

**Proposal Summary
for
A First Nations Centre
at
Douglas College**

Prepared by:
The Douglas College
Foundation
March 7, 1996

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I. The Experience of a First Nations Learner

“Survivor of the Residential School System” - Betsy Bruyer’s Story

As Douglas College’s First Nations Coordinator, Betsy Bruyere is, in many ways, an exemplar of the First Nations experience with education over the past thirty years. She is a self-described “Survivor of the Residential School System,” the school system that controlled Native education in Canada well into the 1960s. Betsy later transferred to a “mainline” school secondary education to continue her studies (residential schools usually only taught as far as the Grade 6 level). She quickly became disheartened by the alien culture and racism she encountered there, however. Her escape from the school system came in the form of starting regular work at age 12 and dropping out of school midway through Grade 8. At age 15 she married and started having children.

The Turning Point

Betsy’s decision to resume her educational pursuits coincided with two events in her life. The first was the passing into adulthood of her children. The second was the “fire” that stirred in her heart as a result of the Oka crisis. Betsy began enrolling in classes at the Vancouver Native Education Centre and eventually ending up in the Criminal Justice Studies program, a program run in partnership between the Native Education Centre and Douglas College. After transferring to Douglas College to complete her program of study, Betsy was witness to a large unmet need of support services for First Nations learners. She became active in Douglas College’s Student Society, and did volunteer work as the College’s first First Nations Coordinator.

II. Douglas College’s First Nations Coordinator’s Office

Introduction

Due in large part to Betsy’s efforts, Douglas College obtained provincial funding in 1993 for a First Nations Coordinator’s Office at Douglas College. The First Nations Coordinator’s Office now serves the needs of approximately 90 “status” or registered First Nations Learners, and an indeterminate number of “non-status” First Nations Learners who do, nonetheless, identify themselves as First Nations. (Certain restrictions apply to the collection of data on the ethnic background of Douglas College students.)

Mandate

The mandate of the First Nations Coordinator’s Office is to provide support services to First Nations students, the objective being to increase their participation and retention (i.e. success) rates. The First Nations Office achieves this objective primarily through the provision of **counseling and referral services** to First Nations students. The First Nations Office also **conducts forums and workshops to raise awareness of First Nations issues on campus and to provide cross-cultural training to College faculty and administration.**

III. Needs Assessment

The Low Post-Secondary Retention Rates of First Nations Students

Over the past thirty years, Canada's First Nations have made significant educational progress, particularly in high school completion rates. Much of this success stems from the greater control given First Nations over the education of their children since the early 1970s. As a result, primary and secondary schools have been created that incorporate First Nations experience and cultural values in the process of learning and teaching. The success of this approach is evident: whereas in 1976 only 14% of the Aboriginal population completed high school, by 1993 completion rates had increased to 78%.

The Culture Shock Experienced by First Nations Learners

Today, First Nations Learners attend post-secondary institutions in record numbers, their participation rates being approximately 80% that of the general population. Unfortunately, the culture shock experienced by many First Nations Learners results in abnormally low retention rates. One study has found that 70% of First Nations Learners enrolled in mainstream post-secondary institutions fail to complete their program of study. At the other end of the scale are the success rates of First Nations Institutes, which claim an average 85% completion rates for their students. Further studies have shown that the participation and retention rates of First Nations Learners "increase dramatically when support services are built into delivery systems."

IV. First Nations Centre - Methods of Approach

Objective: Increasing the Educational Participation & Retention of First Nations

Douglas College is committed to removing barriers to learning in its programs. It provides people with opportunities to learn, but the College's commitment also includes providing support for students in their learning activities. Dropping out of an education program can be an extremely demoralizing experience for the student; it is also a waste of valuable time and resources. The primary objective of Douglas College's First Nations Coordinator Office, therefore, is to increase both the participation and retention rates of First Nations Students.

Douglas College's First Nations Centre

Incorporating the experience and values of First Nations culture is the essential element to promoting the success of First Nations students. It will also benefit Douglas College by demonstrating the viability of alternative approaches to learning. Douglas College therefore proposes to establish a First Nations Centre, to be housed in a distinctive facility in the new Pinetree Way campus. The Centre will expand upon the programs and services presently offered through the First Nations Coordinator's Office. It will also offer a number of new programs that will be unique in main-line post-secondary education institutions.

Programs and Services to be Offered Through the First Nations Centre

1) Support Services

- Lay counseling
- Referrals to culturally appropriate resources services
- Liaison with Bands, Sponsors and College
- Advocacy on First Nations Learners issues
- Networking with First Nations communities, organizations and other educational institutions
- Cultural awareness workshops

2) Resource Library

- Materials with a First Nation's perspective
- Compendium of First Nations self-government initiatives
- First Nations representative organizations and their Histories

3) Awareness Programming

- First Nations Learners issues symposiums
- First Nations Land Claims forums
- Douglas College Faculty/Staff development
- First Nations community input seminars
- First Nations Advisory Committees development

4) Cultural Development

- Elders traditional teachings studies (Medicine Wheel and Longhouse)
- Beadwork instruction
- Button Blanket instruction
- Drum making instruction

5) Mentoring Program

- Assistance in developing academic skills
- Networking to share academic skills
- Support for successful transition into College
- Advice and support with career planning

6) Elder in Residence Program

- Spiritual Guidance
- Personal counseling
- Traditional Elder's Teachings (Medicine Wheel and Longhouse)
- Advisor to the College

Long-Term Vision - The Revival of Aboriginal Languages

Of Canada's 53 native languages, 43 are on the verge of extinction - a legacy of the assimilationist goals of the residential school system (please refer to attached historical background and newspaper article). Of the aboriginal Canadians who have attended secondary school, only 5% report having received instruction in an aboriginal language. Unfortunately, virtually the only people left who are fluent in the aboriginal tongues are the First Nation elders. Given that language is the primary carrier of cultural values, a long-term goal of the First Nations Centre will be to include First Nations language instruction by its Elders-in-Residence.

Preliminary Assessment of Resources Required to Carry Out Proposed Program

	To be funded by Douglas College and/or Province	Remaining Resources Required
1) Staff		
• First Nations Services Coordinator	✓	
• Assistant First Nations Coordinator	✓	
• Mentoring Facilitator	✓	
• Elder in Residence	✓	
2) Space		
• First Nations Services Coordinator's office	✓	✓
• Clerical and waiting area	✓	✓
• Mentoring Facilitator's office	✓	✓
• Elder's office	✓	✓
• Library space	✓	✓
• Study area	✓	✓
• Activities area	✓	✓
3) Equipment		
• Computers (2)		✓
• Printer		✓
• Stationary	✓	
• Filing cabinets		✓
• Office desks and chairs (4)		✓
• Activity tables (4) and chairs (40)		✓
• Display shelves		✓
• Library shelves		✓
• Library books and materials		✓
• Material for cultural activities		✓
4) Honorariums		
• Symposium presenters		✓
• Land Claims Forum presenters		✓
• Facilitator for faculty/staff development		✓
• Mentors		✓

Appendices

Historical Background

British Columbia's First Nations: A Proud History

When European explorers first arrived at the end of the 18th century in what is now British Columbia, they encountered a vigorous and dynamic collection of aboriginal communities. With a population of around 100,000 people, it was the most heavily populated region of what was to become Canada, its native communities accounting for approximately 40% of British North America's total population. Described by historians as "among the world's most distinctive peoples,"¹ B.C.'s native communities formed one of the most significant centres of Native American civilization north of Mexico. Six of the eleven major aboriginal linguistic

families of Canada were spoken by its peoples - a highly diverse population noted for their cultural sophistication, social and political organization, and material wealth.



Indians of British Columbia, Population Distribution, 1835. Each dot represents 100 persons

Consequences of European Contact

Contact with European traders through the fur trade initially brought increased levels of prosperity to B.C.'s native peoples. Unfortunately, it also introduced a number of highly disruptive factors to native society, not the least of which were disease, firearms, alcohol and the gradual displacement of its traditional economic base by European settlers. By 1885, owing primarily to several epidemics that raged in native settlements throughout B.C., the native population declined precipitously to 28,000 in 1885, and reached an all-time low of 22,000 in 1929. This population decline was paralleled by a corresponding unraveling of the native social fabric, the underlying cause of which has been explicitly acknowledged by several observers, among them Richard Charles Mayne, who noted in 1862 that:

*"[t]he Indians of the interior are, both physically and morally, vastly superior to the tribes of the coast. This is no doubt owing in great part to their comparatively slight intercourse with white men, as the northern and least known coast tribes of both [Vancouver] island and mainland are much finer men than those found in the neighbourhood of the settlements."*²

¹ *The Indian History of British Columbia*, Vol. 1, by Wilson Duff, Prov. of B.C., 1964, pg. 8.

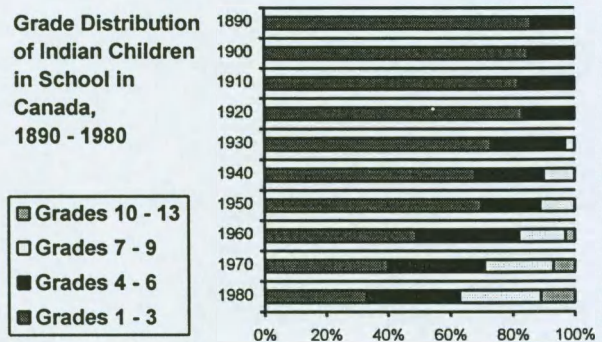
² *The Forces Which Shaped Them*, by Mary Ashworth, quoted from *Native Literacy Life Skills and Curriculum Guidelines*, B.C. Ministry of Education, 1984, pg. 308.

Residential Schools: The Assimilation of First Nations Through Education

The solution proffered by government officials and missionaries to the problems ailing native societies was to embark upon an extensive program of “civilizing” them, primarily through education in residential schools. Under this alien education regime native children were removed, often forcibly, from the influence of their parents and community and made to adopt the European language and customs of their teachers. The explicit goal of residential schools was not so much education of native children as it was their assimilation. The often severe education practices employed at the schools “ignored or rejected the world-views, languages and values of Aboriginal parents in the education of their children. The outcome was the gradual loss of these world-views, languages and cultures and the creation of widespread social and psychological upheaval in Aboriginal communities.”³

The Legacy of Assimilationist Education Policies

The overtly assimilationist goals of the Canadian education system, as experienced by its First Nations, has left a lasting impact on native attitudes toward formal schooling. Besides the serious erosion of native culture, the primary legacy of native education for most of this century has been extremely low education participation and attainment rates among native people. As late as the mid-1970s, when the last residential school was finally closed, the proportion of natives graduating high school was less than a quarter that of the general population. This low level of completion can be best understood as a visceral reaction of First Nations to the education system. In a very real sense, “the failure of non-Native education of Natives can be read as the success of Native resistance to cultural, spiritual and psychological genocide.”⁴



Source: *Indian Education in Canada: The Legacy*

Reclaiming Indian Control of Indian Education

Recognizing the manifest failure of the education system provided to it, the aboriginal community moved decisively in 1972 to reclaim responsibility for its peoples' education. In that year, the National Indian Brotherhood issued a Policy Paper, entitled “Indian Control of Indian Education,” which called for greater power over education to be invested with native parents and local band authorities. The primary purpose behind Indian Control of Indian Education is summed up in the policy paper's statement of values:

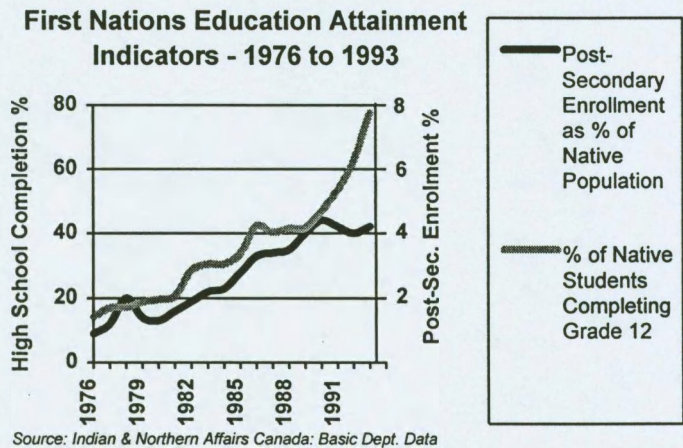
³ *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, Marie Battiste & Jean Barman, eds., UBC Press, 1995, pg. viii.

⁴ *Redefinition of Indian Education*, by Eber Hampton, quoted from “First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds,” Marie Battiste & Jean Barman, eds., UBC Press, 1995, pg. 7.

“... to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture. The values which we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. They are found in our history, in our legends and in the culture. We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the important Indian values he will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian.”⁵

The Success of Native Based Education

The success of the reforms brought about by Indian Control of Indian Education are readily apparent. Whereas in 1972 only 16.2% of on-reserve students graduated from Grade 12, by 1993 this rate had risen to 77.7%. The success of Indian controlled education has also had some spill over effect on native enrollment in post-secondary institutions. Between 1976 and 1993 the number of Registered Indians enrolled in post-secondary institutions grew an astounding 870%, from 2,684 to 23,388 students. These gains were only partially offset by the rapid growth of the native population, a factor figured into the accompanying graph, which shows native post-secondary enrollment as a percentage of the total native population.



⁵ *Indian Control of Indian Education*, by the National Indian Brotherhood, 1973, pg. 2.

The Situation Today

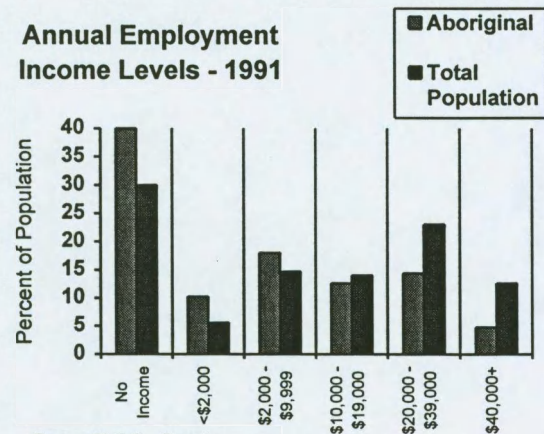
Retention Rates of First Nations Learners

With the rapid growth in First Nations participation in post-secondary education, a new educational challenge is now arising. The nature of this challenge relates to student retention rates - in other words, the percentage of First Nations students entering a post-secondary program who complete their program of study. While the proportion of Aboriginal people enrolled in post-secondary education programs is now 80% that of the general population, non-Aboriginals are three times more likely to graduate.⁶ One study conducted by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs found that more than 70% of First Nations students who begin a university program at the undergraduate level do not complete a degree.⁷

Low Education Attainment and Its Consequences

Whatever the cause, low levels of post-secondary educational achievement among native students remains both a symptom and the root cause of a number of other social ills that plague Canada's First Nations. Numerous studies have established the direct connections between educational attainment, employment rates and income levels. The unemployment rate for aboriginal people bears out this thesis; at 25%, it is 150% higher than that of the general population (10%). Similar disparities can also be discerned in a wide range of other crucial measures of social health, such as income levels, suicide rates, levels of substance abuse and incarceration rates in the prison system.

Annual Employment
Income Levels - 1991



Source: Statistics Canada

Findings of the "Green Report"

In 1990, the B.C. Government commissioned an Advisory Report on Native Indian Access to B.C.'s post-secondary institutions. The "Green Report" identified "major impediments influencing the participation and completion rates of Native students in the provincial post-secondary system".⁸ The report goes on to note that, "obstacles to access are exacerbated by the unique needs of each of British Columbia's First Nations. The unique history, culture, values and traditions of each nation and their learning needs pose a special challenge to the provincial post-secondary system."⁹

⁶ Based on 1991 Census data, Statistics Canada

⁷ *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, "Honoring What They Say: Postsecondary Experiences of First Nations Graduates," Jo-ann Archibald & Carl Urion, eds., UBC Press, Vol. 21, Num. 1, 1995.

⁸ *Report of the Prov. Advisory Committee of Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners*, 1990, pg. 29.

⁹ Ibid.

The Barriers to First Nations in Post-Secondary Education

Several major impediments influence the participation and completion rates of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education. These include: **lack of Aboriginal involvement in the decision-making process**, overlapping Federal and Provincial jurisdictions, **cultural variations**, **systemic bias**, **lack of relevant programming**, **financial limitations** and geographic distance from post-secondary centres.¹⁰ In a very real sense, the situation of modern Aboriginal students in the post-secondary system can be seen to parallel the experience of their elders in the residential school system: native faculty are virtually non-existent, the subject matter of courses tends to be highly Eurocentric in nature, and the pedagogy employed often fails to incorporate proven methods of First Nations approaches to learning and teaching.

Incorporating a First Nations Perspective into Post-secondary Institutions

There is little mystery as to what is required to improve the success rates of First Nations students in the post-secondary system. Research has shown that **participation and success rates for Aboriginal learners increase dramatically when support services tailored to their culture and needs are built into delivery methods for post-secondary education.**¹¹ Evidence to support this view can be derived from the experience of First Nations run post-secondary institutions, which claim an average 85% completion rate for their students.¹²

New strategies for improving the participation and success of First Nations must provide for support systems which recognize, strengthen, and incorporate Aboriginal culture and tradition in the delivery of post-secondary education programs. The unique history, culture, values and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and their learning needs must be reflected in strategies which allow the adult learner to incorporate individual experience into the process of learning.¹³ For as at least one noted native author has pointed out: "For whatever reason, whoever is to blame, Indian education defined as non-Indian education of Indians has a long and conclusive history of failure."¹⁴

¹⁰ *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, Policy paper adopted by B.C. Provincial Cabinet, June, 1995, pg. 10.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Report of the Prov. Advisory Committee of Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners*, 1990, pg. 14.

¹³ *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, Policy paper adopted by B.C. Provincial Cabinet, June, 1995, pg. 10.

¹⁴ *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, Marie Battiste & Jean Barman, eds., "Towards a Redefinition of Indian Education," Eber Hampton, UBC Press, 1995, pg. 7.



Betsy Bruyere (left), the College's First Nations Student Services Coordinator, is a graduate of Douglas College's Native Criminal Justice Program offered at the Native Education Centre in Vancouver for students of First Nations ancestry. Hannele Jantti (right) is coordinator and also teaches in the program, which adds native issues courses and a practicum in a criminal justice setting to the standard criminology curriculum.

Criminal justice program offered at Native Education Centre now in ninth year

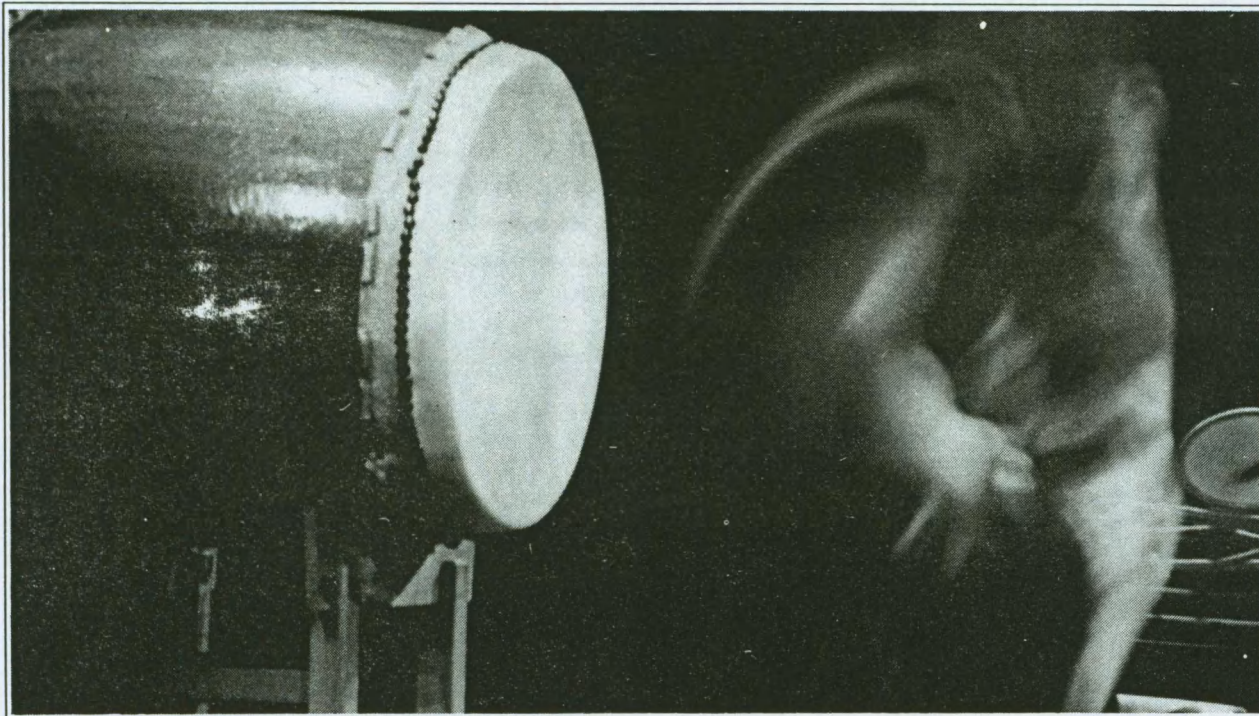
The Native Education Centre (NEC) in Vancouver provides upgrading and post-secondary education in a culturally sensitive setting to students of First Nations ancestry. The NEC is

sponsored by the Urban Native Indian Education Society, an all-Aboriginal community non-profit group.

Since 1987, Douglas College has offered the Native Criminal Justice

Program at the NEC. The innovative program lets native students complete a one-year certificate there, and then continue criminology studies at Douglas

The Uzume Taiko beat



The percussionists of Uzume Taiko brought their big drum music to the Performing Arts Theatre on January 18 as part of the Noon at New West concert series. The hour of rhythmic drumming and choreography left the audience shaken and stirred.

Native Education continued from page 1
College or proceed directly to SFU's BA program in criminology.

Along with the standard criminology curriculum, students at the NEC take two native issues courses: IDST 110 (Native Studies) and Criminology 255 (Native North Americans and the Administration of Justice). As part of the first year, they do a nine-week practicum in an area of the criminal justice system that they choose.

"Practicum placements are in policing, courts, or corrections. For example, students may work as native court workers assisting native accused, or work in victim services," says program coordinator and instructor Hannele Jantti. "In corrections, they may work in youth or adult institutions, in probation or parole offices, or with youth in the community. Also, they may go back to their own communities to do their practicums."

This year's class of 24 students come from diverse backgrounds from across Canada and throughout the North. "There is a big variation in terms of their heritage and their exposure to their heritage," says Jantti.

The Douglas College program is highly regarded in the native and non-native communities. The graduate best known to people at the College is Betsy Bruyere, the First Nations Student Services Coordinator. She now helps native students make a successful transition from the NEC to second year criminology here.

Bruyere, who was put through the residential school system, says the Native Education Centre helped her turn her life around.

"When I entered I had very small dreams. The more I studied at NEC, the more my understanding broadened of First Nations cultures and issues. Prior to that I was a broken person, but there I

heard the sound of the drum, and discovered that I could dance to it."

Bruyere entered the program in 1990 after deciding that she needed to improve her living situation. "I realized that my education was limited. I had experienced lots of racism over Oka during the summer of 1990 in my community. I saw that I had to do some reflection and that led to the desire for more education. I'm very glad that I went. Hannele was always there for us, no matter what it was."

Completely native-run, the NEC also offers adult basic education, college preparation, and skills training programs in tourism, public administration, early childhood education, office administration, computer training, community counselling, youth worker training, and alcohol and drug counselling.

For more information, call Hannele Jantti at 873-3772 (voice mailbox 554). ■

Vanishing languages imperil native culture

BY RUDY PLATIEL
Native Affairs Reporter

HELEN Salter, 93, lay dying in a Toronto hospital in December, and her passing was to mean more than a family's grief over the loss of a loved one.

When her spirit finally left her body, a language also took a small step closer to death.

Mrs. Salter was believed to be the last person in Canada to speak Tuscarora fluently, those familiar with the language say.

One of the languages of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, Tuscarora is one of 2,000 to 3,000 languages around that world that are moving — seemingly inexorably — toward extinction.

In a world fretting about overpopulation, paradoxically up to half of all spoken languages are in danger of disappearing forever. According to New Scientist magazine, the planet is home to about 6,000 languages, but only 600 are considered to be safe. The vast majority of the world's languages are spoken by only a small number of people, and the magazine says up to half

of these languages could disappear within the next century as the few remaining speakers die.

Five languages have come to dominate the Earth: Chinese, English, Spanish, Russian and Hindi are spoken by half the world's population. If 100 other languages are added, the total covers 95 per cent

of what is spoken by the world's 5.7 billion people.

In Canada, the percentage of the population that speaks neither of the two official languages of English and French is rising steadily as immigrants bring their own languages with them, Statistics Canada says.

Please see *Aboriginal / A6*

SURVIVAL / To remove the mode of transmitting ideas is to destroy a people, Indians say.

◆ From Page A1

But among aboriginal people, the situation is reversed. Native languages are falling rapidly to the onslaught of English.

Of Canada's 53 native languages, 43 were classified as on the "verge of extinction" in a 1990 report of the House of Commons standing committee on aboriginal affairs. An additional seven were listed as threatened.

Only three — Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut — are considered to have an excellent chance of survival, said the committee's report, entitled *You Took My Talk: Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment*.

In California, there has been a backlash against the immigration-spurred proliferation of languages and calls for the official recognition of the Hispanic language.

Some experts argue that moving to a few common languages improves communication and fosters a better understanding among people in the world.

But Joanne Weinhotz, a teacher at the Tuscarora School near Lewiston, N.Y., said language is more than just communication. "It opens up our understanding of how we think."

If the Tuscarora language disappears, Ms. Weinhotz said, a full insight into Tuscarora culture and thinking will be lost forever.

What will also be gone is the diversity of views about the world and life, said Amos Key, the language director of the Woodlands Cultural Centre at the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ont.

Mr. Key said each language reflects a different cultural "world view," and that is what is being lost — sometimes deliberately eliminated — in the drift toward a few common languages.

"If you want to destroy a people, you get their language first. Then there is no mode to transmit ideas or concepts," he said. "If you want to have another world view, you get rid of the language and bring in another language, and that brings in another world view."

Mr. Key, who launched a rescue program for Iroquoian languages 10 years ago, said there are 127 Cayuga speakers left on the reserve, 80 Mohawk speakers, 36 Onondaga and one Seneca, as well as 245 Oneida at another reserve near London, Ont.

He said he had thought Mrs. Salter's brother, Robert Mount Pleasant, who died in 1994, was the last Tuscarora speaker in Canada. It wasn't until two months before her death that he discovered that Mrs. Salter, who was living in Toronto, was the last one in her family to be fluent in the language. "Now she's gone."

Mrs. Salter's daughter, Pat Turner, said her mother and her older brothers and sisters spoke Tuscarora among themselves. But while Mrs. Salter's younger siblings were able to understand the language, they would always reply in English.

Mr. Key said the reason it is so difficult to track down the last speakers is that for years many of the elderly often hid the fact that they spoke one of the Iroquoian languages.

That is a direct result of a century of deliberate policies by the federal government, church residential schools and the public-education system to eradicate aboriginal languages, he said.

"I truly believe my people were persecuted, socially, spiritually and morale-wise. That's why the languages went underground," he said. "My parents were punished for speaking their language, and they had horror stories to tell me about strapping."

Meno Boldt, a professor of sociology at the University of Leth-



Tuscarora teacher Betsy Bissell, above, displays pronunciation chart for the Iroquois Confederacy language. At left, Pat Turner holds photograph of her mother, Helen Salter, who died recently and may have been the last person in Canada to speak Tuscarora fluently.

(RUDY PLATIEL/The Globe and Mail)

current generation of parents have already lost the language, and it is only a very few elderly people who still speak it fluently on the reservation.

"But most will not speak it publicly, she said. "Many of the old-timers won't even let you in the door."

Preserving the language in the form of a dictionary is not good enough, she said, because what is lost are the nuances and different phrasing in the language.

Ms. Weinhotz and teacher Betsy Bissell are regular visitors to Tuscarora elder Howard Hill, 73, who is drafting his own Tuscarora dictionary and helping the teachers and students.

Mr. Hill said that as a child he spoke only Tuscarora until he was sent to school and suddenly found it forbidden. "We would hide in a closet to speak Tuscarora, because if we got caught, we'd be hit."

Efforts are being made to videotape and record the language, but even so, it is clear that much is already lost.

What is now being recorded at the 11th hour are everyday words of Tuscarora that were used in conversations between family and friends.

Despite the effort, it is an open question whether teachers at the Tuscarora School will be able to preserve a record of enough of that conversational Tuscarora to enable it to survive, or whether written dictionaries and pronunciation charts will be all that remain for future generations.

bridge in Alberta, agrees that soon a very few aboriginal languages will be left if the current trend continues.

"There is this idea that languages will survive inadvertently ... simply because they have stayed alive this long," said Prof. Boldt, the author of a book entitled *Surviving as Indians: The Challenge of Self-Government*, which is based on his 25 years of study.

"That is just wrong ... because all the trends show this is not going to be the case."

The Tuscaroras, a once-powerful tribe in the Carolinas, first lived in peace with settlers. But encroachments by settlers and the kidnapping of Tuscarora youth for slavery provoked them into a

military conflict that decimated the tribe. The survivors began a 90-year-long migration north, where in 1722 they became the sixth nation of the Iroquois Confederacy.

After the American Revolution, those who supported the British fled to the Six Nations Reserve on the Grand River in Ontario while those who sided with the Americans ended up on a reservation just across the border at Lewiston, N.Y.

Now, the reservation near Lewiston is the last Tuscarora bastion outside of a small population in North Carolina. At the Tuscarora School, teachers are working with a few elders to try to teach children the language.

Ms. Weinhotz said most of the

Natives strive to revive tongue

BY RUDY PLATIEL
Native Affairs Reporter
Ohsweken, Ont.

Mohawk and Cayuga students immerse themselves in a project aimed at undoing the damage inflicted by educators of another era.

MATTHEW Miller and his fellow Mohawk and Cayuga students are part of an unusual class that has been blazing a new language-immersion trail on the Six Nations Indian Reserve.

Since their days in kindergarten, Matthew, 15, and the other students have been leading the way for the 300 immersion students coming up behind them through the reserve's elementary school system.

Now, he and his fellow students have reached Grade 9 and have become the first high-school native-language immersion class on the reserve.

Being put into a class that requires Mohawk and Cayuga students to learn their own language as well as maintain provincial-standard marks in English subjects is pressure, Matthew said. "But it's like gaining a language instead of losing one."

The drilling in the Mohawk and Cayuga languages is a far cry

from the days when aboriginal children in Canada were punished in the church or government-run schools if they tried to speak their native tongue.

At the time, educators and teachers believed that they were doing the children a favour by forcing them to forget their native language and learn English. They reasoned that this would assure that native students could assimilate into the dominant white society.

But a century of official government policies on assimilation did not work. The majority of aboriginal people resisted, and today there is a renaissance of pride in being native.

One aspect of the policies did work: It drove native language underground and put the majority of aboriginal languages in Canada on the verge of extinction.

Parents on the Six Nations Re-

serve began organizing immersion classes 10 years ago when people suddenly realized that members of the last generation fluent in the languages were already over 65 and that as they began to die, the language came closer to being lost, said Matthew's father, Allan, who is chairman of the program's planning committee.

"A lot of us realized it was the turning point. You either do something about it now or it's gone," Mr. Miller said.

"My father spoke Mohawk but he never taught me." Helping other parents start the school prompted him to begin learning the language as well, he said. "It's not the dominant language at home, but we do try."

Mr. Miller said his son cited another reason students like to be in an immersion school: They say they are not confronted with the racism that some native students

face in off-reserve schools.

"We don't have to implement an antiracism policy here," he joked.

The high-school program has been set up with the help and cooperation of the public Haldimand Board of Education. The parents hold fund-raising events to pay costs not covered, such as heating for the school building.

Sixty per cent of the program is in English, with the remaining in either Mohawk or Cayuga.

"We are utilizing what the Haldimand board has to offer, using their guidelines and trying to achieve the same result, but from our perspective," Mr. Miller said.

"We may not necessarily study Christopher Columbus in our history class," but the immersion students are required to achieve the same level of knowledge in subjects as is the standard in the off-reserve school system, he said.

Paradoxically, Mr. Miller said, the succeeding waves of students coming up through the immersion system are now able to speak Mohawk and Cayuga much more fluently than the first class. "The ones coming behind are much more in a protected shell," he said.

Unearthing buried history

Though their history has generally been ignored, societies thrived here long before the arrival of Europeans

Four First Nations groups (Musqueam, Burrard, Qayqayt and Katzie) have laid land claims to New Westminster. And as their cases proceed in negotiations, it is obvious that the process will be long and controversial. The question of which groups can claim aboriginal title to this land will undoubtedly be hotly debated.

Researchers are relying on stories passed down through the generations and on records made by early Europeans.

Of particular interest is the newcomer on the land claims scene — the Qayqayt Indians.

Last week reporter Lori Pappajohn wrote about how Rhonda Ferguson came to discover her roots as extending to a New Westminster Indian reservation. This week, in the second part of the this two-part series, Pappajohn examines the history of natives in New Westminster.



Hold still: This New Westminster photo taken circa 1905 is entitled "Indians camped at Cannery Buildings". The photographer -- B.T. Straiton of Vancouver -- may have had some trouble getting such a large group to pose; two men at centre right are beginning to fight. The smaller of the two is holding a box which may have been used in shipbuilding.

Photo courtesy of New Westminster Public Library

Rhonda Ferguson is chief of the Qayqayt Indians — a band that calls New Westminster its home and aboriginal land. The band is seeking compensation for its 104-acre reservation which was arbitrarily closed by the government in 1916. At the time, the natives were told to move. As far as Ferguson's research indicates, natives were not given compensation for losing their homes. In the land claims process, Ferguson is seeking to right this wrong and is asking for enough land for seven generations of her 25-member First Nations community.

But the question remains to be answered — who were the Qayqayt Indians and did they exist as a nation or were they a conglomerate of a number of tribes?

The question is a difficult, if not impossible one to answer. Historical records disagree, land claims negotiators disagree and, in the end, after one wades through the mountains of research, one realizes the question can likely only be answered by those who lived here 200 years ago.

As far as Ferguson is concerned, the Qayqayts existed as a nation.

"We have to be," she says, pointing out that she was named to the Qayqayt band by the federal government whose records include a Qayqayt band.

However, while historical records make numerous mentions of the Kwantlen, Coquitlam, Katzie and Musqueam Indians, Qayqayt, in most historical records, is mentioned in connection with a Kwantlen fishing village in what is now Brownsville, across the river from Westminster Quay. Some historians have also called it a Musqueam village and a Musqueam and Tsawwassen fishery.

But there is an account of a person referred to as "R.J., the Chilliwack informant" saying that the Qayqayt village was part of a small tribe at New Westminster whose territory extended through to Mud Bay.

More than 170 years ago, the banks of the Fraser River that are now known as New Westminster and Whalley, were the home of the powerful and large Kwantlen Indian tribe. Kwantlens lived in two main villages — Skalametl (now New

Westminster's Fraserview Subdivision) and across the river at Qayqayt (later to become Brownsville, around Pattullo Bridge head).

According to Kwantlen tradition, a Kwantlen chief living in what is now New Westminster, looked across the river and thought the area would make a good fishing village. He then had his Coquitlam Indian slaves fill in the swampy area with rocks and earth.

Historians believe that Qayqayt is the name of this Kwantlen fishing village where the Coquitlam serfs lived and where the Kwantlens fished.

In 1827 when white men built Fort Langley, the Kwantlen Indians left their New Westminster site and moved to the fort to control the fur trade there. The Hudson's Bay Company had the exclusive license to trade for furs with the natives in what was then called "Indian Territory" (now British Columbia). Some Kwantlens may have remained behind at their old villages or other natives, such as Musqueam, may have moved into the two mostly-abandoned villages.

However, in 1860, when Colonel Moody chose the site for New Westminster, it appears there had not been a permanent seasonal Indian camp there for some 30 years, surmises local historian Jim Wolf.

City museum curator Archie Miller agrees. "The Royal Engineers kept meticulous records. If there had been a native settlement there, they would have made note of it."

However, Col. Moody had apparently moved some Musqueam Indians from Sapperton across the river to Qayqayt where he established a reserve for them in April 1860. Initially, according to Euro-

pean accounts, the natives saw the white man's coming as a benefit to them, and natives from numerous tribes began to move into the New Westminster townsite looking for work or wanting to live near and observe this new and rather odd race.

No doubt, the Indians thought it curious that people would go to such lengths to build elaborate houses for themselves. When Col. Moody built for himself an ornate home, he had a challenging reply.

In 1860, Mr. T.W. Herring was farming on the Surrey side of the Fraser River and he noted that at that time Qayqayt was the location of a house belonging to the Musqueam chief Ts'smlanexw. The style of his house, complete with gabled roof, was modeled after the house built on the opposite side of the river in Sapperton and belonging to Colonel Richard Moody.

By 1861, there was an Indian Reserve at Qayqayt. Eighteen years later, the Indian Reserve Commission confirmed adjoining Indian Reserves here for the Musqueam and Langley Indians (Kwantlen).

The Kwantlen Chief Casmier protested vociferously but unsuccessfully against the granting of this land to the Musqueam Indians, stating that it was "the land of his forefathers and not known to the Musqueams."

In the small town of New Westminster, natives got jobs clearing land, unloading ships, or as cannery workers or household servants.

European and native cultures clashed over the



Rhonda Ferguson is chief of the Qayqayt First Nation which lays claim to lands in the New Westminster area.

Raising their voices

When Indian Affairs suggested to

Qayqayt Chief Rhonda Ferguson that she hold a public meeting in New Westminster and welcome the people to her territory, she was at first reluctant.

The meeting was held last February in the Ironworkers Hall on 12th Street.

"The people who attended were 60 to 40 against us.

"They wanted to know who we were, why we want what we want. People said things like: "We don't want these people here."

"I took my whole family and told them we would smile and be pleasant no matter what anyone said. But it was hard."

Recently Rhonda attended a conference entitled Honouring Our Grandmothers.

The women told the stories of the residential schools and losing touch with their families, language and everything that was their culture.

"They were put in the schools at age eight and weren't allowed to speak their language or do anything from their culture. They came out at Grade 12 and were sent back to the reserve and a culture they had been alienated from and forbidden from participating in."

One of Ferguson's goals is to have the full history of New Westminster written in a textbook -- not just the white man's history.

See Muddle on Pg. 4

Continued from page one

concerned about the way it was done and the impact it is having on the parking situation.

"I can understand why they put them in — it was a mess. They were making a mess of whoever's yard it is," he said. "I don't like they way they did it. They just walked in and put it up."

Allan Pope, general manager of Odyssey Medical Equipment, said the area's parking situation is taking its toll on his business. "Parking is always a problem. We are not asking for free parking but if it is not being utilized for something else we should be able to use it."

In the 25 years Vera Hippensteel has operated her hair salon on Cedar Street, she's never seen parking so bad. "It is very important in our business to have that parking. It wasn't bothering anybody whatso-

Hippensteel recently stood in a parking spot to reserve it until a customer arrived, much to the chagrin of other customers who were waiting to have their hair done.

"There is absolutely no place to

customer in the hair salon, who parked in a local restaurant's parking lot because she knows someone there.

"Otherwise I would have no place to park."

That wasn't a parking lot

The city hasn't taken parking spaces away from residents because they were never really theirs to use in the first place.

According to engineering technologist Steve Day, the piece of land that Sapperton residents and merchants had been using for parking is city-owned property. Part of the city land has been used to build an access lane and part is a grassy area people began to use as parking.

"We had complaints from members of the public in Sapperton that people were parking illegally on city-owned property," Day said. "Our bylaws do not allow parking lots on private property without rezoning."

Day said the city installed concrete "no posts" on the grassy area after receiving complaints from residents about the illegal parking.

"I know parking is tight all through New Westminster. That was never a parking lot. It was purely a lane to give access to the back of that property," he said. "It never was a parking lot, not even before the lane."

City's history remains muddled

CONTINUED from page 3

concept of ownership. In native culture things were shared — property was communal. The concept of property, such as lot division, was not part of the native society.

And so, the natives moved into town. Vacant lots and city squares looked to the natives like likely places to pitch their tents.

Not able to communicate in the same language, conditioned to think of them as savages, the British wanted the natives moved out.

However, a group of people led by medical doctor Silas Crain, tried to have the Indian's residency in the city protected.

Those who opposed natives living in the town made their points known vehemently in the local newspaper in 1864 stating that some natives were living on private lots, leased to them by the owners and "subjecting decent people . . . to the intolerant nuisance of having filthy, degraded debauched Indians as next door neighbours."

Obviously the controversy didn't go away, as the newspaper reports two years later that Siwash Indians erected huts in Merchant Square (now Hyack Square).

In 1878, the Indian reserve commissioner counted 172 Indians living at New Westminster and belonging to 10 different bands.

Despite the controversies, many natives took to Victorian life. Photographs from the 1800s show them in Victorian attire complete with suit and hat celebrating the Queen's birthday or attending parades.

In 1916, the government closed the Indian reserves in New Westminster forcing the natives to leave their homes and move elsewhere.

Because of conflicting documentation regarding who lived in this area before the coming of Europeans, the process of land claims settlement in the City of New Westminster, may, like other areas in the province, be a controversial one.

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A special Sunday report by Lori Pappajohn

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SUNDAY

IN THE CITY

It'll be a two-way race for the Liberal seat in New Westminster.
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Downtown businesses are concerned about a possible Rapid Bus line.
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It was good in theory, but in practice a plan which saw certain council meetings devoted to issues, or say, delegations is turning out to be very complicated. City council looks at its meeting schedule.
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City police and apartment managers are teaming up to make rental accomodation less attractive to criminals.
Story/Pg. 7

Money, money, money: Museum group tour costs could rise, the swimming fee in the Canada Games Pool will rise, and the aging carpet in the library is going to be replaced for \$165,000. It's all in city council briefs.
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It's a hard line on smokers. The city has agreed to designate 80 per cent of city restaurants smoke free.
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-FLYERS-
Today, Save On Foods, Home Spot, Extra Foods, Real Canadian Superstore, Buy and Save
*not in all areas



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RHONDA FERGUSON: She wanted to learn more about her ancestors; in the process she became chief of the New Westminster band.
Craig Sleik/NOW

Search takes her home...

When Rhonda Ferguson was growing up, there was one thing she desperately wanted to know — who she was and who her ancestors were.

It was a question she was to ask her mother many times and a question her mother would refuse to answer.

Rhonda's question was always the same: "Mommy, what was it like when you were growing up?"

And the answer was also always the same: "Never mind, dear."

And so, the day Rhonda discovered the answer to her question, she found herself inadvertently and irreversibly on a journey she could never have imagined.

So traumatically did her life change because of the answer to that question that Rhonda has taken a leave of absence from her work to totally devote her time to this most-unexpected journey.

This is her story:

Rhonda is a Native Indian who grew up in Vancouver. Her mother was Native, her father White.

When Rhonda was 25 years old, once again, for the umpteenth time, she begged her mother to tell her about her past.

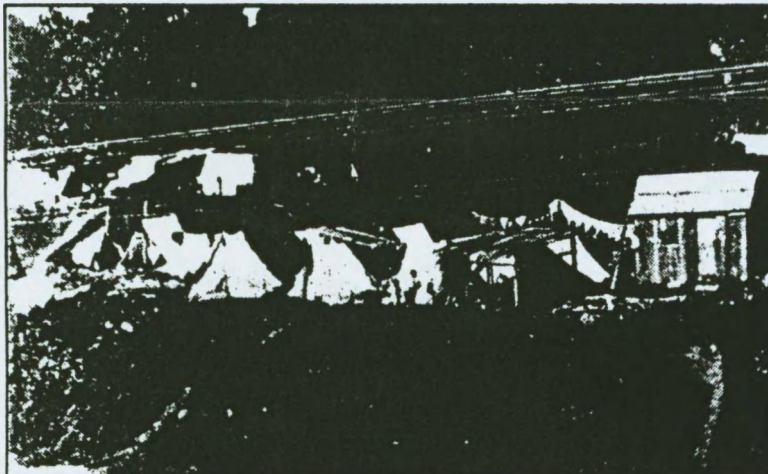
This time Rhonda refused to take no for an answer.

"My mother quietly asked my father and my husband to leave the room and then she turned to me and said: 'I will tell you about my life once, but don't ask me about it ever again.'"

The mother's story was the beginning of an

intricate and confusing tapestry of life that Rhonda Ferguson has chosen to unravel — a path that Rhonda started on innocently enough — a young woman just wanting to know who she was, who her parents and grandparents were, where they had lived and what they were like — questions many of us want to know — who are we?

Rhonda's mother Marie Joseph was born in New Westminster in 1919 to George and Ida.



NATIVE camp beside 'Front Street' circa 1901.

Joseph.

The family belonged to a band of Native Indians that had lived in the area before New Westminster existed.

By the 1860s, with Europeans taking over the land, local natives were shuffled onto three reservations — one of them across the Fraser River at Brownsville — where Marie grew up. Marie's

early childhood was full of the happiness of a close family, but wrought with the hurt that discrimination brings on a young child.

The family's house was on the banks of the Fraser River where the father fished to help sustain himself, his wife and their four children. While family life was sweet and carefree, contact with white people was, at times, traumatic.

The 80 or so natives who lived on the reserve attended the reservation church. The children went to Strawberry Hill School in Surrey where inevitably they were taunted for being 'dirty Indians,' their poor attire the butt of many jokes.

Tragedy struck the family when their father died of a heart attack in 1931. Five years later, their mother died of tuberculosis.

What was left of the family dispersed in all directions. The two oldest siblings, being teens, were left to make a life on their own. The youngest daughter was taken in by Musqueam Indians. Fourteen-year-old Marie was sent to an orphanage in Kamloops.

Marie's carefree life along the banks of the Fraser River came to a

halt as her entire world turned upside down. With her parents dead, and her brothers and sisters gone, Marie found herself locked within the walls of an orphanage run by strict nuns and priests.

"She didn't talk to anyone there," recalls Rhonda. "She told me she spent a lot of time

Please see TRACING on Pg. 3

Tracing roots leads to land claims

CONTINUED from page one

scrubbing floors, scrubbing bathrooms and praying, praying, praying."

Four years later, when Marie turned 18, she left the orphanage to live with her older sister in Vancouver.

But the orphanage had never told her about her Native Indian status and what that meant. And so the orphaned teen went on to live a life apart from the culture she had been brought up in. Once married, although she and her family visited relatives on reserves in Chilliwack and Musqueam, nothing was ever mentioned about the legalities of being a Native Indian. And with her past too painful to recall, Marie had made a life for herself in the "White Man's world."

Listening to her mother's story, Rhonda wondered where the New Westminster Indians and their three reserves had gone. And she wondered if she could become a status Indian, even though her mother wasn't active status.

And so, she decided to find the answers to these questions.

In 1984, Rhonda walked into the Indian Affairs office and related her mother's story. She then asked for Indian status.

(Indian status means you are registered with Indian Affairs and entitled to Native privileges.)

Rhonda was told there was no such thing as a New Westminster Indian band or reserve and so she shouldn't apply for status.

"I tried to find records on my family history, but it was near impossible," recalls Rhonda.

Eventually Rhonda applied again for status and in 1994, much to her surprise, she received a letter of congratulations as a status Indian and member of the New Westminster band — the only active member.

"Now you want land," they told her at Indian Affairs.

"What are you talking about?" asked a confused Rhonda who simply wanted her Indian status.

From there on Rhonda's life changed dramatically.

As the only active member of an Indian reserve long since dispersed, Rhonda was now chief and suddenly catapulted into the whirlwind of meetings and conferences surrounding Indian land claims. There were only two other members in her band — her aunt and uncle whose names were never taken off the books from years earlier. Rhonda was elected chief by the descendants of the community which was once the Brownsville reserve. Soon the band had six registered members.

"The first thing you must do," Indian Affairs told her, "is research the history of your band."

This was something Rhonda was already

doing because, in her heart, she wanted to know about her ancestors and the lives they had lived.

In the library, Rhonda read the handful of history books on New Westminster. One book, quoting the local newspaper of 1861 about Natives living in the city, stated that the city wanted:

"the dirty, heathen cur dogs outside of the city so they wouldn't habitat and infect the people of New Westminster."

"When I read that, I slammed the book shut and flung it across the table," recalls Rhonda.

That newspaper statement was only one of many harsh realities Rhonda was to face as she dug into the way her people were treated over the past 100 years.

In her research so far, Rhonda has discovered:

- The name of the New Westminster reserve her family is from was Qayqayt (pronounced Kay-kite). Its translation is thought to mean muskrat.

- In 1859, New Westminster residents wanted the Indians moved out of the city core and so created three reserves — 32 acres near where Scott Paper now stands, 27 acres on Poplar Island and 104 acres across the Fraser River in Brownsville, an Indian village called Qayqayt.

- In 1904 a small pox epidemic killed numerous natives. Natives were forced to bury their dead on Poplar Island because they city didn't want them buried in the white man's cemeteries.

- In 1916 the McKenna McBride Commission closed the Brownsville and Scott Paper reserves and told the residents to move elsewhere. During this time numerous reserves throughout the province were cut back. Rhonda can find no records of natives being given money to help them move or land to move to. They

were simply told to move onto other bands' reservations, says Rhonda.

- In 1945 the federal government sold Poplar Island. No New Westminster native band members were notified of the sale.

- In 1995 the provincial government declared Poplar Island a park. No Indians were consulted or notified during the decision-making process.

❖

When the word got out that the long-lost New Westminster Indian band was up and running again, Rhonda's telephone began to ring off the

hook.

People who had lived on the same reserve with her family began to call.

One of the most moving conversations Rhonda had was with 90-year-old Jimmy Charlie who lived on the reserve and in the area until 1922.

"He had fished with my grandfather and he knew my family," says Rhonda. "He described what my family looked like and he

'When (my mother) was young it was such a shameful thing to be Native. I'd like to think that she'd be happy that I was doing this. My dad said that if my mother was here today she'd have a lot to be proud of.'



NATIVE women work on the shore of the Fraser River around 1903. In the background is the first Fraser River bridge. The women may be washing clothes or collecting water. Photo courtesy of the New Westminster Public Library

'I envision a reserve that emphasizes education'

In 1916, Native Indians who were living on three government-granted reservations in New Westminster, were told by the government to leave. The government wanted the land — the Indians were told to join other reservations in Washington State, at Musqueam and Squamish. Research indicates that the Indians were not given compensation, or help in moving — they were simply told to get off their reservations and find a new place to live.

After 1916, the New Westminster Indian Reserve dropped out of history — absorbed by other bands and simply forgotten.

But, thanks to the research of Rhonda Ferguson, the band has been revived and is filing a land claim. In short, the band is seeking compensation for the 16.3 acres taken from it in

1916.

This year, the newly-activated five-member band received \$8,000 from Indian Affairs to run an office and cover band expenses.

Securing a land-base for her band has become Rhonda's number one goal since she was elected chief last year. With a land base, the band can receive the rights and privileges other bands do as legislated under the Indian Act.

"What happened in 1916, when the government cut off our land, has deprived our family of all the traditions. There is a part of my life that I could have had and I'm sorry I missed it," says Rhonda.

"I envision a reserve that emphasizes education — that is the mandate of our family — land with a learning centre and pre-

school."

Already the New Westminster band sponsors the Urban First Nations School in New Westminster as well as the RAVEN Project (Relevant Aboriginal Vocation and Education Network) — a school for Natives of all bands for learning for living.

"That's why I'm so excited. In my grandparents' time it was shameful to be a native. But now I can do something about my family, my girls and my grandchildren. My whole life is now the New Westminster Indian band," says Rhonda who has taken a leave from her work at the Vancouver Parks Board to devote herself to this full time.

"Our family is excited about working to get back our culture which was taken away from us. My brother even wants to learn the

Sto'lo language. I said — go ahead — but I don't think I will be," laughs Rhonda.

"It will be a long process," says Rhonda about the land claims process which has immersed her in hours of research.

In short, her New Westminster band is seeking enough land for seven generations.

Ironically, several other Native bands have also laid claims to New Westminster. During the salmon season, natives from the Lower Mainland as well as Vancouver Island used to set up fish camps along the Fraser River.

"I've put a glitch in the other bands' plans because they all claim New Westminster — and in a sense they are right because some of their descendants were from New Westminster when our reservations were closed and our people dispersed."

