadian classrooms until the curriculum recognizes Indian customs and values, Indian languages, and the contributions which the Indian people have made to Canadian history.

In the same vein, museums must begin to respond to the real needs of their various audiences by listening to the con-

In terms of meeting the needs of its audiences, the Mexican National Museum has led the way. The exhibits at the Mexican Museum were designed without labels. Since a great proportion of its visitors are illiterate or semi-literate, written labels were replaced with drawings and pictograms to convey the necessary information on artifacts exhibited (Varine-Bohan 1976:140). Here, the visitor is considered first, and not merely as a nuisance as has been the tendency in the past.

Exhibits dealing with the problems faced by visitors in their everyday life in addition to those illustrating past heritage have also proven to be very effective in meeting the real needs of the population (Kinaird and Nighbert 1972:105). The museum does have a social responsibility to "help people understand their common problems and try to deal with them" (Newsome and Silver 1978:179). As H. Varine-Bohan (1976:141) maintains,

We are accustomed to considering the museum as an institution whose purpose is to exhibit its collections, where as in reality we should regard it as an intelligent instrument which provides us with answers to our questions and problems or at least helps us to find such answers for ourselves.

According to Hodges (1978:151), such strategies coupled with minority control have the effect of uplifting spirit, elevating pride, dignity and contributing greatly to the nourishment of young minds. An example recently cited by K. Warden (1979), the case of the Blackfoot of Gliechen, Alberta, indicates that these very positive results are in fact possible through museums.

In another realm, as mentioned above, it has been recommended that the museum, with its emphasis on the tangible and concrete, and insofar as it has potential for informal, experimental manipulative learning behaviour, take a much larger role in Native education which it has been neglecting to this point. The methodology possible in the museum setting must be seen as a major positive influence on Native students. The key here is that this type of potential must be recognized and exploited to the fullest, not submerged under the familiar and all too comfortable methods
transplanted from the classroom.

Above all, the museum must not continue treating the subject of Native culture as "exotic" and "primitive". Native people must be presented as human beings who are working out their own equally valid solutions to universal human problems (Ribeiro 1955:5) and, in the realm of art, as artists in their own right (Newsome and Silver 1978:104). Any other approach is an essential denial of their humanity and of the basic comparative nature of anthropology and museums.

Regarding the problems inherent to cultural differences and value-incongruence, the major recommendation to emerge from the literature is the basic necessity of recognition of, and accommodation to, these differences. 26. D. B. Sealey (1973:201) is adamant that the school system must examine, understand and accept the two opposing sets of realities in the school/Native interface. L. W. Ballard (1972:3) maintains that although cultural differences are usually perceived of as maladjustive, cultural differences are in fact necessary and good -- even indispensable.

In the museum sphere, Harvey and Friedberg (1971:2-3) have emphasized that the museum should not attempt to impose an alien culture on its minority visitors (in terms of the foreknowledge and attitudes it expects for example), but strive to reflect as much of a variety of cultural backgrounds as possible. Further, as H. Varine-Bohan (1967:139) has maintained, there must be no discrimination in museums on the basis of alleged "cultural standard" of the visitor; "...everyone should be able to find in the museum a reflection of himself; his concerns and cultural needs." Clearly, Native involvement and control becomes an important element of such a solution.

The school system has been consistently urged by its critics to spend much more time and effort on discovering and implementing programmes on a local basis to deal with the real needs of its Native students. 27. "Consultation," "relevance" and continuity with background experiences become the watch-words here. It has also been seen as essential that the pedagogical principle of moving the learner from the known to the unknown must prevail in the case of Native students as well (Sealey and Kirkness 1971:3). E. LaRoque (1975:74) brings the solution down to its simplest and
perhaps most effective level in her suggestion that each student be regarded as an individual, not as a carbon copy of the cultural stereotype for his/her ethnic group.

Museums must also get to know the Native visitor and their needs much better according to many museologists such as Hodges (1978:151), Harvey and Friedberg (1971:27), Kinaird and Nighberg (1972:103, 106) and Woods (1972:19). Although, in the museum setting, it is nearly an insurmountable task to begin considering the needs of each individual visitor, it is clear that much more effort must be exerted in the direction of determining the more generalized needs of Native students.

Another of the important "cultural difference" difficulties within the school system is language. An obvious and widely recommended, but scarcely implemented (Hawthorn 1970:37), solution is the "language shift" pattern as recommended by those such as Sealey (1973:203). Teachers must be persuaded to accept this bilingual approach as a positive factor rather than a problem to be stamped out (Zintz 1969:29).

Again, with the range of Native languages and dialects, even in Manitoba for example, it is perhaps too much to expect provincial museums to accommodate all; but perhaps this adds even further weight to the need for more Native people as docents. If Native people were involved with the museum, at least some facility in Native languages could be provided.

Although it is recognized that the school system cannot teach the Native student his/her own culture and identity (A.I.H.S. 1947:37) unless of course that school is operated and controlled by Native people, a major element in any solution to the difficulties enumerated above is seen to be the positive valuation of the Native identity and the bolstering of self-concepts among Native students. Basically, referring to Hawthorn (1970:123), the means of accomplishing this goal begins with ensuring that Native students are actually allowed to be successful within the educational system.

From the Native viewpoint, M. Otis (1972:72) records the thoughts of a Native Alaskan woman...

I can't predict how I should educate my children. I can't predict how they should be educated, but one thing I do know is, if my children are proud, if my
children have identity, if my children know who they are, and if they are proud of who they are, they'll be able to encounter anything in life. I think this is what education means. Some people say that a man without education might as well be dead. I say, a man without identity -- if a man doesn't know who his is -- he might as well be dead.

Attention to the Native identity is no less important for museums. The museum can be damaging to self-concept and identity of Native people, if only through confusing the issue. In the final analysis, the museum has the responsibility to present a positive and accurate picture (avoiding the pitfalls of the positive bias as seen by Sealey 1973:200) and to avoid propagating a non-Native concept of Native identity. The fuzzy border between "heritage" and "culture" must also be clarified much more deliberately by museums to prevent compounding the confusion.

Fundamentally, all of these suggestions require that Native people be closely consulted and involved in the problem-solving process. They can no longer accept being ignored and isolated as they have been in the past.

In conclusion, it can be determined from the above discussions that the institution of the school and the museum are closely comparable insofar as the respective educational treatment of, and effects on, Native students are concerned. Underlying philosophical assumptions, teacher/docent attitudes, content orientation, cultural differences, and lack of attention to special needs and parental involvement are, for all intents and purposes, identical.

As a result, both types of institutions present difficulties for Native students in terms of success allowed, identity, self-concept, unmet needs and resulting alienation.

Although the museum does have great potential for being extremely successful in educating Native students, this potential is often not achieved primarily because of a lack of awareness of the characteristics, needs and desires of Native people which could indeed be accommodated by the museum.

Cross-cultural concerns must become a significant element in the planning and delivery of museum education programmes. Obviously museum professionals can no longer make the assumption, merely because the objects held and displayed may
have significance in themselves for Native people, that exhibits and educational programmes using these objects will necessarily have corresponding significance. Museologists must take a wider view of their educational mandate. They must use the work already done in the cross-cultural field and expand it in order to determine exactly what effects museum education has on Native students, what are the real needs of the Native visitor, and indeed what can be done to attract more representative numbers of Native people into the museum galleries and onto museum boards and staffs.

Of course one of the primary requisites for success here is the involvement of Native people in the planning, organization and delivery of exhibits and educational programmes. Native control of Native museum education must become the watch word. It is truly unfortunate that in the past, Native people have been just as isolated and alienated from museums as they have been from the school system.

Only some very major changes in philosophy, structure and process within the museum will enable Native people to benefit from their own heritage as is their right. Museums can no longer continue to fail to meet the needs of their Native clientele.

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Paul,

The comparison between
the two institutions is indeed
intriguing. I enjoyed your paper
very much, and the idea and content
of your analysis. Why
should you not add a
checklist to what you said?
I suggest that it may
help with the smooth flow
of the argument, and it may
also be a good source for
future work. You should
check on that. Very good job.

Hope you don't mind me
proofreading a copy!
Endnotes

1. Although admittedly dangerous (given Clifton's (1977:197-9) criticism of Hawthorn), this paper will attempt to generalize about Native peoples; recognizing that: a) there are indeed significant differences among the various Native groups (Metis, Inuit, status and non-status Indians, urban, rural reserve and isolated northern, self-identified versus other-identified, as well as the various levels of acculturation and political, social and economic development); but that b) there are also many broad similarities in terms of such aspects as historic and continuing colonialized position vis-a-vis the Euro-Canadian majority, modern pan-Indian political organization, similar socio-economic class, and unity of Euro-Canadian perception of membership (as a function of visibility) within the amorphous category of "Indian" and/or "Eskimo"; and c) there is also a certain monolithic similarity to the educational structure and the institution of "the museum" to which all Native groups react.


6. see also Rohner (1965:628), LaRoque (1975:65).


10. see also Woodley (1978:153).


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