

AN EVALUATION OF THE UTILIZATION OF CULTURALLY  
RELEVANT WHOLE LANGUAGE THEMES WITH GRADE SIX  
INNU STUDENTS INCLUDING A CASE STUDY PROFILE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**AN EVALUATION OF THE UTILIZATION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT  
WHOLE LANGUAGE THEMES WITH GRADE SIX INNU STUDENTS  
INCLUDING A CASE STUDY PROFILE**

**by**

**Janet Byrne-Turpin B.A.(Ed.)**

**A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Memorial University of Newfoundland**

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**Newfoundland**



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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to assess, through various informal strategies based primarily on teacher observation, the use of culturally relevant whole language themes with a group of grade six Innu students at Peenamin McKenzie School, Sheshatshit, Labrador. The researcher, as participant observer, used various means to determine the suitability of the use of culturally relevant whole language themes with Innu students.

The evaluation encompassed progress in both language and affective behaviors. The general focus was placed on gathering information from attending students regarding attitudes and responses exhibited during the execution of one culturally relevant theme. The specific focus was placed on gathering data about the growth of one child during the course of the theme. A case study format was utilized to report the progress of the individual student.

The research methodology in the study would be classified as naturalistic rather than experimental since "natural" behaviours were observed. The researcher observed, interacted with and analyzed children's actual listening, speaking, reading and writing behaviours. This research orientation is based on the whole language approach to teaching, where teachers are asked to assume the role of researcher in the classroom in order to successfully understand the literacy

needs of their students and to determine how whole language strategies meet or fail to meet those needs.

Recommendations based on the findings of this report, regarding how to better meet the needs of Innu students in language instruction, are included.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **THE NATURE OF THE STUDY**

### **Introduction**

Peenamin McKenzie School offers grades Kindergarten to Level III of the secondary school program. The school serves the Innu population of Sheshatshit, Labrador, twenty-five miles by road from Happy Valley-Goose Bay. There are approximately twelve hundred people in Sheshatshit, according to an article in The Evening Telegram, July 27, 1990, all of whom speak Innu-aimun as their mother tongue. The school is currently operated under the Roman Catholic School Board for Labrador North in conjunction with the Department of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador and the Roman Catholic School Board for Labrador.

However, the Innu Nation, which is the governing body of the Labrador Innu, is in the process of negotiating for full administrative and financial control of the local all-grade school in Sheshatshit. According to Schuurman (1993b), there continues to be very little sympathy among the Innu for the high ideals of the early missionaries to educate and assimilate them, to make them fluent in English and give them access to the wide world of economic growth and employment opportunities, the supposed benefits of which have never materialized. The voices of many Innu of Sheshatshit have

expressed anger towards the school. The beginning of formal, institutionalized, Western education is seen as the beginning of their cultural demise (Schuurman, 1993b).

The Labrador Innu were one of the last nomadic hunter-gatherer societies in North America to be settled in the mid-1960's, relates Schuurman (1993a). She explains: "Prior to settlement in 1967, the Innu had persisted in the sub-arctic wilderness, maintaining a relatively stable pattern of existence for centuries, marked by their autonomy and identification with the land upon which they lived, trapped and hunted. Settlement was followed by a rapid decline in Innu autonomy and patterns of subsistence. The Innu have also experienced social and economic marginalization by the Settler population beginning in the early 1900's and continuing, in different forms, up until present" (p. 2-3).

Hunting, trapping and fishing, however, have not ended for the Innu, despite disruption caused by the creation of permanent villages, governmental disputes and various social problems. Ryan (1988) relates that most Innu refer to this experience of living off the land in the wilds of the bush as "country life."

The culture of the Labrador Indians (i.e., Innu) reflects their nomadic way of life. The Innu culture and language set the people apart from other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This difference tends to impact negatively on the Innu child's

education in the "white" system, as is evident from a high drop-out rate, lower academic achievement at each grade level and lower levels of competency in the English language than are found in the dominant culture (MacKenzie, 1982).

As far as reading development itself is concerned, there are many barriers. First, English is a second language for these children. In Sheshatshit, children start school with a minimum of English, since their Native language, Innu-aimun, is used almost exclusively in the majority of homes. Only recently, since 1983, have these children been able to receive their first few years of instruction partly in Innu-aimun. Since September 1991, all primary grades, from Kindergarten to grade three, have been taught by Native teachers living in the village.

The teaching of Innu children in their first language is seen as a viable course for most who desire to preserve the Native language. Parnell's (1976) research suggests that this course is the best for Native children socially, emotionally, and intellectually. According to Saville and Troike (1971), the use of the first language is thought to allow a smoother transition from home to school, thus allowing immediate progress in concept building rather than postponing it until a new language has been acquired. Furthermore, linguistic research in recent years have supported the idea of having second language learners maintain their first language as a

means of improving learning in the second language (Olivares, 1993).

However, while Innu-aimun is the medium in the primary grades, students receive education in English for the remainder of their school career (i.e., elementary to high school). The school has increased the amount of instruction through the medium of Innu-aimun in the elementary grades. Nevertheless, all other school subjects are taught in English by non-Native teachers who usually do not speak or understand much Innu-aimun. Native teacher aides have usually been available only in the primary grades. It can be assumed that students are expected to "pick up" English from contact with educational materials and with English-speaking teachers.

Innu-aimun is essentially an oral language with few written materials. A standardized system for writing Innu-aimun has only recently been created. Many parents may have limited competency with English literacy, and a significant number of children may come to school with little exposure to the reading process. Researchers have reiterated the importance of parents as reading models (Bisset, 1970; Heater, 1980; Smith, 1968) and the availability and range of written materials in the home (Durkin, 1966; Kirkland, 1980; Klein, 1978) as important prerequisites for literacy development. While literacy usually comes naturally to children raised in literate homes, this natural emergence of literacy may be out

of reach for children who come from non-literate backgrounds (Hamayan and Pflieger, 1987).

Also, the fact that Innu-aimun has fewer distinctive sounds and, therefore, different sound-symbol relationships than English, makes the acquisition of English phonetics and orthography more problematic (MacKenzie, 1982). Since the sound-symbol relationship is different in English and Innu-aimun, and Innu-aimun has fewer phonemes than English, then Innu children reading in English must learn new sounds before they can use and/or recognize appropriate symbols.

The situation is further compounded by the problems of irregular school attendance primarily due to the previously mentioned seasonal camping patterns pursued by many families. According to MacKenzie (1982): "A number of families still spend three to six months in the country every year, living off hunting, trapping and fishing" (p. 233). For some Innu families, the traditional educational experiences (i.e., country life) are preferred over the formal educational experiences (i.e., school) which are still considered relatively new. Vardy (1983) documented 1952 as the first year children in Sheshatshit were ever taught in a school setting. At that time, Father Pierson, the community priest, taught twenty-five children the rudiments of geography, math, religion and English from his residence. Two years later, in 1954, a school building was constructed in the community.

According to Vardy (1983): "Parents were not expected to remain in the village if only to keep their children in school. Rather, the school existed primarily for the children of families who stayed in the village" (p. 12).

Today, as in the past, parents are not expected to stay in the village in order to allow their children to attend school. While preservation of the traditional way of life is accepted and encouraged by the school and community as an important aspect of the Innu child's education, it can have adverse effects on formal education in general and on reading performance in particular.

Due to the school's practice of "social promotion," whereby students are often placed in grades that correspond more closely with their age rather than to their actual level of competency, irregular attenders often find themselves in grade levels where they are unable to cope with the assigned curriculum and require alternative instruction at their own level of competency. The evaluation philosophy in the school policy handbook for Peenamin McKenzie School recognizes that "promotion of all students...based on individual student needs...in no way makes 'he job of the teacher easier. If anything, it will make the classroom situation more stratified. We will have to continue to strive to find solutions for our present problems" (undated).

In 1986 the researcher commenced work in the Innu village of Sheshatshit as teacher of a "special" class of elementary students functioning with a very low reading level. The researcher was faced with the task of providing a language arts program for these elementary students while lacking sufficient high-interest, low-vocabulary reading material that was culturally relevant and that compensated for the barriers to English reading development previously outlined. In response to this problem, the researcher proceeded to develop various culturally relevant thematic language units which would relate to the background, experiences and interests of these Innu students.

The topics, based on Innu lifestyle, both past and present, were ones thought to promote an appreciation for, understanding of and a pride in their own Native culture. Very importantly, they were designed to provide purposeful, personally meaningful and interesting opportunities for the development of the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing by way of a teaching approach called the "whole language approach" (Goodman, 1986). The units were developed according to the principles and strategies of the whole language approach outlined by Heald-Taylor (1986). The students participated in English, the language of instruction for the elementary grades to Level III.

In September 1991, the researcher worked on a half-time basis and was responsible for the teaching of Language Arts and Social Studies, along with Religion and Family Life, in a regular grade six class at Sheshatshit. Math, Science, Health Science and Art was taught by another teacher the other half of the time. The Sprint Reading Skills Series, approved for use in the elementary and junior high classes at Sheshatshit, and the Social Studies program, as specified by the Department of Education for all of Newfoundland and Labrador, did not contain content specifically relevant to the Innu culture. The researcher implemented the developed thematic units as a means of supplementing the existing Language Arts and Social Studies programs, thereby providing a more culturally relevant and personally meaningful curriculum in these areas. Other curricular areas were included as they related to the themes being explored.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to assess, through the use of various informal strategies, based on teacher observation, the use of the integrated and culturally relevant whole language theme units. The study endeavoured to establish whether the inclusion of thematic units reflecting Innu personal and cultural experiences and based on the whole



language strategies outlined by Heald-Taylor (1986) promoted language growth (i.e., listening, speaking reading and writing) and increased student interest and involvement for the grade six Innu students involved in the study.

In assessing the suitability of the use of whole language for the Innu situation in Sheshatshit, the researcher will also endeavor to ascertain whether the use of the whole language approach meets, or fails to meet, the requirements that the people of Sheshatshit have articulated for the education of their own children. These issues will be summarized in the next section.

### **Need of the Study**

Schuurman (1993b) recently conducted research involving interviews with 80 parents in conjunction with the Innu Nation and the Innu Resource Centre in Sheshatshit focusing on the perceptions and expectations of community members regarding local control of Peenamin McKenzie School. More than half of the respondents indicated that they agreed with a change to bring the operation of the school under local control.

In her unpublished thesis, Schuurman (1993b) found that, universally, community members wanted the school to change to include more Innu culture. It was felt by some that the school should take responsibility for teaching Innu life

skills, like chopping wood, and values, like respecting elders. A number of respondents felt that English was necessary in order to function in a non-Innu world. Some thought that the curriculum should contain equal amounts of Innu culture and language and English so that children could make a choice either to live in the country or go on to get jobs outside the village. The School Policy Handbook for Peenamin McKenzie School (undated) similarly states: "When our students graduate we hope they will be Innu equipped to live the way of life they choose in the environment around them".

It was felt also that the school schedule should be modified to accommodate the seasonal hunting, fishing and trapping patterns of the Innu. It was recognized that the students had problems with discipline and fighting around the school that resulted mainly from conflicts at home. The direction the community hoped to be moving towards was a more holistic approach to education, which would meet the educational, emotional and employment needs of the community (Schuurman, 1993b).

As far as work with the students in the classroom in concerned, present-day pedagogy recognizes that children learn best when they are involved in observing, creating, manipulating objects and communicating about topics and activities which are genuinely interesting and meaningful to them. As Baskwill and Whitman (1988) express, "learners learn

most easily the material they are interested in, stuff that's meaningful to them" (p. 22).

Specifically, a reader's background knowledge is assumed to be a major factor in English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) and foreign language comprehension (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Reading comprehension is understood as an interactive process between the text, the reader and prior knowledge (including life experience, cultural knowledge and knowledge of other texts). According to Goodman (1979), when readers encounter new information, they attempt to understand it by fitting it in with what they already know about the world. Thus, the background knowledge that readers bring to the reading task may be as important in understanding written material as is the information in the text.

Instructional materials can be developed which relate to the students' experiences. Foerster and Little Soldier (1980), in their article, "Classroom Communication and the Indian Child," make a plea for building cultural relevance into the school language program as a means of enhancing self-concept and pride in the identity of the child, as well as generating more complex and elaborate language within the classroom. According to Parnell (1976), neglect of Native culture is one of the main factors which leads to poor performance in school for native children: "educational experts have known for years the importance of including

native culture when attempting to give the native child the best education reasonably possible" (p. 25). The school policy handbook for Peenamin McKenzie School mentions the importance of the Innu child understanding his/her cultural heritage..."We try to make courses such as Social Studies, History, Home Economics and Industrial Arts pertain to Native culture." Furthermore, one of the aims for Peenamin McKenzie School outlined in the school philosophy is "to promote involvement of teachers in the development of the curriculum" (undated).

Of the language arts programs developed for Native Indians, such as the Circle program (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1985), few are specifically geared to elementary students. According to Vardy (1983), no single program could be adapted for Innu students without major modifications. His examination of English language teaching practices in Sheshatshit from 1951 to 1982 revealed that in the past educators "sought a ready-made program that could be adapted easily to the unique teaching situation of Sheshatshit. Of course, it was eventually accepted that no such program existed" (p. 39).

Since no commercially available program could be easily adapted to meet the needs of these unique students, the researcher developed one that incorporated the whole language approach and holds many possibilities for the development of

culturally relevant themes. Additionally, the themes deal with aspects of Native culture, both past and present, which would adequately supplement the Social Studies program, providing relevance for Innu students. In this way, the subjects of Social Studies and Language Arts could be efficiently and effectively integrated to make the most of the school day and to create a classroom experience more personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile.

The evaluation encompasses progress in language and affective behaviors. Informal strategies assessing the use of the developed theme through evaluation procedures based on observational techniques were employed. This type of informal assessment is well documented in the literature. Goodman (1978) points out the meaningfulness of what she calls "kid-watching" as a method of evaluating the child's learning as opposed to the use of standardized tests which are child-removed and administration-focused. Farris (1989) recommends that evaluation in the whole language program rely heavily upon teacher observation, informal checklists and anecdotal records. Balajthy (1988) reiterates:

Whole language teachers have turned to the model of teacher as informal researcher... More frequently, teachers engage in an observational form of research to gain insight into student performance

and development, letting children become the teachers of how they learn. (p. 8)

Fagan (1990) emphasizes that the child must be the center in evaluating whether some decision or activity is meaningful. According to Baskwill and Whitman (1986) assessment means gathering and recording information, evaluating that information in terms of an individual's progress. Graves (1975) recognized the need for actual observation of behaviours of writers while they are in the process of writing. He suggested: "A case study approach in the field of comparative research is most often recommended when entering virgin territory in which little has been investigated" (p. 229). Since it is accepted that reading, writing, listening and speaking are interrelated and reciprocal (Brown, 1973; Dale, 1976; Halliday, 1979; Harste, Burke & Woodward, 1981), a case study format was utilized to record and assess various aspects of language growth (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing) for one child.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

The culturally relevant themes were initially developed for use with students in a "special" class who were functioning at beginning reading levels. Therefore, Heald-Taylor's (1986) whole language strategies for E.S.L. students

in the primary grades were incorporated during the development of the themes. However, during the 1991-92 school year, the developed units were implemented with a "regular" group of grade six students of varying ranges of reading ability. Due to the school's practice of sometimes placing students in grade levels that coincide more closely with their age level than their actual ability level, it was expected that this heterogeneously grouped class of students would vary greatly in reading ability. While some students were proficient readers, others were at the beginning reading levels. Fortunately, one important feature of the whole language approach is that it allows students of mixed ability to respond within the context of the theme at their own level of competency (Heald-Taylor, 1986). Nevertheless, the content and approaches suggested needed to be further adapted to meet the needs of the particular group.

A significant limitation to this study is that since, as mentioned earlier, the researcher was only teaching on a half-time basis, and did not have opportunities for first-hand interactions, observations and analysis regarding students progress during the other half of their school subjects (i.e., Math, Science, Health and Art), this reduced the quantity and quality of experiences for the researcher as participant-observer. The researcher was required to rely on collaboration with other teachers involved with the

instruction of the students used in the study. Nonetheless, the researcher was undoubtedly limited in obtaining a comprehensive view of the student based on first-hand experiences.

Another limitation of the study was the irregular attendance pattern of the students. This prevented continuity in the evaluation of the developed theme. Therefore, a general evaluation of the theme unit was presented, and a case study format was utilized to outline the specific language and behavioral development of the most regular attendee during the course of the theme.

The researcher's approach is based on a whole language approach to teaching, where teachers are asked to assume the role of researcher. Balajthy (1988) explains: "If the individual teacher must play the central role in facilitating learning experiences based on the observational attitude of a researcher, that teacher must be committed to the whole language approach" (p. 9).

The main type of evaluation recommended for the whole language approach is observation. The students' propensity for reading is to be noted. However, since the students used their Native language (i.e., Innu-aimun) in discussing their reading and writing with each other, and no translator was available to assist in translation, the researcher found it difficult to determine if or how the students approached this,



since Innu-aimun was virtually incomprehensible to the researcher.

The themes themselves were developed by the researcher based on her experience as a teacher in the school for more than five years. Advocates of the whole language approach suggest that the topics may also originate from the students' own interests. While such student-initiated themes should be included in the whole language approach, the ones to be presented in this thesis are teacher-initiated, with some assistance from Native teachers and others in the school, and based on the researchers' developing understanding of the culture and students.

#### **Definition of Terms**

Innu - means "the people" in Innu-aimun. The Innu are the original inhabitants of Nitassinan, a country referred to by Euro-Canadians as the Quebec-Labrador peninsula. Approximately 10,000 in number, the majority of Innu are based in the Quebec portion of Nitassinan. Two Innu communities, Sheshatshit and Utshimassit, are located in the Labrador portion of Nitassinan. The Labrador Innu are referred to as the Montagnais-Naskapi Indians, implying two distinct cultures. However, they are part of the same culture, and speak the same language, Innu-aimun (Armitage, 1990). This

report focuses specifically on the Innu people of Sheshatshit, Labrador.

"Innu" is the preferred term used by the Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador. While the terms "Indian" and "Native" are used throughout the literature, the researcher will use the preferred term "Innu" when referring to the aboriginal people who are the focus of this report.

Culture - Reyhner (1986) defines culture as "the values and every aspect of local life unique to a group of people" (p. 5). According to Schuurman (1993), Innu culture is defined as "the country" and "country" refers to living in tents in the wide open spaces beyond the community, hunting, trapping and practicing old traditions. "Though the meanings of 'culture' are in flux as pieces of the past disappear, and others reappear with the adoption of modern technology, the changes occur. However, there persists a common language, dress, diet, caribou and the drum in which the spirit of the Innu remain" (p. 9-10).

Culturally Relevant - refers to the teaching materials and methods appropriate to the background, experience and interests of the culture being addressed. One attempt to counteract the negative educational experience of so many

Native children is to adapt a curriculum to include various materials and teaching methods appropriate to the background and experience of the Native child (Dawson, 1988). Forester and Little Soldier (1980) suggest that the teacher can and should modify language lessons to include the home culture of the child as a means of generating more language by utilizing contexts which are personally meaningful for pupils. Tanguay (1984) additionally maintains: "The teaching of native studies, native language, and native culture is instilling in students a pride in their heritage and respect for their culture" (p. 83). According to MacKenzie (1982), the culture of the Innu reflects their nomadic way of life in the past.

Participant Observation - is a research method used in ethnographic studies (Galindo, 1989). The research methodology of participant observation is highly suitable for classroom teachers because they already assume a real role. Students expect the teacher to be interested in their development and involved in their school work (Woods, 1986).

Participant-Observers - a "kid-watcher," or one who derives information from children when they are involved in actual reading and writing authentic and extended texts (Jacobson, 1989).

Woods (1986) points out that there is a difference between being a participant-observer and being a classroom

teacher. Galindo (1989) suggests: "In order to be a participant observer a teacher must first be aware of the differences that exist between being an ordinary participant in an event and a participant-observer" (p. 57). In his book, Participant Observation, Spradley (1980) explains the difference:

The participant-observer comes to the social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation. (p. 54)

Galindo (1989) elaborates:

Participant observation consists along a continuum moving from passive participation at one end (being present at the scene but not interacting with anyone else) to active participation at about the midpoint (doing what the other people are doing) to complete participant observation (studying a situation in which the researcher is already an ordinary participant). The continuum moves from only observing interaction to full participation in the interaction. (p. 58)

E.S.L. - refers to the teaching of English as a second language.

L1 - refers to the first (Native) language.

L2 - refers to the second language or the dominant language of the majority culture.

L.E.P. - means Limited English Proficiency.

### The Whole Language Approach

Definitions of whole language are somewhat elusive (Eldredge, 1991). The confusion surrounding whole language is probably due to the insistence on the part of whole language proponents that whole language is not a program, but a philosophy about literacy instruction (Altweger, Edelsky & Flores, 1987; Newman, 1985).

While Newman (1985) believes that the whole language approach is so complex and comprehensive that it defies definition, Eldredge (1991) offers these specific classroom practices generally associated with the philosophy, and accepted by whole language advocates:

Rather than teaching reading, writing, spelling and handwriting as separate subjects, whole language teachers integrate the teaching of the language arts into a single period. They recognize the interrelatedness of reading, writing, speaking and listening. They recognize that all these language processes are used as an individual attempt to

communicate with others, and growth in one area facilitates growth in the others.

Children's own language productions are used to help them make the transition from oral to written language. Children are given opportunities to write messages, letters, stories, using their individual vocabulary and syntax knowledge, even before they can read, write or spell accurately.

Whole language teachers encourage students to write as soon as they enter school. They believe that writing skills develop from children's scribbling to invented spellings and eventually on to mature writing. Children may dictate experiences or stories to teachers or other literate individuals, to be written on charts for reading, as in the "Language Experience Approach" to reading instruction, but the major emphasis in a whole language classroom is on children doing their own writing.

In addition to using children's written products for reading literature books are widely used in whole language classrooms. Whole language teachers do not agree with vocabulary-and-syntax controlled stories. The best children's literature available to teachers is read to, and with, children. Teachers use stories containing "natural text" and predictable language patterns.

Literacy instruction is organized around themes or units of study that are of interest to students. Children read or

write about these special topics or themes. Listening and speaking opportunities are provided for them while they study a topic or theme in depth. Music, art, social studies, and other interdisciplinary activities may also be integrated into the study of themes.

In whole language, the success of language learning and language use is largely based on the criteria of personal relevance. Whole language advocates claim that when children are given opportunities to enjoy good literature, create stories, write letters, keep personal journals, and share their written products with others, language learning becomes intrinsically rewarding.

Social interaction in whole language classrooms is essential and visible. Whole language teachers believe that literacy development is dependent upon opportunities to communicate, and communication is not possible without some social interaction. Therefore, children need opportunities to interact socially with others as they learn to use the language skills needed for effective communication; that is, they need opportunities to write, read, listen and speak to someone.

In whole language classrooms, children are given the opportunities to both teach and learn from each other. They often work collaboratively with a common interest or goal.

They react to each other's written products, and they share favorite books with each other.

Literacy instruction in whole language classrooms is student-centred rather than teacher-centred. Whole language teachers do not believe that reading instruction should be organized around a sequence of skills typically characteristic of a basal reader approach to reading. They believe that literacy instruction should be based upon recreational/functional reading and writing opportunities that centre on children's interests.

Whole language teachers involve children in holistic reading and writing activities. The focus of reading instruction is on the reading of holistic text (i.e., stories and expository text materials) rather than on the skills related to reading. The focus of writing instruction is on holistic writing products rather than spelling, handwriting, grammar, and other individual skills related to the writing process. Whole language advocates do not teach skills in isolation but believe that skills instruction should grow out of holistic language experiences based on students' recognizable needs.

Empowerment - Delpit (1988) points out that empowerment through literacy necessitates having control over language use, and considers it a disservice if individuals are not



provided with sufficient language competency "that they can meet the possessors of power" (p. 24). This definition of empowerment through literacy can be said to speak to the Innu situation. Empowerment for the Innu may be linked to their ability to be literate in the majority language. The empowered leaders who now battle the oppression which the Innu endured in the past, and who strive to create new political and cultural forms for the future, are those who are educated and competent in English, as well as their Native language (Schuurman, 1993a). However, Fagan (1992) suggests that "for some people, literacy is simply not relevant to their lives" (p. 24). This can also be said for some Innu people in that for those who wish to pursue the traditional Innu way of life, literacy may not be relevant.

The notion of empowerment for whole language proponents, like Gunderson (1989), is linked to the notion of "ownership" for both the teacher and the student. He explains:

In most schools, students do what the teachers tell them to do, and teachers do what the principal tells **them** to do...Whole language teachers believe they should be free to make instructional decisions based on their students' needs and interests. More than that, it is their responsibility to do so...In

the same spirit, whole language teachers empower their students by giving them the responsibility of managing their own learning. (p. 15)

Willinsky (1990), in his text entitled The New Literacy, similarly promotes literacy as empowering in that it shifts authority from the text and teacher to that of the student to make reading and writing more personally meaningful.

New Literacy consists of those strategies in the teaching of reading and writing which attempt to shift the control of literacy from the teacher to the student; literacy is promoted in such programs as a social process with language that can, from the very beginning, extend the student's range of meaning and connection. (p. 8)

Literacy - According to Fagan (1992), "a key problem in discussing literacy ... and its implications is the lack of a clear cut definition as to what it means" (p. 18). Fagan (1992) goes on to state: "An understanding of literacy...will depend on the context and goals... (p. 23).

Willinsky (1990), also appears to be uncertain about offering a precise definition of literacy. However, he stands against a definition of literacy which is defined as the ability to perform at a certain level on a standardized test and which asks education for preparation and practice of that

ability. "It is to resist treating literacy simply as some competence that people have or do not have at some arbitrary level" (p. 8). Willinsky (1990) takes the notion of literacy from that of a skill to that of a purposeful activity. He offers:

Literacy is not a series of subskills that are mastered and applied in isolated exercises; rather...students use literacy to solve problems that they have had some hand in selecting; they use literacy to discover, connect, respond and confront. (p. 153)

Moreover, Willinsky (1990) maintains: "Advocates...have bravely chosen to carve out a research path that is congruent with their understanding of literacy, tending to favor qualitative, collaborative and case studies which turn students into informants, rather than subjects" (p. 164).

Language Growth - is used in the context of whole language as a means of assessing student progress. While whole language teachers generally believe that grades are not useful for indicating language growth (Gunderson, 1989), whole language advocates maintain that growth in language is documentable (Hood, 1989). Wortman and Haussler (1989) profess: "Evaluation is descriptive, qualitative, and longitudinal, and involves samples of students' work" (p. 46). Kitagawa (1989)

asserts: "Kid-watching, writing folders, informal miscue analysis, and anecdotal records are the least intrusive and most representational documentation of language learning" (p. 109).

Woodley and Woodley (1989) state: "A basic tenet of a whole language philosophy is that children develop at different rates and in different ways" (p. 75). Mickelson (1990) relates: "Children are not compared to each other but are evaluated on their personal growth towards linguistic competence" (p. 4). In terms of whole language, language growth refers to the growth of one person, which is the rationale for the focus on the case study participant in this study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The following review of literature will examine literacy development in a person's first and second language, the features of the whole language approach to literacy, recent pedagogical approaches in English as a Second Language and how the whole language approach can be applied to the teaching of English as a Second Language and to the teaching of Native students. Various strategies recommended in whole language, including utilization of the Language Experience Approach, dialogue journal, children's literature, as well use of the computer and learning centers in whole language programs, will be discussed. Finally, the process of evaluation in whole language will be presented.

#### **First and Second Language Literacy**

From theories and research in first language acquisition, conclusions can be drawn for second language teaching and learning. While there are undoubtedly important cognitive, affective, neurological and physical differences between the acquisition of a first and a second language, and between children and adults, there are also important similarities. Both children as well as adults acquire languages from similar

types of experiences and at essentially similar rates when conditions are optimal (Krahnke and Christison, 1983).

According to Hamayan and Pfleger (1987), three principles emerge in the development of literacy in young children:

1. Introduction to literacy must be meaningful (Goodman, 1986). Children should be able to predict what lies ahead when reading or being read to from the rich context that is provided by good reading material. Reading something that does make sense is much easier than reading something that does not! Similarly, children should begin to write for a meaningful purpose - expressing a thought or feeling. Writing to communicate is much easier than writing for no obvious intrinsic reason.
2. The link between oral language and print is easier to make when awareness of it emerges naturally rather than when that link is explicitly taught. Children seem to pick up the associations between symbols and sounds rather easily from their environment. In contrast, when rules that govern written language are formally taught to children, the process is a tedious one that is not always highly successful. (Holdaway, 1979)
3. Affect plays an invaluable role in reading and writing. A child who enjoys reading is motivated to read; will read more; and by doing so, will be a better reader.

Similarly, a child who enjoys writing is motivated to write, will write more, and by doing so, will become a better writer. Since reading and writing are interrelated, writing frequently improves reading and vice versa. (Smith, 1978)

Goodman (1967, 1976) sees normal L1 (i.e., first language) readers as predicting the meaning of a text by using their background knowledge and other strategies. He proposes that a reader samples from the incoming data (i.e., print) only that information which can be accommodated in his or her current hypothesis. The reader may define this hypothesis by using semantic, syntactic and phonological cues from the text, which may entail a rejection of the initial hypothesis and the adoption of a revised one. Goodman calls this process of sampling, prediction and confirmation a "psycholinguistic guessing game."

It is assumed by many researchers (e.g., Goodman, 1973) that the reading process will be similar for all those languages known by a particular individual with minor adjustment having to be made for syntactical and orthographic variations in his/her non-native language. Murtagh (1989), also reports that evidence has shown that difficulties at the orthographic and syntactic levels are characteristic of beginning second language readers. The implication, however,

is that once literacy skills are acquired in one language they should transfer easily to a second language.

Murtagh (1989), in summing up some of the existing data to form an explanatory model of the L2 (i.e., second language) reading process as a basis for improving reading instruction and for evaluating reading progress, relates: "There is plenty of evidence to support the common notion that reading in the second language involves many of the same skills as native language reading" (p. 102).

Evidence from studies of bilingual education of children lends some support to theories that literacy in second language is similar to the first. Children in Canadian immersion programs who initially learned to read in a second language first (i.e., French) eventually read their first language (i.e., English) as well as their monolingual peers (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Barek & Swain, 1975; Genesee, 1979). This approach, however, is not suitable for all populations. The issue of reading in the context of immersion is extremely complicated (Murtagh, 1989). Factors such as the status of the second language in the community, the socio-economic and linguistic background of the student and the motivational forces, such as parental involvement, influence literacy development in the non-native language (Cummins, 1977; Genesee, 1979). In certain circumstances it might be more sensible to teach children to read in their native language



before reading in a second language. For example, a study of Navajo Indian children (Rosier & Holm, 1980) found that instruction through the medium of the mother tongue (i.e., Navajo) was better at promoting reading skills in Navajo and in English than instruction through English. Olivares (1993) concurs that in the long run LEP students with a well developed first language will perform better linguistically in L2 than those students who discontinue their development in L1 and discard it's use. Because the language -learning skills developed in L1 can be transferred to the learning process in L2 (Thonis, 1981) and because research demonstrates that bilingual children have more and higher cognitive skills than monolingual children (Baker, 1988), educators in recent years have supported the idea of having LEP learners maintain their first language as a means of improving in the second language.

Native language literacy affects the way L2 literacy develops, Hamayan and Pfleger (1987) report. Students already literate in their first language are able to transfer many of the skills they have attained through native language reading to the second language. They may not need to be led through the initial stages of literacy in which the awareness of the connection between oral language and print emerges. They would have already achieved this awareness in their native language and would transfer those skills, along with many others, to learning to read in the second language.

Hamayan and Pflieger (1987) agree that developing literacy in a second language (L2) follows the same course of development as the first language. However, they say two additional factors may play a significant role in the development of literacy in L2: age and level of native language literacy. Age makes a difference in how L2 literacy develops: older students, particularly those who are able to think logically about abstract notions (ages 11-15) are better prepared to focus analytically on the form of language and, as such, are better able to benefit from explanations of language rules and tasks that promote reading and writing simply for the sake of reading and writing. Younger students, who are unable to benefit from such instruction, may actually be turned off by the previously mentioned method of teaching literacy and may develop negative attitudes towards reading and writing, resulting in bad literacy habits. With non-literate students, however, even those who are older, literacy must be allowed to emerge in the natural stages. Thus, teaching reading and writing in L2 must be based on the same principles that underlie the development of literacy in young children.

Olivares (1993) agrees that the age of a learner is an important factor when it comes to L2:

A very young child will acquire the second language differently than an older child will. Linguistic

research has proven that even though younger children seem to acquire L2 sooner than older children and are often able to speak the new language without an accent after a few months, older children and adults are actually "more efficient language learners" (Hakuata and Snow, 1986). The common myth that younger children are better than older children at picking up a second language is the result of focusing observation on pronunciation and phonics, which are mainly functions of language acquisition. When the comparison is made with other aspects of language proficiency - such as the type of language ability needed to succeed in school- older children come out ahead. (p. 5)

Collier (1987) relates that children between the ages of eight and twelve years of age learn a second language faster than children between the ages of four and seven years, possibly because older children have more cognitive maturity and more skill with the first language to draw on in developing an effective second-language learning process.

According to Simich-Dudgeon (1986), currently used models of teaching reading and writing to LEP (Limited English Proficiency) learners suggests two basic models: the skills-based and the whole language. The skills-based approach,

narrowly referred to as the phonics approach, is characterized by the assumption that learners learn how to read by mastering discrete elements of language at the onset of reading instruction. Simich-Dudgeon (1986) explains that the whole language approach is based on the assumption that the introduction to reading must be meaningful and should be developed from real communicative situations in the life of the learners.

Hamayan and Pflieger (1987) relate that traditional methods of teaching E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) have not been based on the natural ways in which reading and writing specifically develop or on how language develops. These methods strip the act of reading of meaning, do not build on the learners' oral language and consequently ignore the strong relationship that exists between oral and written language. Finally, they make reading and writing dull. Hamayan and Pflieger (1987) summarize by stating:

The need for literacy to emerge in a natural way is crucial in light of the fact that the introduction to literacy in school through traditional methods not only does not encourage the natural evolution of reading and writing, but sometimes counteracts it. (p. 5)

The failure of traditional second language teaching methods in promoting literacy among children from non-literate

or low-literacy backgrounds has caused many teachers to discontinue the use of traditional methods, and to turn to more innovative methods which take into account the child's total language needs and which promote the enjoyment of reading and writing. According to Hamayan and Pflieger (1987):

A whole language approach to teaching literacy in the second language does just that, and since it includes the use of different methodologies and strategies, it has an added flexibility that allows teachers to find the combination of activities with which they feel most comfortable. (p. 5)

Many similarities exist between the whole language approach and the teaching of English as a Second Language (E.S.L.), where the four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing) are taught as an integrated whole. In both, the teacher's role includes facilitating and modelling language use and creating an environment where it is almost impossible not to learn.

### **Whole Language Approach to Literacy**

The whole language approach is based on recent psycho - linguistic research in language acquisition (Smith, 1971; Chomsky, 1972; K. Goodman, 1972, 1974, 1977; Clay, 1977;

Krashen, 1977, 1978; Graves, 1978; Holdaway, 1979; Y. Goodman, 1980; and Terrell, 1985).

Most of the current methodologies for second language reading are based on the psycholinguistic components of the native (i.e., first) language reading process. One of the most important insights of the psycholinguistic model is that the reader is an active participant in the reading process, interacting with the text in various ways, depending on the reader's knowledge of the language and subject matter, and the reader's needs with regards to the text (Murtagh, 1989). The psycholinguistic model of reading distinguishes several linguistic processing levels - the graphemic (i.e., letter-based), phonemic (i.e., sound-based), lexical, syntactic, semantic and discourse. Experiments have demonstrated the operation of all these levels in the reading process (Rumelhart, 1977).

Whole language as a pedagogical theory has the following 10 components, according to Rupp (1986):

1. Makes use of whole, meaningful reading material.
2. Focuses on comprehension and communication.
3. Utilizes and depends on quality children's literature.
4. Helps children learn to integrate and balance all cueing systems (graphophonic, syntactic, semantic, background and experience).

5. Treats literacy learning as a language development process.
6. Encourages risk taking, hypothesis testing, self-monitoring.
7. Treats literacy as a means to an end.
8. Approaches literacy as movement from whole to parts.
9. Encourages children to utilize their background knowledge and experiences for comprehension.
10. Promotes reading and writing as enjoyable, useful and purposeful activities.

The whole language approach is a teaching approach which combines the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The instructional philosophy is based on recent psycholinguistic research on how children learn language and literacy. The psychology of learning teaches us that we learn from whole to parts (Goodman, 1986). Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores (1987) explain:

The key theoretical premise for whole language is that, the world over, babies acquire a language through actually using it, not through practising its separate parts until some later date when the parts are assembled and the totality is finally used. The major assumption is that the model of acquisition through real use (not through practice exercises) is the best model for thinking about and

helping with the learning of reading and writing and learning in general. (p. 145)

Whole language teachers assume that children will learn to read and write just as naturally as they learned to talk if given the proper environment. Goodman (1989), who has done extensive research on the reading process, believes that teachers of whole language integrate oral and written language with conceptual development . "That is, they believe you read and write while you read to write and learn". (p. xi) He further states:

The whole language movement is a grass-roots movement among teachers. It has been motivated in part by a positive view of teaching and learning and an attempt by informed teachers to use new knowledge about language development and learning to build better, more effective, and more satisfying experiences for their pupils and themselves...It also represents a rejection ... of imposed methods, narrow curricula and mandated materials. Whole language teachers use a range of authentic, natural, functional material to build literacy. (p. xi)

Goodman (1987) notes that teachers who are "fed up with being told what to do" are motivated towards whole language. "Whole language teachers accept responsibility but with it



they expect power - authority to be the key decision maker in their classrooms" (p. 11). Willinsky (1990), an advocate of the psycholinguistic model, proposes a movement called "New Literacy" which has arisen to make reading and writing more personally meaningful and to make the processes of the formation of literacy more powerful. The process of instating reading, writing and speaking should not be seen as a "life skill", but a means of power and control over our whole lives.

The promise of education in a democracy is one of extending opportunities, of participation in processes of development, expression and power. The New Literacy would seem to have taken a piece of this promise as part of its mandate and needs to be encouraged in running with it. (p. 24)

#### Whole Language Approach and E.S.L.

A review of literacy research with LEP adults and children show that there are striking similarities in findings with regards to which approaches are most effective (Simich-Dudgeon, 1989).

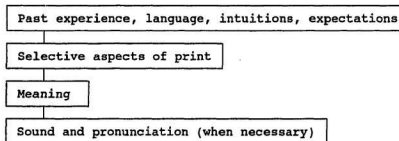
The whole language (and the Language Experience Approach) seems to be most effective with LEP learners. Both children and adults are said to develop second language literacy when the content

of instruction is functional, incorporates the culture and experience of the learner, and allows for individual differences related to age and native language literacy. (p. 8)

According to Krahnke and Christison (1983), "the pedagogical recommendations of Krashen (1982; and Krashen and Terrell (1983), in particular, come closest to bridging the gap between theories of language and language acquisition and actual classroom practices" (p. 626). Rupp (1986) and others studied the guidelines from Krashen and Terrell's book The Natural Approach and found many similarities between the whole language approach and recent E.S.L. research: "...it appears that they are telling us the same things...especially about where the focus of the program should be. It is on comprehension and acquiring language within a context" (p. 5).

Both the whole language approach and E.S.L. pedagogy have the same goal of communication and comprehension. Both view language learning as developmental. Children go through the same stages as they learn to read and write their native language as they do to learn or acquire second language literacy. Both recommend starting where the children are, utilizing their background and experience to build confidence. The four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are intended to be taught as an integrated whole, rather than in isolation (Rupp, 1986).

Hughes (1986), who examined reading approaches for second language learners, advocates an approach that uses learners' past experiences, expectations, and language intuitions as the basis for learning written symbols and developing reading comprehension. Pronunciation and phonics are not the focus of this approach. Hughes (1986) calls the whole language approach the inside-out approach, because learning how to read starts with the learners' past experience and gradually includes learning of discrete language components. The following model implies that the reader is in an interactive relationship with the text and that in order to gain meaning from the text, the reader must be able to predict and anticipate meaning.



While Murtagh (1989) found that the best L2 reader is one who can efficiently integrate bottom up predictive strategies with top-down (whole language) predictive strategies, she also found the focus of attention in L2 reading instruction should

be on the construction of meaning which involves the interaction of the readers' background knowledge with the information available in the text.

When whole language is used to teach reading to LEP children and adults, some adjustments need to be made. Although there are cultural differences among native English-speaking learners, they share many common beliefs and values. LEP learners often do not share these beliefs and values and this may contribute to their making inappropriate predictions and inferences. This is especially the case if the texts are not reflective of their cultural experiences (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983).

Heath (1983) notes that community notions of literacy differ by social class and race, with those from middle-class homes especially given to preparing children for future success in the schools. She talked about the specialized language of literacy provided by the townspeople in her study that provided the glove-like fit with the literacy of schooling. She worked with the teachers in order to shift their classroom habits and materials to accommodate differences in language and culture. It was believed that their altered way of teaching allowed some children to succeed who might not have otherwise done so.

Willinsky (1990) believes part of the liberalism of what he terms "New Literacy" is the "welcoming of culture" through

reintroducing the integrity of students' oral language into a literate environment, thereby levelling the great divide between the languages of home and school, and diminishing the sense of literacy as a civilizing mission that has governed schools and kept it apart from the lives of its charges. "New literacy ... offers more of literacy to those who have been twice denied, both in what they have brought to school and in what they will acquire there" (p. 157).

#### Whole Language Strategies for Native Students

Each child has his or her own learning style, the way in which he or she learns most easily. For some children the differences are innate, or due to learning difficulty. For most children, the differences are cultural, they are caused by differences in early learning experiences (Reyhner, 1986).

Some researchers view mismatch between learning style and instructional methods as a prime cause of school failure among Native children (Havinghurst, 1970; Kleinfeld, 1970). According to Parnell (1976), traditional Native culture has been taught by observation and imitation, rather than formalized instruction which children encounter in school. Pepper and Henry (1986) explain that in most Indian families, it is not uncommon to see young Indian children accompanying their parents or siblings to all types of family and community affairs. They observed that children learned the customs and

skills of their society by sharing directly in the activities of others. They found that verbal instruction was neither offered nor required because the child's close proximity to the observable action made instruction-giving redundant. Pepper and Henry (1986) further note that while question-asking and verbal interaction is almost the exclusive means of exchanging information within the European-American family, Indian children consider question-asking as an interactive strategy found in and reserved for schools.

Parnell (1976) relates, "such differences create difficulties for Native children in adapting socially: they have trouble meeting the teachers expectations since the white, middle class values of the teacher and the school are quite different from those with which the Native children have grown up" (p. 25). Arbess (1981) also discovered that the kind of expectations held by the Indian child was almost directly opposite to those of the school setting. The Indian child, for example, may have expected freedom of movement, but discovered restricted movement; where visual-spatial kinaesthetic learning was the mode, the verbal dimension is stressed; where direct experience had been the route for learning, now most experience was indirect.

Phillips (1983) states: "There are many instances of non-responsiveness on the part of Indian children that seemed related to the total irrelevance of the curriculum content to

their lives. The materials in the classroom presuppose a cultural background that is different from the background actually acquired by the Indian children (p. 132). Phillips (1983) also asserts that "the Warm Springs Indians are not accustomed to having one individual (the teacher) as the sole addressed recipient, but rather to more general address. And in the classroom, the teacher who has this control is not a familiar member of the community, but an outsider whose behavior is strange and unpredictable in many respects" (p. 117). Several researchers (Dumont, 1972; Phillips, 1983) concluded that the cultural incongruity between the home and school, especially the school's tendency to isolate control in the hands of the instructor, caused Native students resistance and lack of participation. Guilmet (1976) looked at both anthropological accounts and contemporary examples to conclude that Indian students learn primarily through nonverbal mechanisms. He suggests, however, that Indian students speak less because classrooms are not structured to allow native students to display their verbal competence.

Dumont (1972) found classroom teachers who shared social control and employed warmer and more personal teaching styles were more effective. Klienfield (1975) concluded that effective instructors of Native students displayed two primary characteristics: personal warmth (vs. professional distance) and active demandingness (vs. passive understanding).

Because, she suggests, learning for Native students tends to be more of an interpersonal activity (as opposed to goal-oriented, impersonal activity) establishing close personal relations with Native students is essential if an instructor is to be effective. Phillips (1983) feels Indian children may particularly benefit from greater opportunity to engage in one-to-one contact with teachers and aides and that Indian students can also be allowed to help one another more in their academic work.

Pepper and Henry (1986) feel that recognition and understanding of a student's unique learning need allows us to pick and choose from a range of teaching techniques to meet these learning needs. Specifically, "it means fitting the instruction to the real nature of the Indian learning, rather than to make the Indian learning fit a preconceived curricular structure" (p. 58).

The whole language approach stresses those values that are emphasized in Native child-rearing practices. Literacy through whole language is based on the concept that language is meant to be discovered by children, much as they discover the physical world around them in their individual pursuits (Zarry, 1991). Kaulback (1984), in his review of literature on learning styles among Native children, contends that a more holistic approach to reading is called for:



Given the assumption that native children are visual learners and they have the capacity and perceptual ability to read details and concepts from visual information, teachers must first attempt to develop instructional materials which appeal to and stimulate the perceptual potential of these children...Perhaps a more visual approach to reading (i.e., Language Experience, Whole Word Method) would be more appropriate. (p. 35)

He adds that a visually oriented reading program, in order to be successful, must involve a process whereby the child interacts with the text and attaches meaning to the words and statements contained within. "Any reading program offered to Native children must focus on meaning as its end goal" (p. 36).

The whole language approach is one that integrates language studies and other subjects with the child's own experiences. As such, it seems to fit very well with the literature that deals with Native children's learning styles and with teaching styles in Native schools, according to Zarry (1991). Zarry continues:

the key component to the whole language approach is the recognition of language experience. For children, the language experience approach provides a way to express themselves in school about

activities with which the child is familiar through experience in the school and in the community. Activities such as hunting, skinning, tanning, trapping, fishing, berry-picking, making bannock, wild rice-picking, stackwell housing, dog sledding, pow-wows, sweating, and so-forth, are often not included in other learning resources, but in the language experience - or whole language approach - if they are activities with which the child is familiar, they may be topics involved in a language learning process that is shared with others. (p. 94)

Allen (1982) reasons that Native students who view English with special mistrust and uneasiness would be more motivated to develop writing proficiency if they saw writing as a means of saying something personal and vital, as a way of creating themselves. Willinsky (1993), proposes students "write out of themselves, listening to their own voices, and voicing their responses to the works of others" (p. 23). He suggests students turn literacy to their own ends, whatever situation they find themselves in. "New Literacy" speaks to a radically different way of schooling...to a different educational conception of literacy and...for a critical coming to terms with the issues of meaning, self, history and politics (p. 13).

Barwell (1981) makes these six specific recommendations concerning Native students and the writing process:

1. Deemphasize formal grammar and usage in instruction and instead concentrate on using language that is more common with everyday use.
2. Insure initial success in the exploration of writing. Students need to understand that writing is a process of discovery.
3. Writing assignments should reflect the realities, cultural background, and real concerns of the Native student. Encourage students to recognize that each has a unique experience.
4. Supply Indian students with a variety of discourse modes such as journals, letters, responses to literature, narratives and poetry.
5. Use the whole language approach to language instruction by combining listening, speaking, reading and writing.
6. Make writing instruction holistic. Don't separate the teaching of grammar, sentence structure, paragraph, and essay writing into modules as breaking things up is not a natural cognitive function for many Native students. Also, the learning of skills as they are needed to express meaningful communication is recognized as a generally more effective means of writing instruction than pre-determined skills-based approach.

Sheilds and Matheson (1990) warn that whole language teachers should recognize the limitations of the whole language approach with all Native students, and that some whole language approaches may not be suitable for all cultural contexts. They suggest teachers adapt and supplement the whole language approach in order to meet the specific needs of Native students.

Similarly, Sawyer (1988) offers:

As in all areas of native education, we must adapt and verify these ideas for ourselves. Nonetheless, the more understanding we have of how to accommodate the unique learning styles and needs of our students, the more success they are likely to experience. (p. 21)

#### **The Use of Culturally Relevant Materials With Native Students**

Reyhner (1986), writing on the misconceptions many people have about Native cultures, stated that:

Unknowningly, people have spoken of Native students as being 'culturally deprived'. Use of the term indicates the speaker's lack of understanding. In some cases, it indicates an attitude towards all minority cultures, an assumption that the culture of the dominant society is superior. In most cases, however, the feeling that these people are

culturally deprived is simply a lack of understanding, a lack of knowledge. None of these people are culturally deprived. They are fortunate in having very rich cultures. (p. 5)

He goes on to say that:

New teachers must learn to understand the students and their culture before they can adopt their instruction...if teachers are willing to take the time to really learn their community, and its morals and values, then they can build an educational program relevant to the needs of the students and the community. (p. 10)

Native students see little relation between their studies and life outside the school because the curriculum is not relevant to their immediate needs (Reyhner, 1986). Zarry (1991) relates that while traditional teaching methods are usually characterized by the use of materials written for someone by someone else, whole language materials are relevant because they are chosen by the children themselves, through language experience and classroom publishing.

The importance of background knowledge for successful reading comprehension has become an accepted principle in reading instruction (Smith, 1963; Stevens, 1982; Hayes and Tierney, 1982). Recent research in schema theory (Rumelhart, 1975; Anderson, 1978) has demonstrated that prior knowledge

relevant to the text should be activated before and during reading. If the reader lacks appropriate background knowledge necessary for understanding the text, comprehension will be limited unless the teacher ensures that such knowledge is imparted to the reader. Hudelson (1984) states that "reading comprehension in a second language, as in the first, is influenced by the background knowledge and the cultural framework that the reader brings to the text" (p. 226).

It follows, then, that culturally relevant reading material is bound to be beneficial to the reader whose background does not match the text. Many studies have demonstrated that culturally relevant material for Native Indian students result in better reading comprehension (Dank, McEachern and Mallett, 1978; Griese, 1971; Rohner, 1965; Wolcott, 1967).

The importance of culturally relevant material for teaching English reading to LEP learners cannot be over-emphasized. Research shows that LEP readers recall more from stories about their own cultural background than those of a culture foreign to them (Hudelson, 1984). Hudelson (1984) refers to two studies of ESL readers (Johnson, 1981, 1982) which conclude that the current practices of simplifying vocabulary and syntax "were less important factors in ESL readers' comprehension of a text than the cultural content of the passage being read" (p. 227).

Furthermore, Klesner (1982) decrees: "Unless school life includes study, which reflects their own lives, there is little incentive for native students to pursue the learning. The hidden message in this is clearly: "My culture is not valued" (p. 9).

### **Whole Language Strategies in E.S.L.**

On examining the whole language principles applied to a whole language E.S.L. program, it appears that many benefits accrue to the learner. According to Heald Taylor (1986):

- youngsters can participate in all language activities regardless of their level of proficiency in English;
- mixed ability groups can learn together;
- learning strategies are child-centered, causing youngsters to continually experience and use language to think and seek meaning;
- development in oral language, reading and writing is totally intergraded and grows simultaneously;
- rate of growth is completely individual;
- the student uses his/her developing English in the reading and writing process right from the start;
- students learn to speak, read and write by being engaged in the process;

- whole language processes facilitate growth in both first and second languages.

One of the enjoyable features of the whole language approaches is flexibility. There are also various methods and approaches which the students use. While there are a variety of methods and materials used in the whole language classroom, these do not, in and of themselves, constitute whole language (Balajthy, 1986). Rich (1985) has noted that teachers may well use any or all of the strategies, but if their underlying philosophy of education is not child-centered, the classroom will not be whole language. Goodman (1986) emphasizes that there can be no whole language programs without whole language teachers.

### Writing

At one time ESL students were not encouraged to read and write until their oral language was fully developed (Freeman & Freeman, 1988). Recent research has shown that ESL students can read and write from the start. This is particularly important for the development of academic competence.

Hudelson (1988) reviewed research on writing instruction of school-age LEP children, and her findings add support to arguments in favor of a whole language approach to writing and to English literacy in general. These findings can be summarized as follows:



- ESL learners, while they are still learning English, can write: they can create their own texts.
- ESL learners can respond to the world or others and can use another learner's responses to their work in order to make substantive revisions in their texts.
- Texts produced by ESL writers look very much like those produced by young native English speakers. These texts demonstrate that the writers are making predictions about how the written language works. As the writers' predictions change, the texts change.
- Children approach writing and develop as writers differently from one another.
- The classroom environment has a significant impact on the development of ESL children as writers.
- Culture may affect the writers' view of writing, of the functions or purposes of writing, and of themselves as writers.
- The ability to write in the native language facilitates the child's ESL writing in several different ways. [It] provides learners with information about the purposes of writing ... second language learners apply the knowledge about writing gained in first language settings to second language settings. (p. 1)

Moffet (1983) has suggested that personal experience story emphasis may be more appropriate for elementary grades due to younger children's initial egocentricity.

### Language Experience Approach

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is a component of the whole language approach to teaching reading and writing. According to Zarry (1991), the key component to the whole language approach is the recognition of the language experience. He explains that the "creed" of language-experience teachers can be summarized thusly:

Experience leads to thinking;

Thinking leads to talking;

Talking leads to writing;

Writing leads to reading. (p. 93)

Language experience is based on the premise that the ability to interpret written language is related to the child's ability to communicate by talking. Generally, the approach follows these steps described by Strickland (1969):

Every child brings to school a language. He can listen and he can talk. The language experience approach to reading begins with this language and utilizes it as the material for reading. Children are encouraged to draw and paint pictures and talk

about their in-school and out-of-school interests. In the case of a picture, the teacher writes under the picture the child's story of it. If he says, "This is my Dad. He is washing the car," that is what the teacher writes for him. Stories and accounts may be composed and dictated by an individual, a group, or the whole class. The children are placed so that they can watch the teacher write. She calls attention to what she is doing. "I have to start here with a big capital letter, don't I? We'll put a mark like this at the end of a sentence. Now what else shall we say? Can anyone help me spell the word? (pp. 266-67)

Writing process advocates such as Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986) advocate written composition emphasizing personal experience stories, which can be presented through the language experience approach.

Balajthy (1986) relates:

The commonly accepted writing process approach limits itself to personal experience stories for several valid reasons. Students more easily recognize the personal relevance of writing. They write from a knowledgeable stance and can more easily develop a natural "voice," having experienced the events about which they are

writing. By expressing the important events of their lives, students are brought to a better understanding of self and of the meaning of their world. Personal experience stories also lend themselves to peer conferencing, as other students have often had similar experiences and can draw on their own background knowledge to provide feedback to the writers. (p. 5)

Hamayan and Pfleger (1987) recommend LEA as one of the best ways to help ESL students learn to make the transition from their oral language to standard printed English. They purport:

The LEA is based on the notion that children are better able to read materials that stem from their own experience and are based on their own language ...In fact, LEA is often used as a tool for developing oral language skills in L2. (p. 9)

Moreover, the use of the language experience approach may have implications for inclusion in both first and second language instruction. Zarry (1991) explains:

Every child has a backpack of experiences that he or she brings to school each day. It is the mandate of whole language teachers to use that experience, and the use of the language in dealing with this experience, to complement the curriculum

in any subject. An important part of the backpack of experience is the child's first language, so it is axiomatic that this approach must not just "take into account" the child's first language, but must depend upon that language. (p. 94)

### Dialogue Journals

According to Gambrell (1985), "in dialogue journals the student and the teacher converse in writing. Each day students write to the teacher about anything of interest or concern, and the teacher responds" (p. 512). Straton (1983) says that dialogue journals are "...a valuable component in developing writing and reading competence in both first and second language classes" (p. 1).

Manning and Manning (1989) explain:

The use of dialogue journals is consistent with a communicative language learning approach to teaching ESL...Both parties in the dialogue generate and respond to real topics...When the teacher focuses only on communication and does not correct errors, the students see that the teacher regards communication as the priority. Thus, the traditional teacher/student roles are deemphasized in the dialogue journal experience. (pp. 204-205)

Since it is accepted that students "learn to write by writing," Cathro (1987) decrees that daily writing in a dialogue journal is particularly relevant for Native students who need to expand their English skills: "The essential feature of dialogue journal is that the teacher responds to the students' writing. These responses help students expand and refine their ideas" (p. 56).

### Children's Literature

Zarrillo (1987) argues that literature-centered reading programs, based on the perspective that reading is the process of bringing meaning to print, are in the best interest of minority students. He describes a "literature-centered reading program" as an instructional practice and student activities using novels, informational books, short stories, plays, and poems. He further advocates the benefits of developing literacy with children's books, rather than with the standard basal reading systems. According to Zarry (1991), many children have found it difficult to relate to the language of the basal reader with its accent on simple, controlled vocabulary, its restricted sentence structure, and its shallow literary depth. He recommends the use of library and trade books which are relevant or interest-based for Native students, in order to furnish the "experience" from which can flourish writing and reading. He further suggests

a series of study books from the Circle program, a whole language program based on Native values and culture, as an example of print resources that might be incorporated.

### Reading Aloud

Klesner (1982) related that for many children the sharing of stories, books and reading experiences provides great pleasure and a direct preparation for school success. According to Huck (1979):

Linguists have noted the significance of children's previous exposure to literature and their cognitive and linguistic development. Educational researchers recognize the motivational value of literature for teaching children to read and have firmly established the importance of reading aloud to all children for their increased performance on tests of reading vocabulary and comprehension. (p. 335)

If such experiences are lacking, it is considered imperative to provide children a wide variety of experiences in being "read to" says Klesner (1982). "Frequent experience with read-aloud stories by the teacher may be the determining factor in reading success for the child who comes to school with limited book experiences" (p. 26). She further explains:

Its role has also been established in developing positive attitudes towards reading while providing adult models of reading. The informational and entertainment value of the book or story provides a high pleasure setting that encourages this learning process. In addition the read-aloud process provides the child with an understanding of "what reading is all about." Listening gives the child an opportunity to become familiar with books, to think, question, and interpret, and to gain some familiarity with the mechanics of reading itself. (pp. 25-26)

Heald-Taylor (1986) suggests teachers choose books which they enjoy reading, since the students will be motivated by the warmth and enthusiasm the teacher demonstrates for the story. Allan, Giard and Kristo (1991) concur by stating: "The most significant factor in effective read alouds is the teachers personal commitment and enthusiasm for literature" (p.6). Barton (1986) relates that while choice of texts is important in the read-aloud encounter, story selection is tricky, as not all children are interested in the same story. However, Forester and Little Soldier (1980) suggests that selections for Native students involving books, as well as pictures and films, should be culturally relevant and should be included on the basis of the student's familiarity with the



topic. Both Heald-Taylor(1986) and Barton (1986) suggest the inclusion of folk tales, and stories with predictable texts make good choices for the read-aloud encounters.

### Predictable Literature

Smith (1978) contends that "there is no essential difference between learning to read and reading. Everyone must read in order to learn to read, and every time we read, we learn more about reading" (p. 9). How, then, are beginning readers to practice reading when they can not yet read? The situation is further compounded when students possess a limited competency in the language of the text.

Allen (1986) maintains that one small but significant way teachers can meet the needs of the LEP (Limited English Proficiency) child is by providing an input of predictable and repetitive language upon which the child can draw. Much has been written about the benefits of using predictable books for beginning and slow learners. According to Heald-Taylor (1987), "literature with many predictable features such as strong rhythm and rhyme, repeated patterns, refrains, logical sequences, supportive illustrations, and traditional story structures, provide the emergent readers support in gaining meaning from the text" (p. 6). By presenting predictable and repetitive literature in an enjoyable way, teachers can help beginning readers can "learn to read by reading", as Smith

(1978) suggests. Moreover, familiarity with the pattern in the text permits children to read printed material with confidence and understanding.

The most obvious examples of stories with predictable or repetitive language and plots are legends and folk tales - as with "The Three Billy Goats Gruff". Repetitive and predictable reading material provides the necessary exposure to language patterns that beginning readers, especially those with limited language competency, need. The students are invited to "join in" as the teacher reads aloud. Eventually the students will be able to "read" these words successfully as the phrases are repeated over and over in meaningful and interesting ways. Moreover, Bridge (1979) relates that "numerous experiences with patterned books also facilitate the development of a sight vocabulary through repeated vocabulary in dependable contexts" (p. 506).

In addition to providing good beginning reading material, the patterned book selections can provide a point of departure for teachers and students to write their own stories based on the literary structure. For example, the story of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" can be adapted to the story of "The Three Caribou" by transforming the underlying structure of the original by substituting words with which the students have had experience and could relate. In the story of "The Three Caribou," the caribou would be going up the hill to eat moss,

since caribou eat moss, and they would meet the witch, which would be more familiar to Innu students than would be a troll. Perhaps even more familiar to Innu students than a witch, would be a cannibal creature from Innu oral literature referred to as "Atshen".

Along with making the reading material more relevant to the student, this type of adaptation also enhances comprehension. When readers encounter new information, they attempt to understand it by fitting it in with what they already know about the world. Reading comprehension, then, would be further enhanced if the students could bring to bear their background knowledge of the caribou, moss, and witch, or "Atshen" etc., in understanding the story, rather than that presented in the original version.

### Learning Centers

"Whole language teachers prefer centers organized around topics and thematic units, structured to facilitate the integration of all the language processes with conceptual skills" (Goodman, 1986; p. 32). According to Staab (1991), classroom organization by centers provides an opportunity for children to improve their oral abilities and use language in various situations.

Foerster and Little Soldier (1980) observed classrooms serving Native Americans in different parts of the U.S. and

found that while young Indians entering school usually exhibit a high degree of language activity, are active learners and appear secure and open to new experiences, older students showed low levels of linguistic interaction and increased passivity. These observations, however, appeared tied to the type of classroom organization (open-closed), teacher-pupil relationship (formal-informal) and type of activity (text recitation-small group activities). They found that the open classroom setting, with its flexible furniture arrangement, materials located in centers and less formal teacher/pupil communication provides a more optimal environment for the language growth of Indian pupils. The flexible use of space, furniture and equipment encouraged dialogue among pupils and learning from peers.

With the explosion of information on child-centered, continuous progress, literature-based instruction (e.g., Altwerger, Edelsky, & Flores, 1987; Forester & Reinhardt, 1989; Froese, 1990; Goodman, 1986; Newman, 1985), teachers throughout North America are reorganizing their classrooms to align practice with current theory. Teachers who believe in empowering children providing instruction within the context of purposeful, meaningful experiences (Edelsky, Draper, & Smith, 1983; Edelsky & Smith, 1984) are searching for ways to translate these beliefs into classroom practice.

The use of thematic centers provides an effective translation of beliefs into practice. Staab (1991) observed how these 10 characteristics were evidenced through the use of thematic centers:

1. Child centeredness.
2. Use of purposeful, meaningful follow-up.
3. Choice within limits of accountability.
4. Flexible structure for kid-watching.
5. Individualized learning.
6. Integration of subject matter.
7. Opportunity for interaction.
8. Taking responsibility for learning by children.
9. Opportunities for play and socialization.
10. A basis for assessment and evaluation.

As the children were working at the centers, the teacher often took the opportunity to interact with individuals, examine their work, and record this information on anecdotal records and check-lists. Not only was the children's academic progress assessed, but also such information as their ability to follow through on a task, to share and to cooperate with others, and to engage in realistic self-evaluation was noted. These anecdotal records contained much information regarding the process of how children were learning to read and to write, as well as information on how children were learning to relate to each other socially, intellectually, and physically.

Individual portfolios filed beneath an easel with the pocket cards contained work that had been done at the centers. The teacher examined this work daily as an indication of the children's products. Both process and product were evaluated. It was these anecdotal records, checklists, and work portfolios that formed the basis for the teacher's evaluation of a student during reporting periods and parent conferences (p. 112).

### Computers

A review of literature on Native peoples' values and styles of learning reveal remarkable consistency in studies. According to Kaulback (1984) the entire issue of computer assisted learning must be examined in regards to its application for Native education. The computer, as a teaching tool, promises to be an effective visual means of presenting and reviewing information. The best educational programs make superb use of visual aids to help the learner understand even abstract concepts.

According to DeGroff (1991), research has shown that computers can be worked into whole language classrooms. While early computer use was often restricted to drill and practice of isolated skills which are incompatible with whole language beliefs and practices, contemporary word processors offer functions that can facilitate writing processes, particularly

revising and editing. For example, Phenix and Hannan (1984 in DeGroff, 1991) note that when children understand how easy it is to make changes to the word processor, they are more willing to make changes to their writing, to risk invented spellings or less-than-conventional punctuation. Later they make changes because doing so no longer requires recopying an entire paper.

### Evaluation

Reading researchers (Valencia & Pearson, 1986; Squires, 1987) have begun to decry the fact that reading assessment in general has not kept pace with advances in reading theory, research or practice such as the whole language approach.

The use of standardized tests is discouraged for E.S.L. students, because they are designed for first (English) language learners (Cummins, 1984). Reyhner (1986) explains that most standardized tests are class and cultural biased, giving students with upper middle class backgrounds an advantage. Due to the differences in the Native background and vocabulary, many Native students do not score well as well as white upper middle class students.

Goodman (1989), who has done extensive research on the reading process contends: "An increasing number...are

supporting and actively encouraging whole language teachers away from textbook and test-dominated teaching to make their evaluation fit the principles of whole language" (p. xi).

Baskwill and Whitman (1988) state that current thinking reflects the belief that learning is an individual process which occurs most effectively within a supportive environment - an ongoing process that cannot be fragmented or time-tabled. "Our evaluation tools and methods should also reflect that belief" (p. 1). According to Baskwill and Whitman (1986), the focus of whole language assessment is on the individual. The whole language teacher is interested in what a child's abilities are upon entering the classroom, and what they are as the child moves on.

A group of whole language teachers in Tucson, Arizona (Marek, Howard, Disinger, Jacobson, Earle, Goodman, Hood, Woodley, Woodley, Wortman and Wortman, 1984) agree that evaluation of students' growth must be based on current research, as well as beliefs and theories about language and language learning. They state:

Because of our beliefs about language learners and teaching the classroom evaluation methods we suggest revolve around observation and interaction with students while they are engaged in the functional use of language (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Evaluation of language



learning can only occur during situations when students are being encouraged to become flexible, take risks, make decisions, select their own material, develop a sense of ownership of their work, and combine independent work with collaboration. By analyzing students' understandings and uses of language, along with observations of how they value their own language development, a clear picture of the students' developing language proficiency can be portrayed.

(p. 5)

Marek, Howard et al. (1984), recognize three essential focuses of kid-watching: observation, interaction and analysis. These relate to incidental, informal and formal procedures as explained by Goodman (1989):

Each may be done formally: for example, records kept of an activity following a particular procedure at regular intervals. Or each may be informal and may occur at any time the teacher and the student or the students come in contact. Observation, interaction and analysis may occur incidentally whenever the teacher perceives that the students are engaged in an activity that will reveal important understandings about a student's learning or development. Or it may be part of a

planned activity with a variety of forms and materials at hand to assist in the collection and analysis of the information. (p. 9)

Goodman (1985) terms such systematic and reflective observation as "kid-watching." A combination of systematically collected observational data, samples of children's work, and brief anecdotal records of classroom behavior can provide information for instructional decision-making, for predicting future development, and for reporting to parents. A thoughtful, systematic, repetitious, and thorough analysis of the data from a variety of observations provides the teacher with an individual record of each child's growth and development in literacy. Such things as the use of print conventions, the use of a variety of cueing systems, the ability to predict, the range of language used, the invented spellings attempted, and other skills can be analyzed from observational data.

According to Hodges (1988), observers must first have a framework for making sense of what they see. They must have knowledge of the reading and writing processes, of the developmental process, and of procedural knowledge which helps them know what to look for and helps them become more aware of their biases and philosophical orientation. A format for recording early literacy behaviors in the classroom must be

based on the school district's and teacher's philosophy and goals and objectives of literacy development.

Secondly, the teacher must be able to break those goals and objectives down into observable units that include items that are significant and representative of the literacy processes of the children in that teacher's group. A series of checklists based on various processes can be designed and used throughout the school year.

Experts in the area of reading and writing might suggest items for the checklists, but the final decision about specific items must be made by the teacher so that they are aware of how each behavior plays a part in demonstrating progress toward the goals and objectives of their... classroom. (p. 19)

Hodges (1988) also suggests that to be truly useful, teachers need an efficient and simple way to record and retrieve information. She suggests checklists designed to fit specific needs. Hodges further explains:

Instead of including an item that indicates that a student "shows an interest in reading," they might include an item that indicates a more specific and observable behavior such as "listens attentively when books are read aloud." The behaviors to be

observed must be stated in clear, concrete terms in order to assure validity and reliability.

The format must also provide room for several dated entries so that teachers may illustrate the way in which the child progresses, levels off, or regresses during the school year. To make checklist information easily accessible, teachers might keep a folder on each student and place material in it periodically and/or each time something special is noted. (p. 18)

Thirdly, since there are no "correct" or "all encompassing" observational lists or set of lists, Hodges (1988) further recommends that teachers be open to other behaviors that provide additional information, such as anecdotal written comments: "These more global or summary comments plus the specific items chosen for observation supply a well-rounded assessment format for measuring the child's total literacy performance" (p. 17). Hodges (1988) adds: "Samples of a student's work that clarify observational data or illustrate students' skills on a particular task are a valuable addition" (p. 19).

Fourthly, "the informed observer recognizes what the child already knows, plans experiences to build on that knowledge, and then observes and listens on a timely basis

with appropriate attention, patience and thoughtful questioning" (p. 18).

Teachers in whole language classrooms are urged to assume the role of "researcher" in their classrooms in order to successfully understand the literacy needs of their students and determine how whole language strategies meet or fail to meet those needs. Expertise in observation is complex and does not come without planning and effort (Hall, 1987; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; and Johnston, 1987). Hodges (1988) expands by stating:

Systematized observation, performed by responsible teachers who have a knowledge of reading and writing processes, the developmental process, and observational and record keeping procedures and analysis, represents one very useful tool for assessing growth and development in early reading and for providing information for making the daily instructional decisions that must be made by classroom teachers. (p. 21)

Evaluation by way of "kid-watching", or continuous informal assessment, is well supported in the literature. Goodman (1989) makes these points regarding whole language evaluation:

1. Evaluation is mostly an ongoing, integral part of curriculum which happens in the course of teaching/ learning.
2. Self evaluation (on the part of both teachers and pupils) is the most significant type of evaluation. Reporting to parents is of secondary importance.
3. Whole language is not simply concerned with measuring behavior changes. It uses behavior as indications of developing knowledge and underlying competence.
4. Informal - and even formal - evaluations may be used if they add to the information available.
5. Teachers use interaction, observation and analysis. These relate to incidental, informal and formal procedures.
6. Whole language teachers reject traditional evaluation techniques because their content, nature and use are in direct conflict with the whole language teachers' view of teaching, learning and curriculum.
7. Whole language teachers are professionals who accept all pupils, their language, and their culture. They view all evaluative information in the context of the personal and social goals of the learners and the school.
8. The curriculum is integrated where language and thought are developed to build knowledge and where linguistic and cognitive growth is evaluated.

Kitagawa (1989) suggests: "It is impossible to separate "valuing" from evaluation. The kernel of the word is also the kernel of the act" (p. 101). She says helping students value themselves as readers and writers has an enduring impact on their literacy. She feels that, while whole language teachers have no monopoly on appreciating students as individual learners, they may stand out as those who rely primarily on natural, occurring, ongoing evidence in the classroom to verify growth.

#### Teacher and Student Self-Evaluation

Guided by their theoretical understanding of language and learning, whole language teachers are skilled observers of their students. Instructional decisions evolve naturally from this melding of theory and observation (Bridges Bird, 1989). Bridges Bird continues by saying: "But it is self-evaluation that tempers the teaching learning process.... Through self-evaluation, whole language teachers revise and refine their teaching art" (p. 24).

The ultimate goal of the evaluation process in whole language classrooms is self-evaluation for both the teacher and the student. Goodman (1989) contends that:

Through self-evaluation the teacher involves students in serious examination of such questions as: How am I doing? Are things going as I

planned? What can I do to see that things go better next time? Students help by keeping records about their own learning experiences and meet with the teacher in conferences to evaluate what they have accomplished and what goals they hope to achieve, planning with the teacher how these are to be met. In this manner, the teacher helps the kids learn about themselves and their capabilities. (p. 13)

Whole language teachers are constantly assessing both their students and themselves (Baskwill and Whitman, 1986). Goodman (1986) refers to the double agenda or reciprocal relationship between evaluation of the teacher and the students. Whole language teachers evaluate themselves as they evaluate their pupils as to whether the content is appropriate and how to plan further experiences to capitalize on the intellectual functioning of the student.

Goodman (1986) believes that whole language teachers are "kid-watchers." Informally and formally they evaluate and revise their plans on the basis of the kid-watching they do. She elaborates:

Informally, in the course of watching a child write, listening to a group of children discuss or plan together, or having a casual conversation, teachers evaluate. It even happens while children



are playing. It happens more formally on one-to-one conferences with pupils about their reading or writing, as teachers make anecdotal records of what they observe. It may involve instruments like Reading Miscue Inventory or a writing observation form. The key is that it happens in the course of ongoing classroom activities. (p. 41)

### Conclusion

Whole language is not a particular dogma, but rather a general approach to finding out how language can be learned in the most natural and enjoyable way. Whole language teachers thus have to be responsive teachers who acknowledge that they too are learners, and that they can learn from the diverse backgrounds of all the other learners in the classroom (Zarry, 1991). They urge children to become independent learners and they stress self-evaluation and peer-evaluation as opposed to teacher-evaluation. Students are expected to work cooperatively, as well as individually, in a classroom of learners that includes the teacher.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

In this study the use of a culturally relevant whole language theme with a group of grade six Innu students was examined. The research methodology in the present study would be classified as naturalistic rather than experimental since "natural" behaviors were systematically observed. Consequently, the present study made no attempt to test a hypothesis or to manipulate the subject's behavior. The research concern in this study was not to find a cause and effect relationship, but to understand, through actual classroom observations, how to better meet the needs of Innu students in second language instruction. To this end, several tools such as anecdotal and informal observations records, checklists, and samples of student's work were kept. A case study is presented to document growth for one student over the course of the execution of a theme.

One unit, entitled "Berries," was developed in full and later evaluated according to the principles and recommendations of the whole language approach. Two other themes, entitled "The Caribou" (Appendix A), and "The Country" (Appendix B), are presented for further development and assessment.

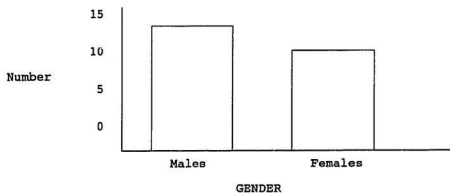
### Population

The use of culturally relevant whole language themes was examined with a group of grade six Innu students at Peenamin McKenzie School, Sheshatshit, Labrador. The following description of the sample presents the diversity of the class used in the study; the number of male and female, Innu and non-Innu students, as well as the ages and attendance for each child registered at the beginning of the study.

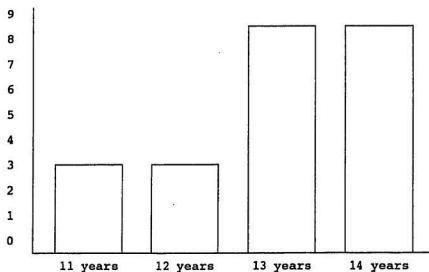
At the onset of the study, the grade six class in question had 24 students of both sexes registered for the 1991-92 school year. Fourteen, or 58.3 percent, were males while ten, or 41.7 percent, of the class were females. All students, with the exception of one, were Innu students who spoke Innu-aimun as their first language. The ages of the students ranged from 11 to 14 years, with a mean age of 13. These percentages are displayed graphically in Figures 1 and 2.

The average attendance of the class recorded for each day the theme was in progress was 33.2 percent. The most regularly-attending student during the theme, identified as "Jayne," averaged 85.7 percent attendance, and was chosen as a case study subject in order to provide some degree of consistency and continuity to the learner profile. The dispersion of attendance for each student is portrayed in Table 1.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Analysis of Gender Distribution**



**FIGURE 2**  
**Distribution of Students by Age**



**TABLE 1**  
**Distribution of Attendance**

Name	Age	Theme Days in Attendance Out of a Possible 28	Percentage of Theme Sessions in Attendance
1. Marianne	13	8	28.57%
2. Glen	14	8	28.57%
3. Kerry	14	16.5	58.93%
4. Nancy	13	9.5	33.93%
5. Alexander	13	7.5	26.79%
6. Paula	13	4.5	16.07%
7. Michael	11	20	71.43%
8. Michel	12	3	10.71%
9. Simon	13	5	17.86%
10. Stephen	12	11.5	41.07%
11. Charles	11	23	82.14%
12. Peter	14	0	0.00%
13. Ted	14	12	42.86%
14. Theresa	14	5.5	19.64%
15. Betty	14	0	0.00%
16. Drew	14	8.5	30.36%
17. Jayne	12	24	85.71%
18. Robin	14	0	0.00%
19. Eleanor	13	6	21.43%
20. Pien	14	6	21.43%
21. Krysten	13	6.5	23.21%
22. Caroline	11	9	32.14%
23. Harry	13	10*	66.67%
24. Johnny	13	15	53.57%
Total Student Days		219	33.23%
Total Available Days		659	

\* Out of 15 - due to transfer

### **Basis of Selection**

All students in attendance were observed, interacted with and analyzed throughout the execution of the theme. Information was obtained concerning the students' perceptions, attitudes and responses. This was the general focus of the study. By way of demonstrating and documenting language and behavioral growth for an individual child, which is the emphasis of evaluation in whole language, a case study was developed. The case study participant was selected on the basis of regular school attendance during the course of the theme. The presentation of the case study constituted the specific focus of the study.

The students were observed in many settings over the course of the theme, during actual reading, writing, listening and speaking activities. The researcher engaged in constant and on-going evaluation of all students in attendance. This took the emphasis off the case study participant.

### **Gathering of Data**

During the study the researcher served a dual role as teacher and participant-observer. The researcher observed, interacted with, and analyzed the students in various social and literacy-related settings. Actual listening, speaking,

reading and writing behaviors, as well as social and affective behaviors, were noted.

At first a "grid" was made to record each child in various settings and for different activities (Appendix H). Individualized notes were also used to record quick comments about specific children. All notes were included in each child's permanent folder, and later transferred to a permanent anecdotal record sheet in their folder. Once the student became more familiar to the researcher, less writing was required of the researcher. Informal notes taken to confirm or reject previous beliefs were jotted in the researcher's planbook. These, too, were later transferred to the more permanent anecdotal record in the child's folder. Also included in the folder was a record of books read by each child, as well as a collection of each child's written work.

The collection of language samples and anecdotal records were included for all students in attendance. It was the researchers belief that the evaluation techniques employed were viewed by all students, including the case study participant, as normal activities for the teacher in the classroom setting. The researcher did not attempt to influence the students in any other way than would be typical of a whole language teacher in the classroom setting.

### Methodology

Participant observation is a method used in ethnographic studies and this research orientation is suitable for the whole language approach according to Bright (1991), who compared traditional and whole language approaches. Bright (1991) listed these points about the research orientation of the whole language approach: "Qualitative in nature. Relies heavily on ethnographic research procedures. Focus on language arts program as a whole for research purposes" (p. 49).

The researcher, as a participant-observer, assessed the use of one culturally relevant whole language theme. The general focus was placed on gathering information from attending students concerning behavioral and language-related responses during the theme. The specific focus was placed on gathering data to document the language growth of one child. Detailed emphasis in the evaluation was placed on on-going informal assessment of the case study participant through observation, interaction and analysis, as recommended by Marek, Howard et al. (1984). Goodman (1989), relates that these three categories prove useful in thinking about whole language evaluation. Goodman (1989) also suggests: " Like so many other aspects of whole language, these three types of evaluation are separated for the purposes of spotlighting the



importance of each, but in most cases when these are in practice they are overlapping and integrated" (p.8):

### Observation

Informal observations, which most often take place as the teacher moves around the classroom, build an intuitive sense of an individual or a group of students. Teachers are watching and listening to discussions of small groups; they're noticing students engaged in reading or writing, working on scientific experiments, researching for reports, or solving math problems; teachers are becoming aware of the interactions taking place and how the interactions relate to the task at hand. The teacher may keep a notebook to jot down general impressions by noting key words, dates and names used later at a more convenient time to stimulate the memory in order to record more formal and long-lasting records.

Formal observations can be made by keeping anecdotal records of a more specific nature. These are dated, named records kept in a student's portfolio or file.

Teachers who find formal anecdotal entries useful are careful to rotate around the classroom at different times of the day or week, making sure to record appropriate information about each student working in different subject-matter areas and different settings in the classroom and

participating in different activities such as silent reading, journal writing, collaborations, small-group discussions, and so on. These formal entries, of course, are supplemented by less formal observations. Teachers who use formal observations may do so for the first few months of the year only. Then the teacher may add informal observations to the anecdotal records file on a less regular basis as important new information arises. (p. 10)

### Interaction

As teachers interact with students, they are not just discovering what students know...but are using the moments of interaction to question the student, to encourage, to stimulate, and to challenge.... Open ended questions such as, Why do you think so? Is it possible? I wonder if...help students believe that [teachers] really expect explorations in their interactions with the objects of learning, then the evaluation of students takes on a new and exciting dimension. (pp. 11-12)

### Analysis

When teachers understand the principles underlying miscues in reading, they can evaluate miscues as they listen informally to kids reading during an individual conference. To understand the developmental moments in the spelling and punctuation of their students, teachers can eventually point out a student's development by informally examining the student's composition. Marek, Howard et al. (1984) conclude: "Holistic scoring procedures, analysis of story grammar, variations and flexibility in styles of writing and genres of reading, interests, spelling and punctuation, development, and qualitative miscue changes all lend themselves to in-depth analysis" (p. 13).

Over a three-month period, from mid-September to mid-December, the culturally relevant whole language theme "Berries" was presented. Since the theme was meant to merely supplement, rather than replace, the existing Language Arts and Social Studies programs approved for use at Peenamin McKenzie School, the researcher worked on the development of the theme as a participant-observer in the classroom on a half-time basis, one forty-minute time period three times within a six-day cycle. The thematic unit entitled "Berries" was developed according to the principles and strategies of the whole language approach outlined by Heald-Taylor (1986).

**Culturally Relevant Theme: "Mina" (Berries)****Background to the Theme**

The Labrador Indians (Innu) were nomads or wanderers until fairly recently (i.e., 1940). They travelled in bands of about fifty to one hundred individuals and lived the "country life" year round. They hunted and fished for their livelihood and survival by moving from one camp to another and living off the land.

Due to harsh climate they couldn't raise crops, so wild berries which were available during certain parts of the year, comprised a very important part of their diet. They relied on wild fruits and made much use of medicinal plants (Armitage, 1991).

Today, the Labrador Innu have settled in the Labrador communities of Sheshatshit and Utshimassit, but many families periodically pursue their traditional hunting, fishing and gathering lifestyle. While in the country the Innu people avail themselves of what the land has to offer - including berries. They also take advantage of berries in season that grow wild in and around the village of Sheshatshit. Family-oriented berry picking excursions on foot, in car, or by boat during the fall of the year are still an important part of Innu lifestyle.

### Rationale for the Theme

The topic "Berries" was chosen because of its relevance to Innu lifestyle, both past and present. The topic is one that is both culturally and personally relevant to the students, one which they would have some knowledge of on which to build upon further. The topic is thought to promote an appreciation for, and increased understanding of, their Native culture, therefore enhancing self-esteem and a sense of pride. This theme can also lend itself to inclusion in various academic areas, especially social studies. More importantly, however, the unit was designed to provide purposeful, meaningful and interesting opportunities for the development of an integrated language arts experience involving listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing.

### Organization of the Theme

The communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are combined by way of a teaching approach called the whole language approach. To provide structure, the thematic approach, with related whole language activities based on the theme "Berries," was incorporated. Concepts from other academic areas were included where they related to the topic. Permanent listening, reading, writing and viewing centers were adapted to the theme. The "Art Center," for example, contained labelled pictures of berries to be coloured

or traced. Sketches from Gerald Mitchel's A Labrador Colouring Book entitled "Picking Berries" were also included for colouring. The "Listening Center" was available for students to listen and follow taped children stories related to the theme, stories from Them Days magazine and interviews conducted throughout the development of the theme. The "Puzzle Center" contained simple "Who Am I?" questions and answers that enabled the children to self-check their predictions about the berries being explored. Compound word puzzles required children to fit two words together to make one compound word. With the "Letter Game" the students were to put the lower case berry on the matching upper case leaf. Also the "matching game" required the students to match the picture of the berry with its correct name tag. Again the students were able to self-check their answers. The computer race game rewards students with points for racing opponent to the berry bush for berries. Included in the "Reading Center" was a collection of language experience stories dictated to the teacher by the students regarding their own experiences with berry-picking, charts classifying berries various ways, recipes the children had experimented with, names of berries on flashcards and a "Pictionary of Berries," as well as other booklets compiled in class. The "Writing Center" provided paper, pencils, erasers, etc., and language experience posters depicting the theme. The children were encouraged to dictate

a story or sentence about these pictures, as well as their own they had sketched. The "Viewing Center" contained individual slide viewers and a collection of slides of berries being studied for examination. This center also contained recent photographs of field trips and activities relating to the theme, as well as photos of berries.

Much of the content of instruction came from the students' own language and experience. With the help of resource persons Mrs. Kathleen Nuna and Mrs. Ellen Obed from the Sheshatshit area, these ten berries deemed relevant and familiar to the Innu were selected for individual study:

Redberry (Kamikuatshi)  
 Squashberry (Mushuminat)  
 Skunk Currant (Innitshimina)  
 Dogberry (Maskumina)  
 Raspberry (Anushkaalat)  
 Blackberry (Assimina)  
 Juniper (Kakatshimina)  
 Blueberry (Inniminana)  
 Snowberry (Pineuminina)  
 Bakeapple (Shikuteua)

The whole language strategies used in the unit were adapted to the theme based on Heald-Taylor's (1986) outline in her monograph Whole Language Strategies for E.S.L. Students. The strategies proposed by Heald-Taylor include dictated

stories, literature strategies, process writing incorporation of themes, and evaluation procedures.

### **Dictated Stories**

A dictated story is an oral account of a real or imagined experience composed by a group or individual in collaboration with the teacher. Both teacher and student-composed experience charts describing, contrasting, or paraphrasing a shared experience or a personal experience relating to the theme are elicited throughout the development of the unit. (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

In the LEA, the teacher activates the students' language and encourages the students to share their experiences with the class. The teacher writes the students' words verbatim and then teaches the students to read what they have said. This process ensures that the learners understand what they are being taught to read (Moustafa, 1987).

Hamayan and Pflieger (1987) recommend dictation for helping the LEP learner make the initial transition from oral (i.e., English) language to reading and writing, because it allows the learner to verbally share meaningful events and stories which are then shaped into written form by the teacher. This approach allows the learner to read meaningful



story units rather than isolated words, parts of words, or sentences.

Specific dictation strategies as outlined by Heald-Taylor (1986) include:

- Teacher composed charts
- Group charts
- Student composed charts
- Picture charts
- Sentence structure through literature
- Individual dictated sentences
- Dictated stories and reading
- Dictated stories oral language development
- Publishing dictation
- Dictation in the first language

### Teacher Composed Charts

For students for whom communicating in English is difficult teacher-composed charts paraphrasing the students' intended message about personal experiences are incorporated. Descriptions of art work, photos and field trips pertaining to the theme are used. Teacher-composed charts can also take the form of informal messages (e.g., Today we will pick redberries at North West Point). Recipes (Appendix C), as well as narratives about the ten berries chosen due to their

familiarity and relevance to Innu lifestyle (Appendix D), could also serve as additional reading material.

As a means of further linking oral and written language, teacher-composed charts involving transcribed taped interviews of the students' berry-picking experiences are utilized. Also, a taped interview with an Innu resource person, Mrs. Kathleen Nuna, relating Innu use and treatment of berries in Innu-aimun, was translated. Later, the English transcription was published in a local magazine entitled Them Days (December, 1987).

#### Group Charts

While teacher-composed charts support the emergent speaker and reader, some children, even at the beginning level, can begin to participate in composing through group activities. Many group charts were composed. Examples include the following:

1. Listing - berries they know from their own experience.
2. Describing - a description of berries by color, texture, taste, edibility, smell (if appropriate), and type of leaf.
3. Labelling - pictures of berries, photos taken pertaining to the theme.
4. Sharing - accounts of field trips and responding to art work.

5. Arranging - berries word-cards, according to initial consonant sounds and later alphabetical order.

### Student Composed Charts

As soon as students began to speak and use their second language in group charts, they were encouraged to tell about an experience, a picture, or a story they heard. The teacher printed the story onto a chart exactly as dictated. The emphasis was on the students' idea, rather than the syntactic form, at first. This is believed to provide confidence in using the language a child has internalized thus far (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

More advanced students may edit an inaccurate form in response to questions by the teacher (e.g., "Is that what you wanted to say?"). The decision to make adjustments is left to the author (i.e., the student).

### Picture Charts

Picture charts serve to help the students make a visual relationship between the berries themselves and to help match the berry with its written symbol. Non-print materials were collected by the teacher during the course of the theme. From the school's vertical file, pictures of berries were obtained. Students also cut photos related to the theme from various magazines and pamphlets. Former co-worker, Mrs. Ellen Obed,

offered some sketches from her unpublished manuscript Berries of Labrador. Much use was made of this non-print resource in labelling pictures for identifying and naming berries. Later a booklet about berries was produced at the Curriculum Center at Peenamin McKenzie School incorporating these sketches.

Mr. Jim Newton, another co-worker, offered slides and photos of berries from his private collection for use with the theme. These were later copied and used as part as the slide-tape presentation to accompany the theme. Copies of the slides were included at the viewing center for individual viewing.

#### Sentence Structure Through Literature

Since many of the students would have had limited experiences with literature, sharing good literature that coincided with the theme through read-aloud sessions was a priority. Where possible, predictable selections were included and students were invited to join in the reading of the selection. Later, some patterns from predictable texts were written and students asked to cut the original text into sentence strips and over-copy and under-copy them. The activity of over copying and under copying served to help develop fine motor skills and awareness of English text as well (Heald-Taylor, 1986). For Example: In the text Berries

Berries Berries by Lenora Keeshig, the following pattern was repeated:

I hate picking berries but I like to eat berries.

I like to eat berries with milk and sugar. I like to eat berries in pie.

I like all kinds of berries - strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries and sometimes gooseberries.

Some children may be able to recall only the intent of the message; others may be able to read along some words as the teacher reads; while still others might "say" the repeated parts independently.

#### Individual Dictated Sentences

These sentences were dictated by the student and recorded on a strip of paper. Dictated sentences were offered in response to the students' own artwork, a language experience chart of photos of field trips. For some students a number of activities such as over-copy (i.e., trace over), under-copy (i.e., copy sentence below original) and cutting word strips to rematch to an original sentence, were utilized. These techniques are thought to develop oral language, fine motor control, help students observe the formation of the alphabet, make students aware of words and spaces, develop early reading and model beginning writing (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

At the onset of this experience, the exact syntax of the child was used. However, over time the students were supported in developing more complete and complex sentence patterns. This was a very gradual process, however, until some transference gradually took place.

Patterned sentences from literature selection were also used as a support for students in generating their own variation. For example, using the story Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey, students were directed to rewrite a sentence using an exact line from the literature selection: "He heard a noise from over a stump and thought, 'That is my mother walking along'" (p. 32). Using the cloze procedure, the children dictated other possibilities for the underlined words (e.g., hill, stamping, respectively).

### Individual Dictated Stories

Dictated stories based on an account of an event relating to the theme, real or imagined, which the researcher transcribed in the students' exact language, was the logical extension of the individual's dictated sentence. Again, the exact recitation was transcribed to acknowledge that the message was initially more important than the mechanics to help students gain self-confidence in their initial attempts.

Illustrations were made prior to, or after, dictation. Many students made their picture prior to dictation since the

picture making helped them organize their thoughts for composition.

### Dictated Stories Reading

E.S.L. students have many interesting stories to share through dictation which make relevant reading material. Once students become comfortable with story dictation they begin to see letter formation of English script, observe the direction text is printed, participate in the composing process, become aware of spelling, punctuation and other mechanics of English (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

The purpose of reading the stories to the students at this time is not to teach them to read, but rather to make them aware that their talk can be written down and read back. (p. 27)

Initially, students rely on the teachers reading of the text, but eventually they are asked to join in as the teacher points to the text. Finally, the student re-reads the story along with the teacher, who fades in and out orally, offering support when needed. An individual's dictated story provides an opportunity for a student to use their oral language. It provides the teacher with valuable information on oral language development (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

### **Publishing Dictation**

In preparing dictation for publication, students need to be involved in making changes so that stories are grammatically correct. Publishing stories can be a great motivator for reading and writing, especially when computers are used in the publishing process.

### **Dictation in the First Language**

Having Native teachers dictate stories in their own language helps reinforce composition processes important to both first and second languages. By including dictation in first language students are reminded that their own language is their first language and is a necessary and important part of the school curriculum (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

### **Literature Strategies**

Huck (1979) reveals that children's previous exposure to literature has a positive effect on their cognitive and linguistic development. She asserts that the motivational value of literature for teaching children to read has also been recognized, as well as the importance of reading aloud to all children for their increased performance in reading.

Murphy (1980) recommends the presence of books and the daily reading of books by the teacher for ESL students.



Story reading begins immediately in the ESL component of bilingual education with picture books and simple accompanying texts so that children can 'read' the pictures, sequence events, and learn to relate picture to text in their earliest experience with the second language. (p. 195)

Reading good children's literature should be the center of an instructional program, as it relies on children's natural search for meaning, according to Hamayan and Pflieger (1987). They advocate this approach for children from non-literate backgrounds who need to be introduced to literacy in a natural, enjoyable way. They further recommend that children participate in literature any way they like: as listeners, as choral readers, or as individual readers.

Heald-Taylor (1986) maintains that quality literature serves to effectively introduce students learning English as a second language to the rhythm, syntax and richness of the English language. She also endorses predictable literature containing rhythm, rhyme, refrains, logical story lines and repeated patterns for use in choral speaking, early reading and beginning writing. The whole language literature strategies she suggests for E.S.L. students encompass the following:

- Reading aloud
- Choral reading

- Shared reading
- Big books
- Literature and story writing
- Listening to literature
- Listening to first language literature

Each of these literature strategies will be discussed as they relate to and are incorporated into the theme "Berries."

### Reading Aloud

Books relating to the theme were selected at the student's approximate listening level. The main goal of the read aloud session is to instill in the students an enjoyment for books and a desire to read, while at the same time extending English oral language facility and comprehension.

Read aloud selections for the theme include:

Blueberries for Sal by Robert McClosky

Bread and Jam for Francis by Russel Hoban

Bears and Berries by Trisha Gessler

The Redberry (a submission to Them Days Magazine by Janet Byrne-Turpin, December, 1987)

Berries Berries Berries by Lenora Keeshig-Tobias

Berry Picking (a poem) by Sheila Bearski

I Love Berries (a poem) by Margaret Izatt

The Little Brown Rabbit (a story adapted from the classic The

Little Red Hen (Appendix E))

Rosie's Visit by Mary Upper

Maximum participation was elicited from the students during the read aloud experiences. The students were encouraged to participate in pre-reading discussions. During the reading, the researcher pointed to the text in a deliberate, yet fluent manner, to demonstrate that print is read from left to right. Throughout the reading the researcher paused periodically in order to elicit predictions from students and to check their comprehension. Interpretative activities, such as sound effects, movement, art and puppetry comprised some of the post-reading activities.

The students also listened to the stories on cassette tape as they followed along with the text. This activity was carried out by students independently at the listening center.

### Choral Speaking

Choral speaking is begun with predictable material. The teacher invites students to read along or join in when they can predict what the text will say next. Through repeated reading the students' memorization of the text expands. The students may firstly fill in the missing word; later, they recite the refrain and then verse with the teacher; finally, they "say" the selection independently.

### **Shared Reading**

From the choral speaking activity children moved on to the shared reading experience. During this process students followed along with the teacher as they "read" the text they were previously familiar with through choral speaking activities. The students were directed towards the text through techniques involving the use of the cloze procedure, repeated sentences, reading in unison or reciting the rhyme. This helped the students move from reading with the teacher, or a partner, to eventual independent reading of the predictable selection.

### **Big Books**

Enlarged versions of an original piece of literature were produced through the use of the photocopier at the Innu Curriculum Center located in Peenamin McKenzie School. These "big books" were used for reading aloud, choral speaking, shared reading, as well as for independent reading material. The big books were useful for demonstrating manually the direction the eye moves in reading.

### **Listening to Literature**

In order to allow students to listen to favorite selections as often they wished, all of the literature used during the course of the theme was recorded on cassette tape

at the classroom "Listening Centre." The printed selection to accompany each text was supplied and students were encouraged to follow along.

### Listening to First Language Literature

Research indicates that maintenance of the first language positively affects growth in second language learning. Listening to such literary pieces as legends and folk tales from the students' own culture and in their own language, helps maintain an appreciation for their cultural heritage. Self-esteem is enhanced when they realize that the school values their first language (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

The traditional Innu legend, "Auass Ka Mashkut" (The Boy and the Bear), was recorded in Innu-aimun. The accompanying overheads were presented on the overhead projector. This legend tells the tale of a boy who is taken by bears and who lives with them for many years. The story relates to the theme since, after the boy's human father finds the boy, he is instructed to wash the boy in berries to remove the bear-like body hair that the boy has grown. A translated copy of The Little Brown Rabbit, entitled Ne Kaipisnisset Kauitshesuet Uapash, was also available at the Innu Curriculum Center at Peenamin McKenzie School.

### Literature and Story Writing

Heald-Taylor (1986) recommends that predictable literature, selections which have a repeating pattern, rhyme, rhythm, or refrain, be used in the beginning for choral speaking, read aloud sessions and/or the shared reading process. Patterned, or predictable literature, is thought to provide excellent early reading material, as well as to stimulate creative writing for E.S.L. students. Heald-Taylor (1986) further suggests that the literature selection correspond with the theme being studied.

In order to provide predictable material that pertained to the theme the writer modified the text of the folk tale The Little Red Hen to correspond with the theme. The adapted text used the pattern of the original but deviated from the original in order to make it culturally relevant. In the modified version entitled The Little Brown Rabbit the rabbit finds a redberry and asks each animal in the country in turn to help her firstly pick, then wash, clean and cook the berries, and finally to bake the jam into a pie. Again, the story deviates from the original in that the three "country" animals agree to help. This twist in the story was included to reflect the Innu tradition of everyone helping the other.

The selection of The Little Brown Rabbit illustrated for the students how alternate texts could be created from an original. This is the first step in having students use

patterned books according to Heald-Taylor (1986). She suggests that E.S.L. students will be able to dictate alternative texts before they will be able to write them on their own.

The students are asked to offer suggestions concerning how the classic folk tale The Great Big Enormous Turnip could be adapted to the theme and renamed "The Great Big Enormous Berry." The word "berry" was substituted for the word "turnip" and the text was easily adapted to the theme. The students copied the new text and illustrated it to make it into a big book. This selection was used for read aloud, choral speaking, shared reading and independent reading/writing material.

### **Process Writing**

At one time ESL students were not encouraged to read and write until their oral language was fully developed (Freeman & Freeman, 1988). Recent research has shown that ESL students can read and write from the start.

Process writing is an approach which encourages E.S.L. youngsters to communicate their own written messages while simultaneously developing their literacy skills in speaking and reading. Rather than delaying involvement in the writing process until students have perfected their abilities in handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation, as advocated

in the past, students early attempts at writing are encouraged (Heald-Taylor, 1986).

When examining the product, the emphasis is on content and process. Responses are geared towards what the student means or attempts to say. Miscues, invented spellings, and the movement towards language conventions are all viewed as data for evaluating language development and for planning strategies for further development (Holdaway, 1979).

#### Process Writing Method

As students began speaking in classroom and social situations they were introduced to writing in the form of personal dictation, picture labelling, copying literature patterns and invented spellings. Independent journal writing dealing with the theme was also encouraged.

Heald-Taylor (1986) refers to the problem of having older students take risks and overcome previous educational values that a piece of writing must be absolutely correct. As attempts were made in writing, attention was given to the meaning, and syntax and grammar which were not corrected in the early stages. Gradually, students began to learn to take some risks in the writing process as they realized the language they offered was being accepted.



### Conferencing

Through conference interviews students were invited to further develop their stories by adding more information, including descriptive language, or organizing their information and developing skills in phonetics, spelling, grammar and punctuation. The message, rather than the form, is attended to at first. However, students gradually become aware of the skills through individual and small group conference interviews.

Students had an active part in revisions, and there was no editing without student participation. Also, focus was on one skill at a time, and transfer of skills must have been evident in students' writing before a new skill was discussed.

### **Themes**

Present-day pedagogy recognizes that children learn best when they are involved in creating manipulating, observing and communicating about topics and activities which are generally interesting and meaningful to them. Furthermore, it is recognized that, in order to be truly meaningful and interesting, learning must be based on personal experience. The student must have some experience background to bring to bear on the learning situation for true learning to take place.

The specific theme "Berries" was chosen with this rationale in mind. It was a topic that is relevant and important to Innu children, one with which they could relate to their own schemata. Also, it was a topic that provided many possibilities for development within the whole language approach.

The use of the thematic approach is supported in the literature (Rhodes, 1983; Doake, 1986). Rhodes (1983) recommends "the thematic unit" approach to language learning. She explains:

If effective language learning occurs while children use language as tools to learn about the world, a curricular vehicle must be utilized that will encourage exploration of the world through the use of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Such a vehicle is the thematic unit, a type of curriculum that focuses on the exploration of a number of related concepts. The theme for the unit can be selected because it is a required curricular topic, because the teacher knows it will inspire the children's interests and fulfil some of their needs, or because the children themselves suggested it (p.84).

Themes are an excellent way to integrate learning (Heald-Taylor, 1986). Doake (1986) sees thematic studies as a natural way of integrating the curriculum in the intermediate

grades especially, where students are able to work more independently than younger children. Themes are thought to provide for an economical use of time, opportunities for students to work collaboratively and independently, and lead the students and the teacher to make use of a wide range of resources both inside and outside the classroom.

### Evaluation

According to Heald-Taylor (1986), observation is the key strategy used in evaluating student progress in the Whole Language Approach. In this study language growth was monitored through teacher observation, and documented anecdotally, with Heald-Taylor's (1986) language behavior charts serving as a guide to monitor growth. Aspects of "Oral Language Behavior" (i.e., repeated language, applied language, labelling language, student-initiated language), "Reading Development" (i.e., composition symbols, spelling, conventions, grammar, publishing), are included. Marek Howard et al. (1984) suggest that teachers adapt checklists to meet specific needs. The researcher developed a checklist of skills to coincide with the theme (Appendix F).

Additional skills were included during the course of the theme to correspond with the level of competence of the students with whom it was used. These included:

- Capitalization, punctuation and quotation marks were developed in response to the students' own writing.
- Plurals, and specifically changing y to i, and adding "es," (i.e., changing the word "berry" to plural)
- Contractions - using a teacher-composed L.E.A. chart relevant to the theme (Appendix G).
- Silent "e" (long and short vowels) in discussing the title of the story Blueberries for Sal (vs. Blueberries for Sale).

During the course of the theme additional resources that became available to the developer were also included. The story Kapapishat mak Kametuanut Inniman by Michel Noel was included under "first language literature." "Blueberry Facts" from Newfoundland's Favourite Blueberry Recipes (Blackmore Printing and Publishing Ltd.) was also incorporated into the theme.

All print and non-print material suggested were actually available at Peenamin McKenzie School. The researcher felt this important since it makes the unit adaptable to other teaching/learning situations in Sheshatshit. However, this list is certainly not complete since the developer was limited to the current available resources at the school library in

Sheshatshit. Additional selections should be incorporated as they become available.

### Evaluation Criteria for Use of Thematic Units

The researcher evaluated the progress of a group of students throughout the incorporation of the theme by way of observation, since this is the key strategy used for evaluating student progress in the whole language approach (K. Goodman, 1986; Y. Goodman, 1978; Hodges, 1988).

As an active participant-observer, the researcher observed, interacted with and analyzed children's responses and behaviors in the process of actual reading, writing, listening, and speaking throughout the execution of the theme. Since the language arts are interrelated, and are integrated across the curriculum, responses in other curricular areas were included where appropriate in evaluating children's language growth. The gathering of work samples and naturalistic observations were employed. According to Bright (1991), evaluation methods in whole language indicate progress of one student and evaluate the totality of development. Therefore, incorporation of a case study documenting one child's language growth was conducted. The case study contains vignettes and ongoing evaluation of the student during the course of the theme using the techniques of observation, interaction and analysis.

Goodman in The Whole Language Evaluation Book, Goodman, Goodman & Hood (1989) explained the use of observation, interaction and analysis for evaluation.

1. Observation of students can be specific or general; it can be mentally noted, recorded on anecdotal records or observation checklist; can involve one student individually, as a group or whole class.
2. Interaction with students engaged in using language in order to provide information on students' knowledge of language flexibility, functions and cueing systems, and gives an indication of students' attitudes and values relating to language development. Questions, discussing, conferences, listening, dialogue journals provide the opportunity to assess the students' language development, confirm observations, gather information for further analysis, and provide direction for instructional activities for language development.
3. Analysis of language use provides a chronological and visible record of development. Growth and flexibility in the use of functions, conventions, strategies, cueing systems, and attitudes can be documented through periodic language samples, story reading, or taped oral samples. They provide concrete evidence of progress to the student, teacher, parent and administrator.

Self-evaluation on the part of students and teacher is deemed the most significant kind of evaluation in whole language classrooms. During the course of the theme, the researcher evaluated, along with language behaviors, other social/behavioral components, such as students' involvement, interests and attitudes during the course of the theme. Students' willingness to participate helped determine the suitability and relevance of the theme and helped the researcher make recommendations for the use of the specific theme being pursued specifically, and the use of whole language with Innu students in general.

Whole language evaluation methods are multiple, diffuse and complex (Bright, 1991). A variety of methods which pertain to the student and the situation helps develop a clear picture on students' developing literacy. A combination of many varying means of evaluation in whole language were incorporated, as was recommended by proponents of the whole language approach. The evaluation procedures, outlined previously, were incorporated where appropriate.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the utilization of culturally relevant whole language themes with a group of grade six Innu students at Peenamin McKenzie School, Sheshatshit, Labrador. The goal of the researcher was to ascertain through various informal measures (i.e., observation, anecdotal records, and written samples) whether inclusion of thematic units, reflecting the experiences of Innu children, would promote English language growth and increased student interest and involvement during the course of one culturally relevant theme. The suitability of the use of culturally relevant themes for use with Innu students was also to be determined.

The general focus was placed on gathering information from a selected group of students regarding their attitudes and responses during one theme entitled "Berries." The specific emphasis was placed on gathering data about the specific language behaviour of one child. The names of all students referred to in this report have been changed to respect the privacy of the individuals. A great deal of attention has been given to changing identifying details, especially for the case study child.



The reporting format to be used by the researcher will be similar to that used by Oldford (1985), and will consist of two phases. Phase I will report the responses of the students during the course of the theme. Observations concerning language and affective behaviours will be discussed. Phase II will present a case study as a means of documenting language growth for an individual student within the theme. This phase of the evaluation incorporated the model of observation, interaction and analysis proposed by Marek, Howard et al. (1984). While the headings - Observations, Interaction and Analysis are closely related, Goodman (1989) differentiates between the three:

**Observation** includes examining what students are doing as the teacher stands on the sidelines. The teacher may choose to observe one student working alone, a student as a member of a group, all the members of a small group, or the class as a whole to make judgements about language use, problem solving, leadership, and collaborative capabilities.

**Interaction** includes ways in which the teacher converses or conferences, participates in discussions, interacts in journals, and raises questions with students in order to discover what

students know and to encourage or challenge students to explore beyond what they are thinking at the moment.

**Analysis** includes eliciting information in such ways as the reading of a story, the written response to a book, a composition or an oral conversation on tape and then using psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge to analyze in depth what the students know about language and how they show development in their language use. (p. 8)

#### **Phase I: Student Reaction to "Berries" theme**

It was anticipated that inclusion of these culturally relevant themes would result in increased interest and involvement for students in school activities. One informal means used by the researcher to assess this was to note the positive and negative remarks and reactions of students. The researcher recorded that one student had written that "Theme Block" was his favourite subject. Other students would inquire as to the activities planned for "Theme Block" that day. An individual student who questioned "why we needed to keep on learning about berries" alerted the researcher to the fact that the extended timetabling of the theme development

was deemed to be somewhat drawn out for some students. While the responses of individual students may not reflect the attitudes of all, the responses were noted to help reveal how the theme was received by individuals within the particular group.

The execution of the theme "Berries" began in September with an afternoon berry-picking excursion. The berry picking outings were especially well received by the students. At the beginning of the year, but before the "Berries" theme had begun, students were asked to state preferred "reward" activities for good school behaviour. The school usually offered extracurricular activities such as swimming, bowling and skating as incentives for good school attendance and behavior. Interestingly, a number of students included "berry-picking" as one of their chosen rewards. Other excursions associated with the theme involved field trips to collect berry plants in the local environment. Integration of the subject area, Science, was incorporated as plant samples were collected and later examined. One student became interested in independently researching the scientific names for the plant samples collected.

"Life Skills" offered during the theme were also enjoyed by the students. The students indicated, through the use of a dialogue journal, that the cooking and eating experiences were among the most enjoyable during the theme. Traditional

Innu recipes were prepared with the help of a Native teacher from the school. Another activity noted by the researcher as enjoyable for students was the cleaning of the berries. The researcher noticed that most students were eager to perform, and were quite skilled at this task. The students teased the researcher about not being able to keep pace with them.

However, activities involving the sensing of berries, through taste, touch, smell, and sight and later recording this information on a group language experience chart, appeared to be of little interest to this particular group of students. As with the slide-tape production, the researcher perceived that these activities were less enthusiastically received than that of many other students from previous years.

#### Modifications of the Theme

Due to the practice of social promotion previously mentioned, there were varying age and ability levels within the grade six class used for the study. Some students found the reading material associated with the theme to be above their instructional level. In these instances, stories were read aloud and included on cassette tape at the listening center. The predictable selections were used for choral and individualized reading material for these students.

Other students possessed more proficient English language skills than the students for whom the theme was originally

designed. More independent reading and writing was incorporated for these students, and the literature associated with the theme was also used for further study. Invariably, this more proficient group of English language students found the enrichment exercises in keeping with, or above their level of competence. For the majority of attending students, however, the content of the theme more closely matched their instructional level than did the content of the prescribed texts at the grade six level.

The theme could be modified to meet the needs of all the students in the class. This was demonstrated during writing. Some students were able to write stories independently, while other needed teacher intervention by way of dictation for their drawings on either the sentence or word level. Skills associated with the theme were also modified. Arranging berry names in alphabetical order was at the instructional level of some. When this was too difficult for others, the assignment was modified to reviewing the letters of the alphabet.

### Oral Language

Many researchers have commented that getting Native students to participate in class discussion has been problematic (Dumont, 1972; Phillips, 1983). It has also been the experience of this researcher, as a non-Native teacher, that, with the exception of a few individuals, Innu students

are not usually eager to participate in class discussions in English.

One of the aims for inclusion of a more culturally relevant curriculum, organized around the whole language approach, was to provide the familiarity and motivation necessary to support these Native students in taking risks with their English oral language development. Informal, ongoing observations during the theme reveal that there was some increase in verbal participation on the part of students, perhaps because the content more closely matched their interests and listening comprehension level. Collaboration with the other half-time teacher for the class supported the researchers observations that the students would often appear "lost", as the content presented in the prescribed texts, even when read aloud to the students, would appear to be beyond their English comprehension level. This was deduced by the general lack of attention exhibited by many students during instruction in various other subject areas and by their unwillingness or inability to answer questions about the content.

While someone unfamiliar with these Native students may not have been especially impressed by the amount of dialogue exhibited during the course of the theme, the researcher would consider the level of participation by the students an improvement over the usual level of response for other school

subjects. This may have been due to the fact that the researcher expected and required more in the way of responses from the students, believing the theme to more closely match their background, interests and English language competency.

### Student Interactions

Interacting with students during group work was difficult for the researcher since the language spoken among the students was their Native language, Innu-aimun. Since Innu-aimun is virtually incomprehensible to the researcher, and no Native interpreter was available for translation, interacting with students in this context was difficult. Students naturally preferred to talk amongst themselves in their native, rather than their second, language.

During group work, students often "helped" each other by providing their completed work for another to copy. They readily shared answers with each other. The researcher suggests that this willingness to share in the classroom may be a result of their cultural heritage of cooperation. Scott (1992) relates that in many Indian cultures the person is respected for sharing knowledge, experience and material goods with others. This willingness to supply work was well served in the case of Eleanor, who often relied on other people's spelling for writing. If the classroom environment were not

conducive to this, Eleanor would not be able to rely on this coping strategy.

### Read Aloud

#### Vignettes

Charles was repeating a line from the story Blueberries for Sal by Robert McClosky during our redberry-picking adventure. The story's repeating words "kurplink," "kurplank," "kurplunk" were reproduced by Charles, as described in the publication, when he tossed berries into an empty tin. In the researcher's estimation, this behaviour indicated that he had enjoyed the story.

Advantageously, read-aloud was a well received activity for these students, both for selections dealing with the theme and others not directly related to the theme being explored. This worthwhile inclination may result from their cultural orientation to oral story telling through legends, or from the students lack of ease with reading themselves. Nevertheless, it was obvious through various read-aloud episodes that these students, like many students from previous years, enjoy being read to.

The selections from Them Days magazines were generally not tolerated well as read-aloud material. The exception was the article submitted by the researcher involving the Innu use of berries. The poems suggested were used for both read-aloud



purposes and also as a model for students to write their own poems related to the theme.

The researcher found that since many of the students may have limited exposure to classic children's stories usually associated with lower grade levels, very simple texts like fairy and folk tales could be approached at the elementary level with these students. These texts were better received by older students if they were read in an engaging but matter-of-fact fashion, rather than in a dramatic way that might catch the attention of younger children. Also it was found that these second language learners seemed to listen more attentively to stories which were read slowly, but not so slowly that the language sounded stilted or unnatural.

#### Using Predictable Literature

The story of The Little Brown Rabbit used in this theme was adapted from the well known classic The Little Red Hen. The language structure of the story is similar to the original. However, the animal characters and the plot were changed in the adapted version to make the story more culturally relevant to Innu students. Four animals the students were familiar with, a frog, dog, mouse and rabbit, were involved in making a redberry pie. Again, the story deviates from the original in that all the animals in the story agree to help. This deviation in the story line was

incorporated to reflect the Innu cultural value of helping others. This adapted story was originally written in English but was later translated in Innu-aimun for use as much needed first language curricular material.

Students responded well to the English version of the afore mentioned predictable and "culturally relevant" selection. The researcher noted that some students listened, while others read the selection independently, with great interest. The writer suggests that, while a story at this level is usually recommended for primary-aged children, these elementary grade, second language learners, enjoyed the familiarity of the culturally relevant content presented in a simple, easy to read text.

The predictable selections The Little Brown Rabbit and The Little Red Hen were analyzed. Specifically, the two versions of the story were compared and contrasted, with inferential level questions incorporated to focus the students' thinking.

#### Vignettes

By way of analysis the students were asked to write points about the two stories under the headings "same" and "different." Even Michael, the most capable reader at the time, could only offer one point on each side. After being asked to go back and re-examine the stories he was able to

come up with one more example for each category. Then he asked if he had written enough.

The remainder of the class struggled with the assignment independently, without writing anything, or beginning and scribbling out what they had written. Although some students seemed to have a vague idea of the similarities and differences in the texts, they were unable or unwilling to formulate the ideas in their own words. Instead, they relied on using phrases from each text which were, for the most part, the same or different.

The results seemed to indicate that more preliminary work was necessary before assigning this type of work in future. As more pre-writing discussion was deemed necessary, additional exploration of the story of The Little Red Hen was approached in isolation. The class was shown a film of the story and later given the text of the same story. Students were asked to list the similarities and the slight differences between the two accounts of the same stories. Most of the students present attempted the exercise by listing words from both stories which were the same or different. Since the students worked together many of the responses were the same. For the purposes of demonstrating the process involved, the class dictated the answers to the teacher who copied their responses onto the chalk board. The students' answers reflected that rather than stating the main ideas in the

story, the students were focusing on details. Instead of relating that the stories were similar because the animals were lazy and the hen made bread in both accounts, the students alluded to the differences in the physical settings. The question; "What was the same in the film as it was in the story?" was asked to the students. Someone answered "hen." Michael finally attempted to formulate the raw idea into a sentence. After some discussion he offered, "Two animals were the same." The hen and the cat were the same." Then the following sentence was formulated: "The pig, dog, duck and goose were different." Jayne said "cottage" eluding to the fact that there was a cottage in both versions. Someone else then said "flour," while another said "mill." When asked for other words that were the same "wheat" and "grain" were included by the students. The researcher then inquired to what the words offered pertained, and the students correctly answered that they related to making bread. A sentence was formulated "The little Red Hen made bread." After some questioning and guidance the class formulated; "The lazy animals did not get bread."

As with the first exercise on the story the class did not work as well independently as the researcher had expected. The comparing and contrasting of the two stories proved to be a difficult assignment for even the more capable students. This was somewhat of a surprise to the researcher given the

simplicity of the texts. The students either did not appear familiar this kind of analysis or they did not find this type of work interesting. Barwell (1981) suggests that native students do not do well with argumentative exercises. The researchers' experience has revealed that this group of students seems to work most diligently and comfortably at "seat work" activities. They seem to prefer to answers questions involving a single response, such as fill in the blank and multiple choice, as is required of them in the Sprint Reading Skills Program.

### Writing

When the students were first required to write, the researcher was approached with requests from students to supply correct spellings for words. Initially, spellings were offered. Gradually, the students were encouraged to use their developing knowledge of letter-sound relationship in attempting their own invented spellings. The researcher, as participant observer, circulated around the classroom, praising individual students attempts at invented spellings, no matter how rudimentary. It was the researcher's intention to reinforce that meaning, rather than word-perfect single answers, were valued. This concept needed a lot of reinforcement.

The need to use the Language Experience Approach with these older students was re-discovered, not only as a means of demonstrating the purpose and functions of writing, but also for the demonstration of simple conventions of language such as capitalization and punctuation, which proved to be problematic for most of the students attending.

Students were generally not comfortable with self-correction of their own work or that of their peers. They preferred to leave the task of correcting and guiding literacy development to the teacher. Some improvement seemed emerge between two of the students, Charles and Michael, who sometimes liked to collaborate and to read each other's work. They were also persuaded to write a comment on each other's work periodically. The commentaries usually took the form of a short positive message such as: "I liked your story." The students smiled when they received these responses.

One way the students would interact is through the use of dialogue journal. The students were interested in reading the comments written down by the researcher, not only for themselves, but also for others. This was especially evident when the dialogue journals were first introduced.

### Computers

Students were very aware of computer periods included on the classroom schedule, and they did not enjoy missing their

computer period for any reason. Initially, the students wanted merely to play games, since for many that has been their past experience and initial attraction to the computer. It was explained that game-playing would be permitted periodically. The students enjoyed playing a "pac-man" like race game designed for use with the theme by Mr. Jim Newton. The object of the game was to proceed from bush to bush, "picking" as many berries as possible. Primarily, however, the computers were used for writing during the theme. Specifically, the software program, "The Children's Writing and Publishing Center" was used. Much in the way of operation of the program and editing was offered to the students at first, as a means of demonstrating the functions of the program. Gradually, students were expected to write and edit stories at their own level. This sometimes required a number of computer sessions. Students seemed to enjoy seeing their finished product printed out. Some students were more willing to write using the computer than with pencil and paper.

### Learning Centers

Permanent learning centers were adapted to the theme. The centers provided the students opportunities for "hands-on" tasks through a non-threatening medium. Student generally enjoyed game-like activities such as berry (compound) word puzzles, riddles about the berries and the computer race game

mentioned earlier. It has been the researcher's experience this year, as in the past, that simple games are welcomed by both younger and older Innu students.

The viewing center, including pictures of berries and photos of local children involved in berry-picking excursions, made interesting material for the grade six students, as well as students from other grade levels. The listening center was also very well received as students seemed to enjoy using the audio equipment. Most students were accustomed to playing popular music on cassette tapes. While this center was not used for playing popular music during class time, the use of the listening center seemed to maintain a "recreational" appeal for the students.

### Summary

Many aspects of the "Berries" theme appeared to be of value and worth to the Innu students involved in the study. The specific features of the culturally relevant, whole language theme, which seem to work well with these students will be recounted in the next chapter.

While affective and language behaviours were noted throughout the development of the theme for attending students, a case study report was undertaken in order to document the language growth of the most regularly attending student over the course of the theme.



**Phase IV: Case Study**

Name: "Jayne"

Sex: Female

Age: 12

Grade: 6

School: Peenamin McKenzie School

**Introduction**

Jayne was the most regular attender during the first theme entitled "Berries" which extended from mid-September to December. The researcher was able to obtain only limited information about Jayne's literacy habits at home, since the home and school did not communicate directly during the time Jayne attended school. Jayne indicated on an informal assessment exercise that she read newspapers, magazines, posters and the T.V. guide. When asked to make mention of other usual reading material that had not been included, Jayne indicated that she read storybooks. However, it was noted by the researcher that Jayne was not responsive to the suggestion of bringing books from school home to read.

Jayne is the eldest of four half-brothers and sisters in a single parent family and shares a residence in the village of Sheshatshit with their mother and other relatives. During the theme, the researcher became aware of the fact that Jayne

assumed responsibility for baby-sitting her younger siblings many week-ends. Later, to Jayne's relief, circumstances changed freeing her from baby-sitting duties.

Jayne's school education at Peenamin McKenzie School has been in both the Innu and English streams. She is a capable student academically. According to the teacher of Innu-aimun, Jayne is considered quite capable in all areas of her own Native language. She also coped well with curricular material presented in English. Collaboration with Jayne's other half-time teacher confirmed the researchers observations that Jayne was able to listen attentively during instruction, and although she did not speak much in class, was considered a capable student. Quiet and reserved, she was non-demanding in the classroom and did not pose a discipline problem.

The emphasis in the evaluation of Jayne's progress during the "Berry" theme was based on continuous informal assessment of language use during the first theme by means of observation, interaction, and analysis as recommended by Marek, Howard et al. (1984).

### Observations

Observations in the areas of attitudinal behaviours as well as oral language, reading and writing will be addressed in this section.

Attitudinal

Jayne displayed somewhat despondent and pessimistic attitudes towards school and school related activities at first. On one of her first writing assignments to a pen pal Jayne wrote: "I hate school." For most of the theme Jayne did not often converse with other classmates. The only exception was her friend Krysten who attended only a short time at the beginning, and again towards the end of the theme.

The other half-time grade six teacher for Jayne's class substantiated the researchers observations that Jayne would sometimes become uncooperative when faced with school work that she was unable or unwilling to do. When disinclined to do her written work she would either refuse to write, scribble over her work or erase it. In these instances, Jayne would have to be prodded on to continue the assigned work.

Attitudinally, there were some improvements over the course of the theme. Jayne, who was generally apathetic towards school, showed her first spark of excitement during the cooking experiences involving berries. While usually choosing to stay on the periphery of class activities, Jayne was quite eager to get involved. She asked to participate in measuring and stirring the batter. The researcher noted that Jayne was one of the students who indicated interest in having a copy of the recipe to take home.

Jayne showed progress attitudinally during another "hands on" activity associated with Halloween. The class was shown a book about making masks, and were asked to select the type of mask they would later like to make. While most other students did not seem overly enthusiastic and did not seem to have a clear idea of which mask they would choose, Jayne promptly selected the type of mask she preferred to make, and quite persistently questioned the researcher as to when the class could engage in the mask-making activity.

Another noteworthy episode was recorded in a small group setting. Jayne was sitting at a table in a small group viewing magazines independently. Jayne held up and showed the researcher a picture that she found alarming. Jayne quietly gasped to express her surprise and then smiled at the researcher. This was the first time Jayne spontaneously shared something with the researcher. Such open displays of emotion were rare for Jayne.

#### Oral Language

Jayne was a very passive child, generally very reluctant to participate in class discussions. When she did respond she usually replied in one or two words. Her voice was almost inaudible, as she spoke very faintly in English, which was the language of instruction. She would normally not repeat her response if it was not heard the first time. Jayne's other half-time teacher concurred that Jayne was usually very quiet

and distant in class. In terms of oral skills, the researcher noted the quality of her responses improved during the course of the theme from non-responsiveness and one word answers for elicited questions to that of two-word and short phrase responses for both elicited and unelicited responses.

In introducing the story of The Great Big Enormous Turnip the researcher pointed out that the word "turnip" was very similar to the researcher's surname "Turpin." Jayne was overheard referring to the researcher as "The Great Big Enormous Turpin." The researcher felt this significant for Jayne as she did not usually share witty insights and observations in class - at least not in a language comprehensible to the researcher.

#### Reading

Although Jayne was a capable reader, she would not volunteer or agree to read aloud in class for most of the theme. It was in response to the aforementioned story, The Great Big Enormous Turnip, that Jayne read aloud for the first time in class. After students were invited to join in the reading of the predictable selection, the researcher was pleasantly surprised to note that Jayne took a chance and joined in where some other more capable readers had left off.

Jayne demonstrated a general interest in books and reading in school. In one of her writing assignment about herself, she described herself as liking to read. She enjoyed

working independently through the Sprint Reading Skills Series. She liked to browse at the Reading Center in the classroom whenever the opportunity arose. Although she would examine more difficult texts, she would often change book selections, opting for easy reading books. Jayne's own criteria for evaluating her enjoyment of a story seemed to depend on the difficulty of the book. She would often indicate orally, and in writing, that she enjoyed a particular story because it was easy to read, or short in length. For most of the theme, the selection of reading choices were less than challenging for Jayne.

Towards the end of the term, Jayne's book selections became more sophisticated. When a complimentary book order was sent to the class, Jayne displayed an added interest in the novels. At the time, Jayne was involved with babysitting, and made mention of it on occasion in her personal writing (Appendix I). The researcher suggested she begin a book in a series entitled The Babysitters Club, Mystery # 1 by Ann Martin. This was definitely a case of "the right book, in the right hands, at the right time," for Jayne since a heightened interest in books seemed to have developed. Jayne avidly read the novel at every opportunity, and appeared pleasantly surprised to learn that she could occasionally extend this individual reading time instead of working within the prescribed reading skills series. In the opinion of the

researcher, to interrupt students in the process of authentic reading experiences in order to engage them in practice exercises is akin to the medical analogy of waking someone to give them a sleeping pill!

Having completed the book, Jayne indicated verbally in conference that she had understood the story. The re-telling of the book could be termed a "book cover" account. Jayne communicated her knowledge of the story's main characters and basic plot. The synopsis was brief.

The next book in the series was begun by Jayne with the same interest as the first. However, the Christmas break interrupted the reading of this book because, as mentioned earlier, Jayne was not inclined to taking books home to read. After Jayne returned she had lost interest in it. This was considered a regression for Jayne who had demonstrated previously that she was able to cope with, and sustain interest in reading at this level.

#### Writing

Jayne's English writing skills needed improvement. This assertion was supported throughout the theme by Jayne's reluctance to write, as was especially apparent at the beginning of the theme.

Vignette

Near the beginning of the theme Jayne and her friend Krysten would not attempt their journal writing assignment. They were more interested in talking. The researcher suggested that the two "pass notes" instead of talking. Seemingly surprised by the suggestion of this mode of writing in the classroom, the two reluctantly began to write independently. Jayne produced only a couple of short sentences during the forty minute period.

Jayne would sometimes make a bored groaning noise when writing activities were suggested. Jayne ordinarily had little writing to show for her time. The other half-time teacher in the class also remarked that Jayne would not offer a lot of writing associated with her other school subjects. It seemed Jayne experienced trouble getting started with writing, and on a few occasions would sometimes not even venture to write. As a stalling tactic she sometimes spent an unnecessarily extended amount of time copying the writing assignment from the chalkboard.

On other occasions, however, she would begin to write after a time. In these instances she would be observed working on a short paragraph. However, when the time came to collect the sample it was noted that Jayne had erased or scribbled over the entirety of her efforts. The problem did



not seem to be associated with her penmanship. Both her handwriting and printing were acceptable. From observations of various writing samples, it began to become apparent that Jayne was not comfortable as a writer of her second language.

Jayne was disinclined to share her reading or discuss her written ideas with others. She preferred to have the teacher read her writing silently rather than have it read aloud or to read it aloud herself. She was not usually willing to edit and would sometimes reject suggestions to revise, generally relying on the researcher to make suggestions for modifications.

Jayne produced texts in which virtually all words used were known spellings. She was also able to spell many words correctly. However, it appeared that Jayne was overly dependant on using only known spelling words in her writing, which tends to limit children's writing. She did not, however, seem overly concerned with conventions like punctuation and capitalization.

Throughout the execution of the first theme, however, Jayne attempted to create some invented spellings, many of which were similar to the conventional spelling. Her first overt attempt at invented spelling transpired during the writing of the following poem. Jayne had asked to have the word "delicious" spelled. She was encouraged to attempt the spelling on her own. Jayne offered the word "Delisours" which

was visually similar to the conventional spelling in length and form, and was included meaningfully.

\* Student's Work:

Redberries

are good to eat

are fun to eat

and they tast Delisours

\* This and other student samples in this report are reproductions of the child's work. Identifying details have been changed to further protect the anonymity of the individual. However, the grammatical structure, spellings and use of punctuation have not been changed.

Interestingly, Jayne also included a "y" in the spelling of her name, changing the spelling from the original. This spelling change could have resulted from her friend Krysten previously changing the original spelling of her name by substituting a "y" for an "i". The researcher felt this was a significant development since it seemed to show that Jayne was accepting some of the spirit of invented spelling on a personal level. The inclusion of invented spellings were felt to be important for Jayne in order for her to expand her written composition to include both known and invented spellings.

### Interactions

Interactions with Jayne in various settings involving both the verbal and written domain will be presented in this section.

#### Group Work

Jayne was not comfortable with the expressive (i.e., speaking and writing) forms of her second language. She was a little more responsive in her own Native language. She dialogued freely in her Native language with her friend Krysten when the latter attended. For both languages Jayne was generally more verbally responsive in a small group as opposed to a larger one.

#### Vignette

The students were asked to compare and contrast the stories The Little Red Hen and the adapted version entitled The Little Brown Rabbit.

Jayne began, and later scribbled over her attempts. After she made another attempt which read: "Once upon a time there was a little...." She seemed to be stuck there. Perhaps she was trying to indicate that the stories began the same way or that the language in the stories was very similar. Since little progress was being observed with the students on an individual level, the students were invited to work together in order to help each other generate ideas.

Jayne, Krysten and Marianne agreed to work together in a small group. The students talked amongst themselves in Innu-aimun, occasionally reverting to English for words such as "pie" which provided the researcher one means of determining that the students discussions were "on task." Jayne was flipping through her texts which was another indication that the discussion was about the assignment.

The three girls produced similar samples since they had copied the other's work. Jayne's sample consisted of fragmented excerpts without punctuation from both texts. The researcher surmised that Jayne and the students seemed to have at least a vague idea of the similarities and differences in the texts. However, it appeared that since they were unable or unwilling to formulate the ideas in their own words, they relied on using phrases which were for the most part, the same or different in each text. The results indicated that more preliminary work was necessary before being assigned future work of this nature.

The students were finally asked to tell which story, The Little Red Hen or The Little Brown Rabbit, reflected the "Innu way." Jayne was able to correctly communicate in writing that the latter was the story that best reflected the Innu way.

Replica of student Work:

Question: We read the stories The Little Red Hen and The Little Brown Rabbit. Which one tells of the Innu way? Why?

Jayne's Response: The Little Brown Rabbit Because they were in the country and they pick berries.

Individual Work

Collaboration with her other half-time teacher supported the researcher's observation that Jayne was most comfortable with independent or "seat work" activities. Jayne seemed to enjoy working independently at her own pace at both Math and with The Sprint Reading Skills Program. Due to the multitude of age and ability levels within the class, both of the aforementioned programs predominantly consisted of independent seatwork whereby little speaking or writing was required.

She did not usually solicit help from others in the classroom except to occasionally call on the researcher to supply a word for her writing. She was not inclined to discuss her work with the researcher and would also decline suggestions to discuss her work with other classmates. Jayne shunned any attention that singled her out, even praise or encouragement. Being very self-conscious, Jayne would hide her head in her arms to reveal her uncomfortableness with the unwanted attention.

### Collaboration

Jayne's shyness made it very hard for the researcher to conference with Jayne in the routine manner. Since getting Jayne to overtly discuss her progress was difficult, a less intrusive and less explicit mode that was more comfortable for Jayne was employed. Jayne was interested in reading the observational comments and anecdotal records kept on her by the researcher in the class. The researcher accepted this as a type of self-evaluation for Jayne in terms of getting feedback on her progress, and tried to keep comments positive. However, when asked if she had any questions about anything written or if she wanted to discuss the content of the observations, Jayne always declined the offer.

### Written dialogue

Another manner of interacting with Jayne was through the use of the dialogue journal whereby the students and the researcher would respond to each other in the written mode. Jayne was generally better able to extend her writing beyond the usual minimal reply through the use of written dialogue. Also, this written mode seemed a less disconcerting one for Jayne. She responded more revealingly in the written mode when probed. Jayne's response recounting her preference between the book and movie version of the story of The Headless Horseman, which was associated with Halloween, was

extended through the use of written questions to direct her thinking as displayed in the following sample.

Reproduction:

Researcher writes: Which version of the Headless Horseman  
did you enjoy most?

Jayne writes: the film. Because it is longer than the  
book.

Researcher writes: O.K. Any other reasons you enjoyed the  
film more?

Jayne writes: and its funny.

Researcher writes: What part is funniest?

Jayne writes: the man who went home in the night

Researcher writes: Who is the man?

Jayne writes: Icabod Crane

Researcher writes: Why is that part funny?

Jayne writes: Because he was scared.

Researcher writes: Good!

The use of direct questioning also served to direct Jayne's thinking in recall of stories. In her written account of the story Rosie's Visit Jayne seemed to become so caught up in details that she became overwhelmed and was unable to complete the assignment. However, with the structure of guided questions, Jayne was able to reveal a

great deal more about the story than previously indicated (Appendix J).

### Analysis

Analysis of reading and writing, followed by a summary and implications will be presented in the following section.

#### Reading Inventory

Using the exercise from the Nelson Reading Workbook entitled "Things to Read" Jayne indicated that she read newspapers, magazines, T.V. guides, posters and storybooks. Other possible reading material like cookbooks, birthday cards and licence plates were not included as probable reading material for Jayne.

#### Modified Miscue Analysis

The first miscue analysis carried out with Jayne had to be discounted due to poor audio quality. For the second miscue analysis executed, an Aesop's fable from the grade five Networks reader Ripple Effects entitled "The Fox and the Grapes" was used. This was an unseen passage for Jayne who did not work out of that program the previous year. This selection was not about berries specifically. However, since grapes are somewhat related to berries they would be considered in keeping with the theme. It should be noted that "grape" is classified as a berry in Innu-aimun.



When Jayne was introduced to the selection she was told that the selection was a fable similar to previously introduced fable selections. Jayne was asked to read the selection aloud as best she could. On encountering unknown words, Jayne was advised to first attempt to guess the word. If that were not possible, it was recommended she skip the unknown word(s). She was further instructed that she would later be expected to retell the story in her own words. The moral of the story, which was included at the bottom of the page, was covered from Jayne's sight at first.

Jayne read the selection rather quickly in a barely audible fashion. She was asked to speak up on a couple of occasions during the reading, but continued to read softly and quickly. It was clear that Jayne was not comfortable with this assignment. The types of miscues portrayed by Jayne during the reading of this passage were recorded (Appendix K).

Analysis of the sample reflects that 62% of the miscues were supportive of meaning which indicates that Jayne primarily views reading as a meaning-getting process. Visually similar words like "kicked" for "licked" and "look" for "took" were promptly self-corrected by Jayne after she realized that they did not fit semantically in the text. This demonstrated that Jayne was searching to make sense in her reading.

Various substitutions noted, such as "and" for "but" and "least" for "last," did not detract from the meaning of the text. Subsequent miscues that also did not detract from the meaning-getting process during the reading were the repeated words recorded. The majority of the insertions recorded were meaningful, as revealed by this sentence from the selection; "Well, next time I won't miss," the Fox said (p. 55). Jayne added the word "it" to the end of the dialogue which added to, rather than detracted from, the intended meaning. In this instance Jayne was bringing her developing knowledge of the English language to bear on the reading of the text.

One strategy that Jayne employed for predicting unknown words was focusing on the initial consonant and blends. The unknown words "trotting" and "trailed" were attempted with a "tr..." response, and the word "vain" was approached with just the sounding out of the initial consonant "v." It appears in these cases that Jayne used only the initial sounds, apparently neglecting to focus on either the middle or ending of the word. In another instance, however, Jayne attempted the unknown word "grapevine" with the non-word "grapevin" which shows that she could attempt word endings of some unknown words.

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the total number of miscues were considered omissions. The researcher surmised that many of these "omissions" may actually have been unheard responses

that were offered too softly to be detected. This assumption is supported by the fact that some of the omissions were "low imagery" words (e.g. the; on; with; he) which would not be expected to be problematic for Jayne. Since these responses could not be heard, they were considered omissions. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the unheard omissions were considered non-meaningful and possibly contributed to a higher percentage of non-meaningful responses than was actually indicative of Jayne's competency on a passage at this level. The distribution of miscues are presented in Table 2.

After reading the story, Jayne seemed reluctant to retell it to the teacher. Prompting questions such as: "Tell me as much as you can about the story," were met with no response from Jayne. In an attempt to get Jayne started, she was directed to the story's illustration. She began: "The fox was hungry. He tried to eat the grapes." (This response could be derived from the picture clues). When encouraged to continue, Jayne merely repeated her previous response. It was not until specific questions were asked about the piece that Jayne indicated a more thorough understanding of the story. The following is a transcription of an on-going questioning session:

Researcher: Did he get the grapes?  
Jayne: No. (correct literal level answer)  
Researcher: Why not?

**TABLE 2**  
**Distribution of Miscues**

Omissions		Visually Similar Words (form & length)	Non Word	Initial Consonant	Substitutions		Self-Corrections		Total Miscues	Number of Meaningful Miscues	Number of Non-Meaningful Miscues
M	NM				M	NM	S	US			
branch	ripe	grape for grapes		tr... (for trotting)	and	and	autumn		21	13	8
on	the				but		omitted				
with	on	vin for vine	vin	v...(for vain)	were		kicked for				
he	the				are		licked				
					least		look for				
					last		took				

Key: M = Meaningful Attempt      S = Successful Attempt  
 NM = Nonmeaningful Attempt      US = Unsuccessful Attempt

- Jayne: Because they were too high. (correct literal level answer)
- Researcher: What happened at the end of the story?
- Jayne: He left them. (correct literal level answer)
- Researcher: What did he (fox) say at the end of the story?
- Jayne: They were probably sour. (correct literal level answer)
- Researcher: Why do you think he said that?
- Jayne: 'Cause he was mad. (correct inferential level response)
- Researcher: How many times did the fox try to get the grapes?
- Jayne: Five times. (correct literal level answer)
- Researcher: Some of the other fables we did before had a moral or lesson behind them. What do you think is the lesson behind this story?
- Jayne: Don't know. (unsatisfactory inferential level response)
- Researcher: Turn back and read the moral at the bottom of the page. Do you know what that means?
- Jayne: No. (unsatisfactory inferential level response)
- Researcher: Did you enjoy the story?
- Jayne: Yes. (evaluative response)
- Researcher: Why?

Jayne:           Because it was too short. (evaluative response)

Researcher:     You **liked** it because it was too short?

Jayne:           Yes. (evaluative response)

Jayne's comprehension score was 75% (6/8 questions answered correctly) based on both factual and inferential questions. No more than one word-recognition errors in every twenty words was evidenced. Jayne's level of competence on this passage would be estimated at her instructional level. According to Bond and Tinker (1973), this level suggests successful performance in a typical classroom setting where both personal direction and structured instructional atmosphere are supplied by one or more teachers. This level of performance would be estimated by the researcher to be in the upper "range" of the class. While a couple of attending students were more competent than Jayne, she would be considered more competent the majority of attending students.

It was clear from Jayne's answers to specific questions about the story that she knew more about the story than she was willing or able to tell unaided. That understanding seemed to be primarily limited to the literal level, which comprised the majority of the questions. However, she did attempt to analyze the meaning of the text at the inferential level on one occasion. This occurred when she correctly

inferred that the fox said the grapes were sour because he was mad that he couldn't reach them. She indicated that she did not understand the moral even when it was explicitly written out for her. Comprehension may have been impaired as a result of a miscue in reading, consisting of an non-meaningful insertion. It is also likely that Jayne is not accustomed to thinking about stories in a European moral sense due to her cultural experience with legends. Horwood (1981) who recorded the legends of the Innu in the book Tales of the Labrador Indians relates that: "there is little trace of moral sense in any of the folk tales. To a large degree, the right and wrong are equated with success" (p. 19).

#### Writing Sample Comparison

The following two samples illustrate the differences between Jayne's writing in the Native and second language mediums. Both samples were produced after berry-picking excursions. The first was produced in the Native language for the teacher of Innu-aimun after accompanying the class on a blueberry picking excursion. The second sample was produced for the researcher in response to a redberry-picking field trip. The language required for the second sample was English.

Sample #1: (English translation)

I went picking berries up to Nine Mile Mark. There were lots of berries - blueberries and there were lots of flies too. I went on the bus and the next day we had to clean the berries and we made cupcakes and they were so good. When I was picking berries we went up the hill. I and Pien and Paula went up the hill - up the statue of Mary. We ate a little bit of berries and we sat down and looked up there. We saw the statue of Mary.

Sample #2: (Reproduction of English Original)

This morning the class went berry picking  
We picked lots of redberries. On the way back to school we ate cake. The buss had a flat tire.  
We went back to school.

Analysis of Writing Samples

Both of these samples were extracted in response to similar experiences. The first was produced for the teacher of Innu-aimun in the child's Native language. The second sample was produced for the researcher the same day as the excursion. The sample was produced completely independently in English.

A comparison of both samples reveals that the sample produced in the child's Native language was superior in both quality and quantity to that of the English medium. While the



second sample presented the events more sequentially, the first sample provided many more particulars involving people, places and events. An "affective" quality was detected in this phrase referring to the cupcakes; "they were so good." The second sample provided merely a scanty outline of events, and was devoid of supporting details.

Possible explanation for the differences in the two samples may simply be that it is easier and more natural for Jayne to formulate ideas in her Native language rather than a second language. Jayne may also have been more willing to relate in writing, as well as in speaking, to a fellow Native person from her own community, rather than from someone outside her culture.

Also, more experiences were identified with the first sample which involved not only the picking, but also the cleaning and cooking experiences. Jayne had expressed interest in baking through her dialogue journal earlier in the year (Appendix L). Jayne also indicated through the use of the dialogue journal that picking berries and baking pie were the most enjoyable part of the Berry theme for her (Appendix M). The first sample in Innu-aimun, then, seemed to be produced in response to more interesting experiences for Jayne.

The English sample was obtained the same day as the field trip. Jayne may have considered the request to write directly

after the outing somewhat disappointing, resulting in a less than enthusiastic response to the assignment. At this point, there were fewer interesting experiences to report in the second as opposed to the first sample. It was also evidenced in Jayne's class journals that descriptions of baby-sitting activities were not given as much effort as other, seemingly more desirable, week-end activities (Appendix I).

#### Process Writing

The self-made text that Jayne produced indicates that Jayne has much potential for growth in writing. Typically, Jayne erased her first attempt and started over. The next attempt contained a quarter page account of a berry-picking trip which she took with her grandparents and two friends. The story was presented in sequential order and included such details as people, places and a simple plot. The plot provided a sense of a beginning, middle and an end. Some dialogue was incorporated. Each word was spelled correctly. Since this piece was intended for publication, it was proposed that Jayne elaborate on the ending and tell what use her grandmother made of the berries. However, Jayne declined to act upon this suggestion.

First Draft: One day my Grand parents went to nine miles I come with them and the next morning I asked nancy Rich and Rose Rich to come pick berries with me and they said yes we

found lots of berries we were gone about Two hours and then we lost nancy's coat we looked for it an hour after we found it we went home. My grandmother cooked the berries.

The two periods used in the eight line, sixty-nine word narrative, were placed towards the end of the script. Jayne's sample contained proper use of capitalization at the beginning of sentences. Use of capitalization for names was used appropriately in some cases. The spelling of the names, "nancy Rich," and later "Rose Rich," reflects Jayne's developing knowledge of the use of capital letters for proper names.

Two areas of concern were identified by the researcher and later explored with Jayne; namely punctuation and capitalization. The use of quotation marks was not pursued with Jayne at this time. Most needed to enhance the meaning of the story was the use of periods. The text was read aloud to Jayne, who indicated to the researcher when one sentence ended and another began. Attention to the use of capitalization at the beginning of sentences was not mentioned. However, capitalization for proper names and places was addressed.

Nevertheless, in copying the text in booklet form, Jayne was able to include capitalization at the beginnings of many newly created sentences. When prompted she could correct the omitted capitalization. With the exception of one instance,

Jayne independently left out connecting words like "and" in beginning new sentences which were previously connected. Also, capitalization at the beginning of most newly constructed sentences was present during the actual re-writing of the text in the booklet. Periods and accompanying capitalization were also included.

Final Draft: One day my grandparents went to Nine Miles. I come with them. The next morning I asked Nancy Rich and Rose Rich to come pick berries with me. They said yes. We found lots of berries. We were gone about Two hours. And we lost nancy's coat. After we found nancy's coat we went home. My Grandmother cooked the berries.

It was clear that Jayne knew much more about the conventions of writing than she revealed in her first draft. Also, she was able to take some responsibility for her own literacy development by independently self-correcting many "errors."

Jayne was helped to determine which parts of the story best went together for illustration purposes. When prompted she was also able to chose the appropriate title, "Picking Redberries" to name her story. The accompanying illustrations were appropriate for the text and the use of color and details would seem to indicate that Jayne took some pride in this

project. However, she later identified writing and drawing as the least enjoyable part of the theme for her (Appendix M).

### Checklist

Jayne was evaluated relative to the checklist of oral, reading and writing behaviour as well as various skills and concepts developed for use with the theme (Appendix F).

### Receptive language

Jayne experienced no problems with the listening/reading content and concepts presented within the theme. Indeed, the material was well within her independent level, which, according to Bond and Tinker (1973), approximates the level at which the child can do "extensive supplementary reading for enjoyment or for information in line with his interests" (p. 220). This is supported by Jayne's attention during read aloud sessions and her ability to answer questions about the content. Jayne was able to read the names of berries both in isolation and within the context of the varied reading material associated with the theme.

As far as reading itself was concerned, Jayne was generally reluctant to read aloud even simpler texts that were at her independent level. The sole example of risk-taking noted with reading aloud was when she volunteered to join in the reading of a predictable selection. This was a significant milestone for Jayne who was usually shy about participating in group activities.

### Expressive Language

Throughout the presentation of the theme Jayne's receptive language of listening and reading were not causing her any problems. Expressive language (i.e., speaking and writing) were more problematic for Jayne. She was generally reluctant to participate verbally for most of the theme. However, the quality of her responses improved from a single word answer to the phrase level, as was evidenced in the researcher's continuous anecdotal records of responses during the course of the theme. There was little evidence of self initiated questioning on Jayne's part. Her aptitude for writing in English did not match that of her reading. She would often produce very little to analyze in her English writing samples. Part of the problem was her felt need to erase after she had written. Other clues, such as an audible sigh when asked to write, and unreceptiveness to editing her writing and sharing it with others, lead the researcher to surmise that writing in her second language was not a valued or enjoyable experience for Jayne.

She was able to "piggy-back" or adapt a simple predictable text to make it fit with the theme. The class was asked to think about how to change the text of the traditional story of The Great Big Enormous Turnip into a story about berries. It was suggested that this could be done simply by substituting the word "berry" for the word "turnip" throughout

the text. Jayne was able to innovate by extending the general idea to that of the "redberry" (Appendix N).

As far as writing was concerned, Jayne generally seemed to enjoy working at the computer and liked to receive the print-out of her published piece. She was not as enthusiastic about editing on the computer, and usually opted to delete the entire story and begin again, rather than amend specific parts of the document. It should be noted, however, that the quality of Jayne's work on the computer seemed dependent on whether or not the writing assignment was desirable to her.

In one instance, towards the end of the theme, the class was asked to write a letter to Santa. Jayne may have felt this request too juvenile for her. In any case, her writing sample would suggest that she was less than enthusiastic about the assignment. She typed:

Dear Santa

For Christmas I want camera and a watch.

your friend

Jayne

The above document contrasts greatly to the following, seemingly more favourable, exercise for Jayne which was printed for a Religious Education assignment. The class was asked to draw a picture about different aspects of their life, as was demonstrated for a fictional character in the Religion

text. Later they were asked to write a story based on the pictures included. Jayne seemed to enjoy this activity. She offered:

My name is Jayne Charlotte Rich. I live in Sheshatshit Labrador. I am twelve years old. I am in grade six I go to School at Peenamin Mckenzie. I like to watch video tapes. My Birthday is August 21 I have a friend named Krysten Anne Nuna. I like to read books. I like school. I like to listen to a radio.

### Skills

Jayne experienced no problems mastering any of the skills introduced and/or reinforced during the execution of the berry theme. Her developing knowledge of the uses of capital letters and punctuation was refined during the course of the theme. This was evidenced in the story of the berry-picking trip that was later made into book form. She had not yet begun to attempt quotation marks. Although Jayne was in the habit of writing and erasing, her actual skills in both cursive and manuscript handwriting were fine. She preferred printing to writing. A gradual trend towards invented spellings was evidenced. She was able to spell many words, including the names of berries.



### Summary

Jayne progressed through the course of the "Berries" theme in all areas of language behaviour as well within the affective domain. Unfortunately, due to Jayne's irregular attendance pattern beyond the first theme, the researcher was unable to extend the evaluation process.

In the expressive realm, her extreme reluctance in both verbal and written expression lessened somewhat. Her one word responses later expanded to phrase level. Although Jayne was not a zealous writer, she showed much potential for improvement. Perhaps the most significant indicator of this potential is that she is considered a competent writer in her first language, Innu-aimun. This shows she is aware of the purpose and functions of writing. Also, Jayne could spell many words used in composition. Occasionally she experimented with invented spellings, many of which were close approximations of the conventional spelling. The self-made text that Jayne produced demonstrated that she had control over the beginning, middle and ending in writing. She was able to bring her developing knowledge of conventions such as punctuation and capitalization to bear on the writing situation. She also self-corrected her "errors" after only minimal guidance in her self-made text, indicating that she was beginning to take more responsibility for her own literacy development.

Jayne's strengths appeared to lie within the realm of receptive language in English. She had no difficulty with the content of the theme since the level of the material was observed to be well within her independent listening level. She was able to listen attentively and with interest during the theme, as was also evidenced with most other curricular areas. The readability of the content of the theme for Jayne, however, was perceived to be different from that of other school subjects. While the material in the prescribed texts would be estimated to be above Jayne's independent reading level, the content of the theme was estimated to be well within her independent reading level. This may explain why the only time Jayne read aloud in class, as far as the researcher could ascertain, was in response to a predictable selection associated with the theme.

Since Jayne's perceived weakness seemed to lie with speaking and writing in English, she needs to be encouraged to take more risks with her expressive language. This can only be accomplished through a supportive and nurturing environment whereby the language that Jayne produces in her second language is accepted, with the emphasis on the meaning rather than the form. Jayne can be further helped to attempt taking risks to bring her expressive language closer to that of her receptive language. The fact that Jayne, who was very reserved, could venture to read aloud when supported through

the use of predictable materials confirms that there is much potential for growth when ample support is granted. Some predictable selections were also effectively used as a "springboard" to extend Jayne's own writing, as with her story of The Great Big Enormous Redberry.

The modified miscue analysis carried out with Jayne indicates that Jayne primarily views reading as a meaning-seeking process. This was revealed by a greater number of meaningful miscues than non-meaningful miscues, and an ability level estimated at the instructional level. Most unknown words encountered by Jayne during the reading were dealt with by either omitting them or attempting to sound them out by focusing on the initial consonant or blend. Jayne needs to be supported in attempting unknown words rather than merely omitting them. She further needs to combine her use of initial consonants and blends with both semantic and syntactic cues to aid her in attempting unknown words. In addition to being assisted to take risks at the word level, Jayne needs guidance and support in attempting answers to questions beyond a single-word response.

Her comprehension of a passage from the grade five level basal reader was estimated to be at Jayne's instructional level. This level of performance, although one grade level lower than the actual grade placement, is judged by the

researcher to be satisfactory performance for Jayne who was functioning in a second language.

Although little reading seems to be undertaken at home, Jayne is a capable reader who is able to seek and glean meaning from the printed word. Jayne's interest in sustained silent reading began to flourish for a time during the course of the theme, which indicated that Jayne was beginning to take an active role in her own literacy development by reading on her own. This interest needs to be fostered in the classroom by affording Jayne the time and preferred materials to read on her own, since it is only through actual reading that skills and interests in reading are cultivated (Smith, 1978).

Attitudinally, Jayne seemed to awaken in response to certain activities during the course of the theme, such as picking and cooking berries. She also appreciated other "hands-on" activities performed during other types of school activities, as evidenced in making masks for Halloween. It seemed that Jayne was more responsive to activities which matched her interests and experiences. Specifically, Jayne seemed to respond more favourably to school assignments which were more personally and/or culturally relevant to her. It was gratifying for the researcher to note in Jayne an enthusiasm during these activities that did not usually surface within the classroom.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the findings reported previously and expand upon their significance. The use and evaluation of the culturally relevant whole language theme, "Berries," will be addressed with reference to the students' reaction to the theme in general, and the case study participant's language and behavioral growth specifically. Implications will be drawn from the discussion of the literature and a number of recommendations will be made for the incorporation of culturally relevant whole language themes with Innu students.

#### **Utilization of the Theme**

The inclusion of the culturally relevant, whole language theme, "Berries," appeared to be of interest, and of value, to the students involved in this study. The researcher's personal bias regarding the use of the "Berries" theme may have been imparted to the students, resulting in increased student interest and involvement. Nevertheless, many aspects of the whole language approach were deemed suitable for Native education in general, and for the teaching/learning situation at Peenamin McKenzie School, specifically.

The philosophy of whole language would seem to suit Native learning styles in that the approach is "warm" (i.e., offering a supportive environment for risk-taking, where the child's language is accepted) but "demanding" (i.e., moving towards refining and extending existing language competence) as Kleinfeild (1975) recommends. Furthermore, the concrete, "hands-on" aspects of the culturally relevant theme, such as picking, preparing and eating berries, lend themselves more readily to the establishment of closer personal relationships with the students, also recommended of educators for Native students (Kleinfeild, 1975; Dumont, 1972). Moreover, these experiences were extremely well received by students, as were other opportunities to leave the confines of the school during the course of the theme. These experiences also provided the impetus for various language related activities (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Jayne, like many other students, was a little more open and responsive during the life skills component of the theme than in the structured classroom setting. She too appreciated the opportunities to go outdoors.

While the conduct of Jayne, as an individual, cannot be generalized to all Innu students, some of the behaviour patterns displayed by Jayne have been observed in other students in the classroom, and by other observers of Native students. Forester and Little Soldier (1980), for example,

referred to the "passivity" of the Native student. Schalm (1967) in Leith and Slentz (1984) related that Indian children answered questions as briefly as possible and seldom volunteered information or answered questions. Dumont (1972) observed that classrooms that emphasize teacher dominance, formal lecturing, spotlighting (singling students out) produce what she calls "the mask of silence." Phillips (1983) concluded that the school's tendency to isolate control in the hands of the instructor caused Native students resistance and lack of participation. The quiet pessimism displayed by Jayne during most of the theme can be interpreted as a form of resistance alluded to by the aforementioned researchers.

Jayne, and a number of other students, needed a great deal of support in taking risks in the classroom. Heald-Taylor (1986) relates that encouraging the older student to take risks and attempt writing is a challenge, as it is difficult for some to overcome previous educational values that a piece of writing must be absolutely correct. Barwell (1981) notes that cultural and linguistic differences make Indian students particularly concerned with mechanical correctness, which impedes writing fluency. According to Barwell (1981), Native students often think they are poor writers and therefore tend to worry excessively over details; editing occurs prematurely, and the content of their editing is concerned with superficial correctness rather than with

design or thought. He concluded that their editing may become a strategy for avoiding writing. This description characterizes Jayne's writing behavior for most of the theme. Jayne's writing samples, however, also exemplify how one Innu child began to "risk-take" through the use of various whole language strategies employed throughout the theme, such as the use of predictable materials, invented spellings and the dialogue journal.

The incorporation of a dialogue journal, where teacher and students communicated back and forth in writing, helped to stretch the students writing beyond a single minimal response. Preliminary discussion before the writing event, and the use of the Language Experience Approach with these students was initially underestimated by the researcher as a means of extending language fluency for these second language learners. Discussion helps extend the child's oral English language facility, as does the use of the LEA.

While having students partake in class discussion was generally problematic for the researcher, an increase in the amount of talk generated in the classroom during the execution of the "Berries" theme was evidenced. The researcher may have expected more verbal response from students during the execution of the culturally relevant theme over that for other school subjects which are generally unrelated to the students' background of experience and language competency, thereby



demanding increased participation. Nevertheless, the researcher feels that increased student response would be a worthwhile goal to continue to strive towards since speaking, listening, reading and writing are interrelated, and growth in one area invariably affects growth in other areas.

Like Jayne, most students seemed to prefer "seatwork" activities over discussion-oriented activities in the classroom. They generally liked to work out of the Sprint Reading Skills Series and the Math program which consisted primarily of a "workbook" approach requiring minimal listening, speaking, reading and writing. The students were usually less comfortable answering questions having a high degree of ambiguity. They may be unaccustomed to answering these types of questions due to overreliance on traditional workbook exercises which require a single answer. Klienfield (1975) in Leith and Slentz (1984) also found that shy Native students frequently chose the most highly structured learning task such as filling in the blanks when presented with learning options. Barwell (1981) explains that while description and narration come easier for students whose tradition is oral, most difficult for Indian students is comparison and argumentation because of a more harmonious sense of order that views certain Western cognitive processes (cause and effect, comparison/ contrast, Aristotelian logic) as unnecessarily complicated and even untruthful. The

researcher is suggesting these Innu students may bring a different orientation towards language use than is often expected by the non-Native teacher in the classroom. While this is speculation, a study similar to that of Heath (1983), whereby the patterns of language use in the community were determined and incorporated in teaching practices, would be useful in verifying these assumptions for Sheshatshit.

The researcher's experience concurs with that of proponents of the whole language approach, such as Heald-Taylor (1986), who claim that students of many different abilities can respond within a theme. A language program featuring such flexibility is very important for Peenamin McKenzie School, since a range varying linguistic, age and ability levels are usually evidenced within the single grade levels. During the course of the "Berries" theme, for example, many differing age groups, as well as varying levels of linguistic and intellectual abilities, were included at their own level of competency. This feature was well demonstrated through the use of the "adapted" predictable reading selections. For less capable students, the predictable selections provided the support needed to attempt reading in choral and later individual reading. For more capable, albeit reluctant readers, like Jayne, the predictable texts contributed to their ability to occasionally contribute to read-aloud sessions. The practice of adapting predictable

selections to be more "culturally relevant" was one approach that was successfully incorporated in the classroom, and one with which the students responded with great interest.

The whole language approach would seem to suit the school in Sheshatshit, considering the current attendance patterns of most students. While many traditional approaches to language learning, as well as other areas of the curriculum, are organized around sequential skills development which would undoubtedly leave "gaps" in learning for irregular attending students, whole language learning is not. Irregularly attending students would therefore be included in holistic reading and writing activities associated with the theme in progress, while developing skills in context as the need arose. Additionally, smaller numbers of attending would allow more individualized instruction at the students' own level of competency. Also, since the sound-symbol relationship is different in English and Innu-aimun, making the acquisition of English phonetics more problematic, a whole language program which focuses on meaning, rather letter-sound and other discrete skills in isolation, would appear to be a more effective approach.

One perceived problem with the utilization of the culturally relevant themes in second language classes is the potential overlap with the content presented in Innu language

class. While there is no mandated program for the teaching of Innu-aimun, it would be fair to say that the Innu language classes offer much in the way of "culturally relevant" content, since the teaching of the culture and the language are rather interdependent.

The researcher must clarify, however, that it was not her intention to attempt to actually "teach" Native culture to Innu students, since that may be only credibly performed by a Native person who has indigenous knowledge and experience to transfer. It was the mandate of the researcher to present and evaluate the use of a culturally relevant, whole language theme reflecting Innu lifestyle and experience with which the students could relate. An important objective in offering the culturally relevant theme was to provide purposeful and meaningful opportunities for language development while attempting to convey to students that their culture and experiences are valued, worthy and necessary inclusions in the school curriculum. In order for this goal to be realized, the assistance and consultation of both Native and non-Native resource persons from the Sheshatshit area was required. Future development of other culturally relevant themes would also require the aid of Native resource persons who have the special knowledge and understanding of the culture to share. Phillips (1983) further recommends that culturally relevant

materials would be much more effective if taught or clarified by Native teachers who are in a position to elaborate on such materials.

Also, the time-tabling for the theme "Berries," designated for three periods per six day cycle, was found to be somewhat disjointed and drawn out. Longer blocks of time should be allocated for the development of future theme. For example, a two-month theme explored for approximately one hour a day may be preferable.

#### **Evaluation of the Theme**

Proponents of evaluation in whole language recommend observation of the child in many literacy-related and social settings. The "life skills" component of culturally relevant themes provided unique opportunities for interaction and evaluation. The researcher was occasionally able to view students in "a different light" as a result of sharing a cultural experience together. For example, some individuals who appeared unmotivated and unproductive in the classroom, were very confident and resourceful in various "life skills" portions of the culturally relevant theme. The researcher also became better acquainted with other students, like Jayne, who were reserved in the classroom, but who became more outgoing and involved during activities which more closely

matched their experience and interests. It was shown, through analysis of various writing samples and inclusion of anecdotal records that Jayne improved in both speaking and writing for activities both within and outside of the theme, which happened to corresponded to her personal and/or cultural interests and experiences.

While there is no **absolute** Indian behavioral learning style, a wide range in individual differences have been identified that can be viewed as tendencies or learning style inclinations (Pepper and Henry, 1986). One implication of the Indian cooperative cultural orientation is that small groups and pairs tend to work better than large groups (Sawyer, 1988). This preference was evidenced in Jayne who was a little more expressive in small, rather than larger group situations. Another implication of the Native cooperative cultural orientation is that students like to share. Phillips (1983) says they should be given an opportunity to work together.

It was interesting to note, however, that while children were willing to share their written work for others to copy, they were not as agreeable to sharing their written work with others for collaboration, comment, or scrutiny. This also may result from their cultural orientation.

The peer-evaluations noted usually took the form of a brief, positive comment. Although the student would smile in response to the comments, it may be an indication of their uncomfortableness rather than their pleasure. Phillips (1983) further relates that non-interference in child-rearing (i.e., less praise or punishment, compared with Anglo standards) is regarded as normal in many Native cultures. The researcher is suggesting that the students may be uncomfortable with overt praise. While some students may react by being visibly embarrassed, as witnessed in Jayne, others may smile to cover their insecurities with the situation.

Furthermore, Phillips (1983) suggests it may not be desirable to appear to "act better than" another person in the Native culture. Another factor that may make peer-evaluation more difficult for Innu students is the fact that the "correcting," or commenting on another's work may be interpreted as "acting better than" others.

Considering that competition is better replaced by cooperation in the education of Native students, and that Native students often learn from their older siblings (Pepper and Henry, 1986) the researcher would suggest a model of grouping cited by Mickelson (1990) and others called "family grouping." The model suggests replacing the single "grade" levels of supposed homogeneously grouped students with students working across all levels of competence. Younger

students learn from their more mature peers, and vice versa. This would seem to better fit the learning orientation of Innu students generally, and the situation in Sheshatshit specifically, whereby students are presently placed in grades which correspond more closely with their age, rather than their ability level.

The description of the sample offered in the previous chapter reveals that just six out of a possible twenty-four students attended for more than half of the days the theme was in progress (see Table 1). This low student-to-teacher ratio made pursuing evaluation in whole language both more manageable and more difficult. In one respect, smaller class sizes make an observational focus for evaluation in whole language easier. The researcher was allowed more contact with individual students than would have been possible had each child registered attended on a regular basis. Students were given prompt feedback on their work, as well as a great deal of individual attention. Also, since students did not usually want to take their books or papers home, it was feasible for the teacher to collect many samples without the students objecting. This further provided the researcher with an opportunity to develop a better knowledge of the attending students.

Irregular attendance patterns on the part of students, however, hindered consistency and continuity recommended for



evaluation in whole language. This is exemplified in Jayne's case whereby eventual cessation of attendance interfered with a possible longitudinal investigation of the child's progress.

### Summary

Woodley and Woodley (1989) relate: "If the purpose of education is to help develop independently motivated learners, readers, writers, then the most important evaluation ... will not be completed for years to come" (p. 72).

The researcher feels that the preceding statement also speaks to the present study. However, since the basic belief of whole language is that children learn language by using it, it may be said that the students in this study progressed with regards to language growth since inclusion of the culturally relevant theme generated many opportunities for using language. This was felt to be important since some other areas of the curriculum were "workbook-oriented" with limited opportunities for language use.

In the estimation of the researcher, there were many aspects of the theme which appeared to be of interest and value to the students involved in the study. The "life skill" activities such as picking, cleaning, and cooking berries were particularly well received by the students, as were other opportunities to leave the confines of the school during the

course of the theme. The researcher regards the students' enjoyment of these activities as important in promoting increased student interest. Furthermore, they provided the motivation for various language-related activities (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Other areas of the theme which were deemed effective were the "hands-on" activities such as learning centers and computers, use of the LEA approach and various literature strategies, especially the read-aloud component and the adaptation of children's stories to make them culturally relevant. The researcher asserts that the culturally relevant predictable selections were especially suited to the students' listening and reading interest and ability level. Moreover, it was suggested that students were able to contribute more fully during the execution of the theme than for many other areas of the curriculum which were generally unrelated to their interests, experiences, and English language competency.

Although the performance of Jayne, as an individual, cannot be universalized to all Innu students, the case study participant was included to help demonstrate how one student progressed specifically through all language and literacy related components of the theme. Not surprisingly, an increase in response for activities, both related and unassociated with the theme, which happened to correspond to

her personal and/or cultural interests and experiences, was reported.

While the duration of this report was somewhat limited, the sample was small due to erratic attendance patterns on the part of students, and the results of the findings may not, necessarily, be generalized for all Innu students, this study illustrates how students were encouraged to use their second language through the incorporation of the culturally relevant theme, "Berries." The following list of recommendations will be forwarded based on the findings of this report.

#### Recommendations

Based on the wealth of research on the topic, and the researcher's evaluation of the "Berries" theme, culturally relevant whole language themes are highly recommended for use with Innu students as a means of bridging the gap between the experiences of the Innu child in second language instruction, and the requirements of the Department of Education for students in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Student-selected topics (i.e., "Dinosaurs", "Halloween", "Bears", etc.) which may be "personally relevant", as well as "culturally relevant", should also be incorporated. Further teacher-selected themes might include "Native Peoples of

Canada," which would also help integrate the Language Arts and the Social Studies program for grade six.

Native children's literature in general, and stories related to the Innu culture, specifically, should be included. Folk and fairy tales are other genres of interest which can be incorporated. Since these Innu students enjoy being read to, the "read-aloud" component of the whole language approach should be heavily emphasized.

The use of computers and learning centers worked well with the students involved in the study. The students' interests in these mediums should be expanded upon and incorporated in the classroom. Games and other motivating "hands-on" materials should be included as a worthwhile and enjoyable means of reinforcing learning with these Native second-language learners.

Outdoor, concrete, "life skills" experiences are highly recommended for inclusion in future, culturally relevant whole language themes. These experiences were found to provide refreshing and educational changes for the students, as well as generating enjoyable experiences about which the students could communicate. They further afford the teacher

opportunities to evaluate students informally in alternate settings outside the classroom.

Incorporation of the L.E.A. should be a major component of any whole language program for Innu students since it not only helps serve as a model for students, demonstrating the purpose, functions and use of conventions in writing, but also emphasizes observation and imitation, which are generally accepted features of Native learning styles.

The students responded well to the "adapted" predictable selections in English. The concept of "adapting" predictable selection to make them more relevant for Innu students should be incorporated in future culturally relevant whole language themes. It would be interesting to examine the student's reaction to the "adapted" predictable selections in Innu-aimun.

Teachers must elicit help from Innu resource persons in the development of future culturally relevant themes. Intervention by way of assistance is needed from Native teachers, and other community members, who have vital knowledge and expertise in making the school curriculum more relevant to the background and experiences of Innu students.

Team-teaching situations whereby Innu teachers or teacher aides, who understand the Native language and culture, pair up with non-Native teachers to assist in dealing with academic, as well as other social and personal areas, would be beneficial. Team-teaching culturally relevant material would avoid possible overlap of content taught in Innu-aimun and English.

The researcher recommends that students not be discouraged from speaking their Native language amongst themselves, despite the difficulties experienced by the non-Native teacher in interacting with students speaking Innu-aimun in the classroom. By recognizing the child's first language as the most natural and preferred medium for students to relate to each other, the teacher shows respect for the child. Whenever possible, the child's first language should be incorporated in learning in order to enhance both first and second language competency, and to show that Native language is embraced within the school setting.

Also, non-Native teachers should make an attempt to learn the Native language. A Native language course designed for or by Native teachers or other qualified resource persons could be offered. An information package could also be prepared for new teachers who need the background information necessary in

adapting materials and approaches to meet the needs of these Native, second language learners.

Choosing whole language strategies which "fit" Native learning styles, rather than having the Native student conform to traditional methods which may not necessarily suit the Native learning orientation, may result in less "resistance" on the part of students alluded to by Dumont (1972) and others. Better attendance for students in the community may also result, which would undoubtedly positively affect progress of the Innu student in both first and second language instruction.

Also, replacing competition with cooperation in the whole language classroom seems to suit the cooperative sharing orientation of Native culture. Specifically, the "family grouping" model whereby older, more mature peers help younger, less mature ones, and visa versa, would also seem to match the Native learning orientation and subsequently offer a possible alternative to the presently established single "grade" system which would better suit the school considering the present practice of "social promotion".

Also, it would be interesting to explore of the use of the whole language approach in Native languages classes, as well. Since a standardized system has only recently been created, writing in Innu-aimun using invented spellings, whereby, in keeping with the whole language philosophy, students were encouraged to progressively move towards closer approximation of the standard spelling, would seem to lend itself nicely to the teaching of the Native language. The Language Experience Approach specifically, which is very dependant on the **experience** of the students, has been highly recommended for dictation in the first language.

The whole language approach has been documented to be well supported in the literature for use in second language programs and with Native children. Considering the differences in the sound-letter correspondence in Innu-aimun and English orthography, a whole language program which focuses on meaning, rather than letter-sound and other discrete skills in isolation, would appear to be the best approach.

Also considering the present attendance pattern of the majority of students, whole language would be a more efficient medium for language instruction than the traditional



approaches which have a definite scope and sequence, and which would undoubtedly leave "gaps" in learning for irregular attending students. This would offer a possible solution to the problems associated with the heterogeneous classroom groupings which are presently experienced in Sheshatshit.

Similar research using the naturalistic strategies outlined in this report, or possibly an experimental approach, should be carried out to further examine the use of whole language thematic units with Innu students. Although it may be a challenge, considering the present attendance pattern of most students, it would be beneficial to extend the duration of these studies in order to get more of a long-term view.

The recommendations of this report may be considered for similar teaching/learning situations with other Native students, and with other Innu populations such as that of Utshimassit, Labrador.

### Epilogue

It is the contention of the researcher that incorporation of various whole language approaches and strategies is deemed to hold many possibilities for inclusion in Peenamin McKenzie School, especially in light of recent negotiations by the Innu for control of the school in Sheshatshit. Adaption of the

whole language philosophy would appear to help meet some of the Innu goals for a more holistic approach to the educational, employment and emotional needs of their children.

Specifically, the use of culturally relevant whole language themes is regarded by the researcher to be a plausible means for fulfilling the Innu educational goal of more cultural relevance in the school curriculum. Furthermore, these themes can be incorporated in both first and second language instruction. This would be in keeping with the direction in which the Innu wish to proceed according to Schuurman (1993a), since most community members indicated they wanted education in English and Innu-aimun so that their children could choose between traditional and non-traditional lifestyles. It would appear that to be literate in English and Innu-aimun would be a necessary prerequisite for students who wish to choose between both types of lifestyles, thereby expanding employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the Innu people have demonstrated the benefit of the ability to function in the majority language, English, in order to regain some of the power and autonomy they knew before settlement. While the school is seen as being largely responsible for the destruction of Innu culture, many people perceive a locally run school as a means of redeeming Innu culture and reviving old ways. The empowered leaders, who are the major players in the movement for school

control, are educated and articulate in both languages. Their plans for school control as a resource for self-government involve resetting the future framework for building a new culture and community life (Schuurman, 1993b).

The philosophy of the whole language approach would appear to suit the Innu situation. Willinsky's (1990) program, which encompasses psycholinguistics and the whole language approach, rejects attempts to impose programs from "above" thereby diminishing the sense of literacy as a civilizing mission governing schools and keeping it apart from the lives of its charges. Rather, he speaks of the potential for literacy to have a political function, as a means of power and control whereby students pursue literacy for their own purposes, be it personal or political. Willinsky (1990) quotes Giroux who lays literacy out in bold political tones: "To be literate is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history and future" (p. 21).

While control over the operation of the school by the Innu may be a viable means for the Innu to empower themselves, an increased sense of empowerment may also come from students who are encouraged to take ownership of their own literacy development through the incorporation of the whole language approach. Willinsky's (1993) model also promotes literacy,

not only as a means to greater public participation, but to the exploration of personal meaning. The shift involves changing control over literacy from the teacher to the student who works with literacy by "turning literacy to their own ends, whatever situation they find themselves in" (p. 17). This would seem to better meet the emotional needs of Innu students, therefore further promoting another of the identified aspirations which the Innu hold for the education of their children.

The Innu, in restructuring the school system to meet their goals for a more holistic approach to the educational, employment and emotional needs of the students of that community, would be in a unique position to initiate incorporation of the whole language philosophy and approaches on a school-wide basis. Moreover, it is alleged that, rather than being disruptive to the culture, whole language may be an effective avenue for the Innu people to pursue in taking control over the education of their own children. The words of Goodman (1986) seem to speak to the potential for the work of whole language with Innu students: "Whole language programs get it all together: the language, the culture, the community, the learner, and the teacher" (p. 8).

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**APPENDIX A****Culturally Relevant Theme: "Atik" (The Caribou)****Background to the Theme**

Historically a nomadic people, the Innu of Nitissinan hunted, fished and trapped in order to survive. These harvesters of nature made use of available animals for food and clothing for themselves, and for fur to barter with European traders and other Innu tribes. Caribou hunting in the interior forests and plateau was the main and most important winter activity of the Innu at one time (Armitage, 1991).

The diet of the Innu was always rich in meat, particularly caribou, which was cooked in a variety of ways, utilizing all parts of the animal (Tanner, 1979, in MacKenzie 1982). Almost every part of the caribou, flesh, skin and bone, was used for either food, clothing and tools. It was considered very undesirable to waste any part of the animal.

Harold Horwood (1981) relates that before they became Christians, their major god was the "Spirit of the Caribou." According to Horwood (1981): "The caribou elevated to godhead for the sufficient reason that it was absolutely central and vital to the economy of the Indians" (p. 28).

One of the most important traditional rituals in Innu society is the "makushan" feast. A specially prepared and decorated caribou hide is used to ask the Caribou Master

"Katipinimatautsh" to supply caribou (Armitage, 1991). The caribou leg bone marrow is cooked by directly putting the bone in the stove. The marrow is believed to contain the sacred "Spirit of the Caribou." If eaten before a hunt, Innu people thought it would please the gods, who in turn, would respond with more caribou for the hunters. Today the tradition of eating the caribou bone marrow (i.e., the mukushan feast) is still kept up, but its religious significance is not as highly held as it was in the past.

Many Innu legends feature the animals which were familiar to them, like the rabbit, ptarmigan, goose, black bear, beaver and caribou. Today the Innu people still hunt various animals, mainly for food, but also for the hides. Caribou is still a major source of meat for the Innu. Some still cure and tan the hides which are used to make such traditional crafts as moccasins, mittens, tea dolls, drumskins and filling for snowshoes. The caribou continues to be a very important animal to the Innu.

#### Rationale for Inclusion of the Theme

While some whole language units, for example, "Wild Animals of Canada," by Solkski (1987), are available on various animals, no known packages are available on the caribou. The cultural affiliation of the Innu with the caribou, would support its inclusion as a "culturally



relevant" theme. The student's familiarity with the animal is also thought to provide many opportunities for sharing in the classroom.

#### Suggested Organization of the Theme

This thematic unit is organized around the "project approach." The students are initially lead through the processes of brainstorming, reorganization of this information, and using it as a basis to later research, record, and eventually to write about the caribou. The theme is also used as a "springboard" for having students subsequently select and research another "country" animal. The students are then expected to use the same procedure to research the animal of their own choosing.

Traditional experiences related to the theme (e.g., tanning a caribou hide) may be included with resource people from Sheshatshit. As an alternate, or as a follow-up plan, students may observe a skilled person from the community crafting items, such as mitts, moccasins, or a tea doll from the cured caribou hide. Other "life skills" by way of preparing and sharing caribou stew may also be included.

Specific strategies, involving dictated stories, literature strategies, process writing, incorporation of themes and evaluation procedures, as suggested by Beald-Taylor (1986), will be outlined for further development.

### Dictated Stories

Dictated stories make relevant reading material which further serves to acquaint the second language learner with the purpose and mechanics of writing. Initially, the students may need to rely on the teachers reading, but eventually may begin to read along with the teacher who offers support when needed (Heald-Taylor, 1986). Group charts may result from class discussion concerning authentic experiences such the hide-tanning, craft-making or cooking. Photographs taken during these experiences would make good picture charts. Pictures from magazines which depict aspects of native culture, and slides of a caribou hunt taken by members of the community, would comprise other relevant material which could be used for picture charts. Student-composed charts could be incorporated if students were encouraged to tell about an experience, a picture, or a story while the teacher recorded it on chart paper. These exercises can be attempted in the child's first language, by a teacher of Innu-aimun, as well as in English. When communicating in English is difficult for students, teacher-composed charts could paraphrase students intended messages concerning descriptions of art work, or about experiences related to the theme. The teacher composed charts may also consist of information about experiences to be introduced (e.g., Mr. Rich will tell us about the Innu uses of caribou). Additionally, "thank you" notes to volunteers

create opportunities for the teacher to introduce publishing dictation; that is, making changes so that print is grammatically correct. Teacher composed charts could also include the "adaptation" of the folktale The Three Billy-Goats Gruff to the story of The Three Caribou. This can be done by substituting the words "caribou" for "billygoats," "witch," or "Atshen", for "troll" and "moss" for "grass."

Predictable selections lend themselves to various activities using the cloze procedure, as well as copying and cutting word strips to match the original repetitive sentences or phrases in the story. Patterned selections could also be used to support students in dictating their own variations related to the theme.

### **Literature Strategies**

The following materials can be incorporated as read aloud selections:

#### **Read Aloud Material**

The Enchanted Caribou by Elizabeth Cleaver

Nature's Children: Caribou by Judy Ross

A Caribou Alphabet by Mary-Beth Owens

Where Did You Get Your Moccasins? by Bernelda Wheeler

"A Hunting Trip" by Nigel Markham Them Days

"My First Caribou Hunt" by Michel Pastern Them Days

"Caribou Man" from Harold Horwood's Tales of the Labrador Indians, Newfoundland

Canadian Wildlife Service Caribou. Hinterland Who's Who Pamphlet, Ottawa

Canadian Emblem Series Large Mammals by Marvis Tytiah  
Let's Go Trapping An Activity Book for Children, Ed Hall (ed.)  
Animals of Labrador by Dorie Brown

#### Non-print resources

Irving Oil Activity Book

"Deers" from vertical film at Peenamin McKenzie School

Computer Programs: Compton's Family Encyclopedia  
 Mammals: A Multimedia Encyclopedia

Video: Indian Hide Tanning

Favourite read aloud selection can be included on cassette tape at the Listening center. First language literature ought also be included. The Innu Legend "Kautatikumat" (i.e., Caribou Man) is available in the school's Curriculum Center.

Predictable material may be included for read aloud and choral reading experience. Progressing from the shared reading experience, the student is helped in reading along with the teacher or partner and on to eventual independent reading. Predictable selections can also be used to

illustrate how patterned books can be "adapted" to correspond to the theme. Students will be able to dictate alternate texts before they are able to write it themselves (Heald-Taylor, 1986). The poem entitled "The Moose" from the Circle reading program could easily be renamed "The Caribou," and the same name substituted in the remainder of the poem to make it correspond with the theme. The play, "The Moose's Loose Coat," also in the Circle program, can be similarly used to stimulate creative writing which corresponds with the theme.

#### **Process Writing**

The writing method suggested for this theme is the "Project Method." With project work, even within the single theme, caribou, there are varying levels of materials and resources to support the students' writing. The teacher can select the ones that best suit the needs and abilities of the students involved. The students are guided through the research process at first. Later, they are encouraged to use the same procedure to research independently or in small groups.

#### **Brainstorming**

To begin, students "brainstorm," or work together to develop lists of ideas or statements about the caribou. Their responses are recorded on a large chart or chalkboard which

helps refresh the students background knowledge about the topic. Some "facts" are circled, if questionable, and verified or refuted later while researching the topic.

After brainstorming, the students are encouraged to write in order to organize what they know about the topic for themselves.

### Categorizing

The students are then asked to consider how their "facts" go together for categorizing purposes. They may be asked to tell, for example, to what "big antlers" or "brown and white" relates. They might answer "What a caribou looks like" or "Appearance." Once the label has been affixed to a category, students suggest additional information which fits. Under the heading of appearance students may wish to add, for example, "looks like a moose." Students may need assistance creating category labels in organizing their information. Together the class works out a chart, or note-taking matrix, to use in researching the topic.

### Researching

Using the categories resulting from their "facts," students are asked to consider how to verify this information. Books and encyclopedias from the library, material from the Innu Resource Center, the student's own observations, as well

as the experiences of elders in the community, should be considered.

The student brainstorming session helps formulate questions which may be used to guide their search for information. The note-taking matrix agreed upon is outlined on a large sheet of paper. Once the students have listed the categories, the students are now ready to extend their search and continue note-taking.

### Re-writing

Students are expected to write again, using the information from a variety of sources. Mixed ability levels can participate at their own level. Some students may only be able to copy notes exactly as written and present them in random order. Others will be able to copy and organize the information under headings.

All students would be able to contribute in some way (i.e., art work, lettering, stories, poetry etc.) to a bulletin board display about the project.

### Independent Project

After being guided through the "Caribou" project, students will be expected to research an animal of their own choosing. The student may choose an animal from the deer

family, or another "country" animal, not necessarily related to the caribou.

### **Theme**

There are many possibilities for development within the "Caribou" theme. Many more materials and strategies can be incorporated to make the theme relevant and meaningful to Native students.

This theme can be further integrated with Social Studies for grade six by having students research and chart locations where the caribou, as well as other animals selected, may be found in Canada.

### **Evaluation**

The theme holds many possibilities for evaluation through observation. Individual checklist of behaviour can be developed specifically for the theme. Heald-Taylor (1986) offers general oral, reading and writing behaviours that can also be employed. Participation in the theme can also be assessed.

The project method enables teacher to see how each child is using his or her time. Furthermore, when the research project is completed in school, the teacher is able to observe, support and mediate the entire process.



## **Learning Center Adaptation**

### **Games Center**

The "Caribou Bone" Game: This traditional Innu game is made from caribou hoof bones. The bones are strung on a piece of caribou hide and tied to a long bone which acts like a handle. At the end of the hoof bones is fur from the caribou's tail. Different points, from five to fifty, can be scored by "catching" the toe bone over the top of the handle. If one gets the tail fur, one receives the highest points. The Caribou Bone Game is useful for integrating Math skills, as well as providing enjoyment for the students.

### **Viewing Center**

This center contains various pictures available from the school's vertical file depicting the caribou habits and habitats. Other materials such as slides and photographs could also be included. The Innu Resource Center in Sheshatshit is one locale where one may avail of materials for viewing.

Real artifacts, such as parts of caribou bones used for tools on display in the school, as well as pictures of artifacts, can be taken into the classroom for exhibit and discussion.

### Reading Center

All print material suggested for use with the theme could be included as reading material. Depending on the age and ability level of the students, this material can be put on tape and used for individual listening.

Experience charts relating field trip experiences as well as labels of photographs might also be included.

### Writing Center

Story-starters and other activities related to the theme from Let's Go Trapping Activity Workbook, specifically pages 20, 52 and 58, could be incorporated.

### Art Center

Pictures to draw and colour from the Irving Oil Activity Book as well as the Animals of Labrador series can be included. The Canadian Emblem Series also contains sketches of the caribou to be coloured or traced.

**APPENDIX B****Culturally Relevant Theme: "Nutshimit" (The Country)****Background to the Theme**

The Innu of Labrador were nomadic until recent times. It was not until the 1950's that the government set up housing for the Innu. Before that they spent most of the year inland, living in tents, until well after the Goose Bay air base was built in 1942 (Tanner, 1979 in MacKenzie, 1982).

For the major part of the year they lived in groups of several families. They travelled in bands of about fifty to one hundred individuals and lived the "country-life" year round. Moving from one camp to another, the Innu lived off the land. Caribou hunting in the interior forests and plateaus was their main winter activity. In summer they fished or hunted around the interior lakes or along the coast. Although their activities depended on the seasonal abundance of game, life was not a continuous search for food. They had time for dances, feasts, storytelling and games (Them Days, March 1988).

In mid-winter the group sometimes combined with others to form larger groups, each occupying its own tent made of bark or caribou skin (now replaced by canvas). In the past, they travelled mainly by snowshoe and toboggan in winter, and used birch bark canoes in summer. Today, many Innu families

periodically pursue their traditional lifestyle for certain parts of the year using modern technology such as aircraft, snowmobiles and two-way radios (Tanner, 1979, in MacKenzie 1982).

In preparing for a trip to the country they gather the necessary items such as guns, axes, candles, stove and pipe, pots, frying pan, tent, snowshoes, soap, fabric, thread, needles, canoes, hooks and traps. They purchase various food items that will be necessary. In the past the Innu carried only a few essential ingredients (e.g., flour, baking powder, tea, salt, sugar and powdered milk) since they would move camp many times a year. Today, the Innu usually stay in one place to camp and can manage a larger variety of food which is readily available at the local store (e.g., salt, meat, potatoes, butter, macaroni, molasses, onions, rice, beans, peas and tobacco).

The women are responsible for the sewing of a tent, if necessary. Once in the country, the adults pick a leader for the camp. The men choose a good place to hunt, and the women select a good place to pitch the tent. These tents are small and easy to erect. The women and girls "pick" green boughs to put down on the floor of the tent. This provides a soft, warm and fragrant sleeping surface. Women are also responsible for getting firewood. The trees are cut with an axe, and cut into

smaller sticks so they can fit into the stove. Twigs and bark are often used to start the fire.

An open fireplace placed in the centre of the tent was used at one time. Today a small rectangular "camp stove" provides heat and a cooking surface. The stove pipe extends out through a hole in the roof of the tent to allow smoke to escape. The cooking utensils used in the country usually consist of a large pot and a large iron frying pan. While in the country, the Innu diet usually consists of available game; the main meats being caribou and partridge. Meat is usually cooked by boiling it on top of the stove. The bread, called bannock, is made of flour, salt and baking flour, and is cooked on top of the stove also. The Innu typically like to drink tea with their meals, and usually have a large pot readily available on the stove when living in the country.

Children have responsibilities while in the country like getting water and washing dishes. They also have lots of time for playing and exploring in the woods. At night they enjoy listening to elders tell traditional Innu stories, or legends, which have been passed down through the years by word of mouth.

#### Rationale for Inclusion of the Theme

The "Country" experience is central to the Innu lifestyle and culture. Virtually all students will have knowledge and

first-hand experience with "country" living to share. Some would know of past customs as told by elders in the community, or by Native teachers in Native language classes. The student's background knowledge and experience could be brought to bear on the learning situation. Much of the content of the theme would come from the student's own experiences, as well as the experiences of elders in the community.

#### Suggested Organization of the Theme

Execution of the "Country" theme could be organized around an authentic "country" (i.e., camping) experience. The camping experience itself could range from either a day trip to a nearby Innu tent, to a five day excursion, as has sometimes been available through the Life Skills Program at Peenamin McKenzie School. The content for the unit would generate from preparations, execution and reflection about the field trip itself.

The introduction to the theme could centre around preparations by way of food and supplies. Inventory of food and supplies needed for the trip could be drawn up and later collected. Various traditional camping activities (e.g., "picking" boughs, snowshoeing, ice-fishing, partridge hunting and snaring rabbits) constitute some of the suggested activities. The theme could also include such traditional activities as sharing a special meal, and having legends told

in Innu-aimun. The excursion and related activities could lead to language experience charts before and after the camping experience.

Other opportunities to explore the theme would be through comparison of country life at the present time and in the past. Learning about former times would necessarily include resource people in the Sheshatshit area. Human resources by way of elders in the community or Native teachers and teacher aides at the school are vital to the development of this theme. Use of the interview technique can be incorporated as students interview elders in the community. Available books and resources should be included to enhance the theme.

Specific strategies involving dictated stories, literature strategies, process writing, incorporation of themes and evaluation procedures, as suggested by Heald-Taylor (1986), will be outlined for further development.

### **Dictated Stories**

The actual camping trip would generate many opportunities for developing lists and charts both before and after the camping experience. Before the trip, a group chart outlining a menu could be undertaken with the students. A shopping trip to the grocery store to gather the supplies needed for the menu may be ventured. Other lists of supplies needed to cook and serve meals could be drafted. If the trip involved an

overnight experience, clothes and sleeping items would need to be outlined. All aforementioned lists could then become the impetus for spelling and vocabulary study. Cloze procedure using these dictated stories could also be incorporated, as could the rebus method.

After the trip, individual dictated stories and sentences about the experience could result. Some students may use their own drawings related to the theme as the impetus for dictation and personal writing.

Photographs of the various activities could provide opportunities for labelling. Also, pictures depicting modern day Innu camps found in Recontre magazine and pictures of past Innu lifestyle and dress from Them Days magazine could be used as picture charts. Summaries of taped interview can be translated in English. The teacher may need to supply much support, by way of dictation in English for some students, since it is difficult to translate directly from Innu to English.

### **Literature Strategies**

#### **Read aloud selections**

The following selections are from The Circle Program: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1985.

On Our Way by Mary Upper

Tea in the Kettle by Barbara Burnaby



This is the way by John McInnes, Barbara Burnaby et al.

At Camp by John McInnes, Barbara Burnaby et. al.

Reading Tracks by Margaret Izatt

The following stories, located in Them Days magazine 13(2) pp. 38-51 (March, 1988), were written by former students of Peenamin Mckenzie School in 1973, and are presented in both English and Innu-aimun.

Hunting Experiences by Maurice Penashue

Hunting Experiences by Daniel Ashini

Life Long Ago by Caroline Jack

Living in a Tent by Daniel Nuna

and

Christmas in the Country by Janet Byrne-Turpin Them Days 17 (2), January, 1992.

The selections below are material produced through the James Bay Cultural Educational Centre, and are part of the "Changing Times" Series:

Baby William by Jane Pachano

Bobby and Mary at Home by Jane Pachano

Transportation by Jane Pachano

Now and Then by Joanne Willis Newton

#### Non-print resources

Let's Go Trapping Activities for Children Ed Hall (ed.)

"Illustrated Crossword" (Hunting and Fishing Theme) by Christine Gadoury. Recontre Magazine, 9 (1) p. 22 Sept., 1987.

Film: Father Whiteheads Indians. Available through Curriculum Materials Centre, St. John's, Nfld.

### Predictable Literature

The selections On Our Way and This is the Way from the Circle reading program are predictable selections which may be included. Other trade books such as The Six Foolish Fisherman by Bernice Myers could be included to correspond with the theme. The story of The Pancake by Anita Lobal is similar in plot to that of the classic The Gingerbread Boy. Students could dictate or write a story to fit the theme by "adapting" the simple story to that of The Bannock.

### First Language Literature

The stories presented by ex-students of Peenamin McKenzie School are also presented in Innu-aimun. The story of Christmas in the country which was initially told on tape in the first language, could be included at the listening center.

### **Process Writing**

The articles depicting the Innu perspective, like the stories by former students of Peenamin McKenzie School from

Them Days magazine in both English and Innu-aimun, could be incorporated. These young authors could serve as writing models for students. Students could be encouraged to write about similar experiences they have had themselves or were told about.

### **Theme**

This theme will overlap with other culturally relevant themes since the "Country" experience is central to the Innu lifestyle and culture. Selections about the "country" experience make relevant reading material. The articles depicting the Innu perspective, like the stories by former students of Peenamin McKenzie School from Them Days magazine in both English and Innu-aimun, are especially relevant.

### **Evaluation**

Individual checklist of behaviour can be developed specifically for the theme. Heald-Taylor (1986) offers general oral, reading and writing behaviours that can also be employed. Participation in the theme can also be assessed.

Stories presented in both English and Innu-aimun can provide the non-Native teacher with a means of informally assessing the students' reading comprehension in the first language. The student could be asked to silently read the

story in Innu-aimun and the teacher could ask questions based on the English transcription of the story.

Smaller numbers of attending students will make more feasible the camping experience suggested. Experiencing "country" living with Innu students may help the teacher develop a more comprehensive picture of the child. Sometimes the student's familiarity with the outdoor surroundings helps students feel more comfortable with the non-Native teacher. The non-Native teacher may, in turn, feel more connected to students as a result of sharing such an experience.

### **Learning Centre Adaptation**

#### **Reading/Writing Centre**

A number of empty food packages representative of grocery items usually included by the Innu in the country would be available. The activities could include either matching or writing the name with the grocery item, depending on the ability levels of the students involved.

Dictation charts and pictures taken with accompanying captions, could also be included. Some students may be able to match the picture with the appropriate caption.

#### **Games/Puzzle Centre**

Crossword puzzles, pictures to colour, and activities related to the theme from the Let's Go Trapping Activity Book,

specifically pages 2, 7, 18, 19, 26, 32, 33, 34 and 35, could be included. The grade two Circle reading program also has available games and activities that relate to the theme. Recontre magazine has a Hunting and Fishing Theme crossword puzzle which may be included.

### Viewing Centre

Displayed photographs taken from the camping trip, as well as other pictures depicting both past and present "country" living, could be included. Any family photographs that the students might want to share may be included to enhance the theme. The Innu Resource centre has available with a number of slides and tapes depicting various traditional "country" experience of the Innu of Labrador.

### Art Centre

Students are free to draw/paint pictures of the country experience.

## APPENDIX C

Innu Redberry Jam

- You need:
1. Redberries
  2. Sugar
  3. Lard (or Bearfat)

Mix the redberries, sugar and lard together in a pot. Heat on the stove.

Innu Redberry Pie

- You need:
- 2 cups of flour
  - 1 tablespoon of baking powder
  - 1 tablespoon of butter (or lard)
  - 3/4 cup of water

Mix flour and baking powder. Add melted butter and water. Roll out dough. Put it in pie dish. Add Redberry Jam. Put more rolled out dough on top. Bake at 350° until crust is light brown.

**APPENDIX D**Introduction

There are many kinds of berries that the Innu people know and use. There are many uses of berries. Some are for eating and cooking, some are used for medicine, and some are used as both food and medicine.

There are also many colours of berries. Most of the berries we will learn about are red. Other berries are blue, yellow, white, black, purple, pink, green and orange. You will learn about each of the berries in English, and you will also learn the Innu name for each berry because the Innu names often tell a lot about the berry.

Redberry (Kamikuatshi) - There are many red-coloured berries in Labrador, but this one is called the Redberry. In Innu its name "Kamikuatshi" means "red berry" as well. Because it is the main source of food of the partridge, it is called the "partridge berry" in Newfoundland. Redberries also make good food for many other animals in the country. The redberry is the most important berry to the Innu people, both today and in the past. The Innu know that it is very good for you. It keeps well in winter, it is easy to pick and there are always lots of them. The redberry grows almost everywhere in Labrador - on hills, in cracks of rocks, in dead tree

stumps and in both wet and sandy places. It is best to pick them after the first frost and before the first snowfall. The redberry makes delicious jam and pies.

The redberry is also used as medicine too. Many Innu use the redberries to help babies who are getting their teeth by squashing the berries against their gums. Redberries are also said to help sore throats if eaten raw.

Squashberries (Mushuminat) - This red-orange berry has a big stone. You can find this berry near streams and brooks. It likes to grow in the shade. The leaves to this plant are large and turn a beautiful red colour in the fall of the year. The Innu name for the squashberry "mushmint" means "a little sour," but the berry is very good to eat in jelly when the stone is taken out and lots of sugar is added.

Many animals in the country eat the squashberry. It is a favorite of the black bear, and moose like to eat its leaves.

Skunk Currant (Innitshimina) - This red-coloured berry has soft hairs on it. For this reason it is sometimes called the "hairy-berry." The name skunk-currant comes from the fact that many say it smells bad, like a skunk. Since we don't have any skunks in Labrador, we don't know what a skunk smells like!



This berry grows in many different places on the coast of Labrador. It is the first berry to grow in the forest after the trees have been burned or cut down. It's good to eat in jellies or jam.

Dogberry (Maskumina) - The Innu use this plant as medicine for swollen body parts by boiling the bark and rubbing the water on the body.

The orange-red berry called the dogberry is not poison but it is not nice to eat either. It is said to be only fit for dogs because it is hard and bitter. Perhaps that is why it is called the "dogberry" in English.

The berries grow on trees by the water, and the berry stays on the trees all winter. The dogberry is important winter food for many birds like the robin. The leaves and twigs are often eaten by the moose and snowshoe rabbit. Beavers eat the bark.

Raspberry (Anushkanat) - This sweet red berry is very good to eat in pies and jams or even as you pick it off the bush. In Innu its name means "soft berry." You do not need much sugar with this berry because it is already sweet.

The raspberry grows well in places where lots of trees have been cut down. Little birds like to hide under this berry plant and eat the berries as they drop off.

Blackberry (Assimina) - The blackberry is black. In Innu its name "Assimina" means "mossberry" or "earthberry." The bushes of this plant are good for starting fires and smoking fish. There are lots of black berries on the coast of Labrador.

Because this berry is very "juicy" Innu people eat them in the woods when they are thirsty. In Labrador the blackberry is good to eat in fall after the first frost, but before the first snowfall.

The Innu have known for many years that blackberries are very good for you. They are said to make children "plump and healthy." The berry is good in cakes too.

Juniper (Kakatshimina) - The juniper is also called the "crow berry." The Innu use the juniper for medicine only. They boil the leaves and use the water for swollen body parts. The berry changes colours as it grows. It changes from green to pink. When it has stopped growing it stays blue.

The leaves of the juniper are hard and prickly like porcupine quills. As a matter of fact, the porcupine like to eat the juniper berry, as does the partridge. Ducks like to make their nest in the juniper branches.

Blueberry (Inniminana) - This blue berry, which is called the blueberry in both English and Innu is good to eat by itself or in pies and jams. Before they are ready to eat

these berries are pink, white, green and purple. Once the berries are picked they do not last long and need to be eaten or cooked right away. Innu people like to eat blueberries mashed up with sugar and milk rather than cook them.

These berries grow on the ground alongside the redberry. It is a favorite berry of the black bear.

Snowberry (Pineuminina) - This white berry is called the snowberry - perhaps because it is the colour of the snow.

It is known by many Innu for its peppermint-like taste. They are good to eat while walking or hunting in the woods. The berries and leaves can be boiled as "fevertia" for flues, but most Innu use the berries in the country to give their breath a nice taste - especially in the morning time.

Many animals in the country like to eat the snowberry. In Innu the snowberry is called the "pineuminina" or "partridge berry" because the spruce partridge is said to "get fat quick" on them. Mice in the woods scurry along with their cheeks full.

Bakeapple (Shikuteua) - This yellow-orange berry is called the bakeapple. Its Innu name "Shikuteua" means "you can see it from far away" because of its bright colour.

Many other people in Labrador call the bakeapple the "Queen of Berries" because it has a very nice taste. These people would go by plane or by boat to get the berries in the

wet places called the bog. Innu people usually just pick the berries as they come across them while hunting in the country.

The bakeapples make good jam and pies. Many Innu people enjoy them mashed up with sugar and milk.

**APPENDIX E****The Little Brown Rabbit**

Once upon a time there was a little brown rabbit who lived in the country.

One day the little brown rabbit found some juicy round redberries growing on the ground.

She took a berry to the other animals who lived nearby.

"Who will help me pick the berries?" asked the little brown rabbit.

"I will," said the dog.

"I will," said the frog.

"I will," said the mouse.

"Then we can all pick the berries together," said the little brown rabbit.

And they did!

Every day they all went to the redberry patch together to pick some redberries and the little brown rabbit carried them home with her.

One day the little brown rabbit saw that all the berries were picked.

So she went to the other animals in the country.

"Who will help me wash the berries?" she said.

"I will," said the dog.

"I will," said the frog.

"I will," said the mouse.

"Then we can all wash the berries together," said the little brown rabbit.

And they did!

"The berries are now ready to be cooked into jam," the little brown rabbit said to herself.

"Who will help me cook the berries?" the little brown rabbit asked her animal friends.

"I will," said the dog.

"I will," said the frog.

"I will," said the mouse.

"Then we can all cook the berries together," said the little brown rabbit.

And they did!

When the berries were cooked, the little brown rabbit took the jam back to the animals in the country.

"Who will help me bake the jam into pie?" asked the little brown rabbit.

"I will," said the dog.

"I will," said the frog.

"I will," said the mouse.

"Then we can all bake the pie together," said the little brown rabbit.

And they did!

They all baked the redberry jam into a pie and then left it to cool.

When the pie was cool, the little brown rabbit said, "The pie is now ready to be eaten. Who will help me eat the pie?"

"I will," said the dog.

"I will," said the frog.

"I will," said the mouse.

"Oh yes!" said the little brown rabbit.

"You all helped me pick the berries.

You all helped me wash the berries.

You all helped me cook the berries.

You all helped me bake the pie.

You can all help me eat it, too!"

And they did.

And was it ever good!

## APPENDIX F

## BERRY THEME EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Oral Language (English)	Seldom Occasionally Often	Date
<p>Understands simple commands.</p> <p>Understands simple stories read aloud.</p> <p>Understands more involved texts read aloud.</p> <p>Answers questions using one word.</p> <p>Answers questions using a phrase.</p> <p>Answers questions in a sentence.</p> <p>Answers questions in class unelicited.</p> <p>Answers questions in class elicited only.</p> <p>Asks questions.</p> <p>Responds in whole class discussion.</p> <p>Responds in small group discussion.</p> <p>Responds to teacher one-on-one.</p> <p>Responds to peers one-on-one.</p> <p>Can say names of berries in response to pictures, real plants.</p> <p>Can describe berry by colour, texture, taste, edibility, etc.</p> <p>Listens attentively to stories read aloud.</p> <p>Can retell stories read aloud.</p> <p>Can dictate a word sentence, or story to the teacher.</p> <p>Can participate in "predictable" selection.</p>		



Reading Behavior	Seldom Occasionally Often	Date
<p>Recognizes alphabet.</p> <p>Knows the purpose of books.</p> <p>Actively seeks a library book.</p> <p>Likes to read aloud on occasion.</p> <p>Understands reading as a meaning getting process.</p> <p>Offers suggestions for cloze procedure.</p> <p>Miscues reflective of meaning.</p> <p>Will attempt unknown words.</p> <p>Can read back personal dictation.</p> <p>Can read names of berries in isolation.</p> <p>Can read names of berries in context.</p> <p>Can read short text on berries.</p> <p>Can "read" words associated with predictable selections.</p> <p>Can read a full predictable selection.</p> <p>Can read for enjoyment.</p>		
<p><u>Skills</u> (associated with the theme)</p> <p>Can alphabetize names of berries.</p> <p>Can recognize compound words.</p> <p>Understands contractions.</p> <p>Does exercises involving plurals.</p>		

Writing	Seldom Occasionally Often	Date
<p>Can produce letters of the alphabet.</p> <p>Can "piggy-back" patterned books to create new text.</p> <p>Can write about personal experience.</p> <p>Can write poems.</p> <p>Responds in dialogue journal.</p> <p>Can write in acceptable manuscript.</p> <p>Can write in acceptable cursive writing.</p> <p>Attempts to analyze own writing sample.</p> <p>Enjoys publishing work.</p>		
<u>Skills</u>		
Uses capital letters.		
Uses appropriate punctuation.		
Uses quotation marks.		
<u>Attitude</u>		
Like to write for many purposes.		
Is responsive to editing work.		
Likes to write/edit on computer.		
Will share work with others.		
<u>Spelling</u>		
Will attempt invented spellings.		
Uses beginning/middle/end sounds in invented spellings.		
Can spell names of berries.		



## APPENDIX G

## Contractions

didn't	weren't	wouldn't
won't	I'll	don't

Choose the contraction from the top of the page to write above the underlined words.

One day we went berry-picking. We did not walk. We rode on the bus. We were hoping that there would not be many flies. Mary said, "I hope that there are lots of berries."

We were not disappointed. There were lots of berries. "I will go back to that spot again," said Mary.

Some kids did not want to save their berries. They wanted to eat them right away. The teacher said, "Do not eat all the berries or there will not be enough for muffins!"

## APPENDIX H

Date:	Activity:	General Comments:
Marianne	Glen	Kerry
Nancy	Alexander	Paula
Michael	Michel	Simon
Stephen	Charles	Peter
Ted	Theresa	Betty
Drew	Jayne	Robin
Eleanor	Pien	Krysten
Caroline	Harry	Johnny

## APPENDIX I

## Writing Episode #1

Researcher's Question: How was your weekend? What did you do?

Jayne's Response: I babysit all week end

## Writing Episode #2

Researcher's Question: Did you have a happy holiday? Why or why not?

Jayne's Response: Yes. Because there was no school.

Researcher's Question: Did you enjoy any other part?

Jayne's Response: no because I was babysitting my brother

## Writing Episode #3

## My Journal

On Thursday nov. 21 My mother gave me Twenty dollars. I didn't spend my money On Friday nov.22 I asked Betty to come with me to North West River To the store. I brought a new Camera and a new batteries. And than we went home then we watched Video Tapes. We watched a movie called Alma. The movie was funny. When the movie was over I went to the Dance. I dance was Boring. When the dance was over I went home.

Researcher's Comment: It sounds like you had a nice week-end!

\* (No mention of babysitting)

## APPENDIX J

Tell what happened in the story Rosie's Visit.

Rosie got out of bed and she went out to see his  
grandfather. grandfather was fixing the net. And than she  
went to see her grandmother grandmother was making a fire  
(next 3 lines erased).

Answer these questions about the story Rosie's Visit.

1. Who did Rosie visit?  
Her grandmother and his grandfather.
2. What was Grandmother and Grandfather doing?  
Grandfather was fixing the net and Grandmother was  
making a fire.
3. What did Rosie and Grandmother go to?  
Rosie and Grandmother went to pick berries.
4. What else did grandmother get?  
She got some kind of plant.
5. What did grandmother do when she got home?  
Grandmother hung the plants in the shed.

6. How did Rosie feel when she woke up the next morning?

She felt different.

7. How did Grandmother help Rosie?

Grandmother went to the shed and got those dry plants and then she put the plants in the pot on the stove and pour hot water in.

8. What did Rosie make for her doll? Why?

Rosie did the same thing her grandmother did. Because her doll was sick.



## APPENDIX K

One fine <sup>(C)</sup>autumn <sup>(R)</sup>day <sup>tr...</sup> a Fox was trotting through the woods when the cry of a bird made him look up. What should he see right over his head but a big bunch of purple grapes! The grapes were wild, <sup>and</sup> but quite large and perfectly <sup>(C)</sup>ripe.

<sup>(C)</sup>Kicked The Fox licked his lips. "Grapes are just the thing for my thirst," he thought.

The <sup>grapevine</sup> had <sup>tr...</sup> trailed itself over a high <sup>the</sup> tree <sup>(C)</sup>branch, and <sup>branch</sup> <sup>(C)</sup>the bunch of grapes hung out of reach. "But <sup>were</sup> they are worth leaping for," the Fox told himself.

So he leaped high <sup>and</sup> with open mouth. It was not quite high enough, though, for his jaws snapped <sup>(C)</sup>on empty air.

"Well, next time I won't miss <sup>it</sup>," the Fox said. And he <sup>(R)</sup>leaped again. Once more he came down <sup>(C)</sup>with nothing.

"I'll try from the other side," the Fox thought. He <sup>(C)</sup>look a run, leaped, and-missed. Then he tried again. And again. But it was all in <sup>v...</sup>vain.

last  
At least the Fox gave up. He turned <sup>on</sup> his back on the  
grapes and went crossly on his way. "They are probably sour  
anyway," he said. "I'm sure there isn't a ripe grape among  
them."

If you cannot get something,  
it is <sup>not</sup> easy to say it is no good.

**APPENDIX L**

**Researcher's Question:**   What kind of special activities would you enjoy during schooltime as a reward for good school behavior?

**Jayne's Reply:**            I would like to go swimming with the class and baking cake.

**Researcher's Note:**       O.K.

**APPENDIX M**

**Researcher's Question:** Tell me what you liked and didn't like when we learned about berries?

**Jayne's Response:** I like picking berries and baking Pie. I didn't like about writing stories drawing pictures.

## APPENDIX N

## The Great Big Enormous Redberry

Once upon a time an old man who planted a redberry. The old man said, "Grow grow little redberry. Grow sweet Grow grow little redberry. Grow strong." And the redberry grew up sweet and strong and big and enormous. Then one day the old man went to pull it up. He pulled - and pulled again. But he could not pull it up. He called the old woman. The old man pulled again. But they could not pull it up. So the old woman called her granddaughter. The granddaughter pulled the old woman the old woman pulled the the old man the old man pulled the redberry they pulled and pulled. But they could not get it up. So the granddaughter called the black dog. The black dog pulled the granddaughter the granddaughter pulled the old woman. the old woman pulled the old man. the old pulled the redberry the pulled and pulled but the could not get it up. So the Black dog called the cat. The cat pulled the Black dog. The Black dog pulled the granddaughter the granddaughter pulled The old woman the old woman pulled the old man The old man pulled the redberry they pulled and pulled but they could not get it up. The cat called the mouse. The mouse pulled the cat the cat pulled black dog the black dog pulled the granddaughter. The granddaughter pulled the old woman The old woman pulled The old man. The old man pulled the redberry and they pulled and pulled and they got it up.

October 1, 1991  
Peenamin McKenzie School  
Box 70, Sheshatshit, Labrador  
AOP 1M0

Mr. Frank Galway  
Principal  
Peenamin McKenzie School  
Sheshatshit, Labrador

Dear Mr. Galway,

I would like to inform you that I plan to gather information regarding student progress in language instruction during the 1991-92 school year. The information I receive from students in the classroom will constitute the main focus of my thesis.

I propose to evaluate student progress during the execution of culturally relevant whole language themes. The evaluation will fit in with, rather than disrupt, regular classroom activities, in keeping with whole language philosophy. The types of evaluation procedures used will include samples of students' work, anecdotal record, and informal checklists, to name a few. A case study will be included as a record of language growth. The developed theme units are intended to supplement the prescribed Sprint Reading Skills Series approved for use in Sheshatshit and the Social Studies program dictated for grade six by the Department of Education for all of Newfoundland and Labrador. Curricular areas including Science, Math and others will be included if related to the theme being explored. These theme units will be included for three periods per six day cycle.

The main purpose of the incorporation of the theme units is to add cultural relevance to the curriculum and to provide meaningful and purposeful opportunity for development of the integrated Language Arts. It is my hope that students will accrue benefits due to the inclusion of these themes.

If you have further concerns now or in the future, I would be happy to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

Vanet Byrne-Turpin

cc. G. Butler  
P. Dutton  
P. Penashue









