

# BORDER WORK

*Celia Haig-Brown*

“We take the explanations we produce to be the grounds of our action; they are endowed with coherence in terms of our explanation of a self.” — GAYATRI SPIVAK<sup>1</sup>

## *Introduction*

In a recent interview, Clifford Geertz says, “Some younger anthropologists have become so determined to expose all their potential biases, ideological or rhetorical, that their writings resemble confessionals, revealing far more about the author than about the putative subject.”<sup>2</sup> In this paper I present some important personal details reflecting the conflict inherent in a particularly sensitive situation. For close to fifteen years, I have been working in First Nations education. I have taught First Nations adolescents in public schools. I co-ordinated a Native teacher training centre for the better part of a decade, and taught methods courses to First Nations prospective teachers. I have also taught educational anthropology to non-Native students enrolled in a multicultural program.

More recently I have been combining teaching with ethnography. My research like my teaching focuses on First Nations education and the ways those involved make sense of their lives. The struggle for control of education is at the borders between the oppressed First Nations and the dominant Canadian society. Most First Nations people work in this border area and a number of non-Natives like myself work there primarily by choice. I am a white woman of bourgeois English origins working among First Nations peoples, and this paper provides some insight into the particular tensions arising from this work. It is more than a confessional. As it traces my own story from initiation into the border world to serving as an active agent between nations, it may stir signs of recognition amongst those engaged in similar work and provide insight for those who are curious about such work.

## *I. Defining border work*

I can feel the tension even as I begin to write. I remember Verna Kirkness, the Director of UBC’s First Nations House of Learning, saying: “Every time a white person talks about Indians I get knots in my stomach.” But I want to present some understandings about working with First Nations people as a representative of a society that continues its historical oppression of those people. This is about my experience and my attempts to problematize these understandings. This is not about Indians.

The First Nations struggle for land, sovereignty, and self-government is pervasive in the border area. This struggle for control takes place on the borders between nations: the many First Nations whose peoples are indigenous, and Canada, a nation of immigrants and their offspring. The nations are complex and dynamic. The peoples are immediately and simultaneously diverse and unified in histories and cultures. In British Columbia where few treaties were ever negotiated and aboriginal title never extinguished, First Nations, federal and provincial governments have struggled in a variety of ways. The fight, generation after generation, has been between groups claiming possession of the same lands; the numbers of casualties rank with those in countless wars over land that have been more openly fought throughout the world. While the dead and wounded do not always have bullet holes, cultural invasions have brought alcoholism, disease, and frightening community disruption. Struggles for control shape and daily reshape the borders of this world.

Control of education is one aspect of this struggle. Almost no children are taught the histories of the current struggles nor the bases of the persevering battles over aboriginal rights in schools. For years, First Nations peoples have been condemning the culturally abusive education systems. They seek one built on respect for differences which legitimates their places in these lands, their histories and their dynamic cultures.<sup>3</sup>

Those who have been invisible in existing social structures such as school systems struggle for recognition in two main ways. They establish new and separate structures (feeling that involvement with the old can only subvert change), or they choose to work within and around existing structures to change them (first by their presence, then through their increasing interaction with others). In the industrialized world, complete separation is virtually impossible. There is always contact and often compromise with the structures of the dominant society. Many First Nations people today seek access to and acceptance within mainstream Canadian educational structures while maintaining and developing their heritage cultures. They seek change in both the process and the content of schooling. By necessity and design, they become involved with non-Native people. In this meeting place, the border world, non-Natives feel the ever-present tension between being useful and being undesirable.

## *II. Border workers*

Three categories of people engage in border work. First Nations people are border workers by the nature of their aboriginal claims and their persisting marginalization by Canadian society; non-Native people visit the border for a variety of reasons; and some non-Native people choose to remain in the border area.

The first group of workers includes those First Nations people who spend a part of their lives engaged in direct or indirect battle in the border world of education.<sup>4</sup>

To a greater or lesser extent, they identify themselves and are identified by members of the dominant society as different from and yet a part of mainstream society. Many spend a great deal of time working to syncretize their experiences with the dominant culture's education system with other aspects of their personal histories. These workers have their predecessors. In 1810, a report focused on the concerns of some elders of the Six Nations about the quality and usefulness of formal education: "Many of the old men are not certain whether this school is of use or not. . . ."<sup>5</sup> In 1913, in the infamous MacKenna-MacBride commission transcripts, many chiefs expressed concern about residential schools. Chief Louis of Kamloops commented, "I expected to see my people improve when they first went to Industrial School, but I have not seen anything of it."<sup>6</sup> In 1947, the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Examine the Indian Act listened to Andrew Paull<sup>7</sup> and others condemn residential schools and, as a result, began to phase them out.

More recently, in 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (renamed the Assembly of First Nations) produced the policy statement *Indian Control of Indian Education*.<sup>8</sup> This remains the definitive statement on control. Produced partly in response to a 1969 federal government White Paper on disbanding the Department of Indian Affairs, and partly in response to the failure of efforts at integrating many First Nations children into public schools, it points out that it is the children who are expected to make all the changes while the schools remain oriented to white bourgeois society. *Indian Control* calls for more Native teachers to serve as role models for the children and to work in ways sensitive to the children's backgrounds. It also recommends training non-Native teachers to be sensitive to the needs of First Nations children.

Native teachers and counsellors who have an intimate understanding of Indian traditions . . . [and] way of life and language, are best able to create the learning environment suited to the habits and interests of the Indian child.<sup>9</sup>

In the development of an understanding of "Indian control of Indian education" a number of questions arise. First Nations people are diverse and hold a wide variety of views on education. The construction of Indian control, like so many social constructs, is a process of negotiation, not some absolute to strive for. Indian control of mainstream education as opposed to Indian education is almost always an aspect of the process. For this reason, I have come to understand it is often appropriate and valuable that non-Native people immersed in the culture of mainstream education be involved in the process.

I am constantly aware of the tension this involvement creates for First Nations people. Mainstream education remains less than successful for many First Nations students. Fewer than 20 per cent complete Grade Twelve. While high school graduation is an important goal, many First Nations educators and families are calling

for more than success in mainstream terms. They want school experiences that “reinforce and contribute to the image [the child] has of himself as an Indian.”<sup>10</sup> They want First Nations instructors as role models. The continued acceptance of non-Native people into First Nations education occurs because a person has something special to offer or because there simply are not enough First Nations people deemed acceptably qualified by those in control. Increasingly, non-Native people are expected to be training First Nations replacements as part of their jobs. In these cases, a non-Native person’s sign of success in a program controlled by First Nations people is to work herself out of a job.

Many First Nations professionals in education operate from this perspective. At a recent program evaluation workshop which I led, prospective First Nations administrators had an opportunity to fantasize a perfect program. Their dream and that of the First Nations staff included all First Nations instructors. Later, some non-Native instructors appeared hurt by this. The students were amazed. They explained this was their fantasy and that they recognized the importance of including non-Native instructors in the current program. They meant no insult to the instructors. In most First Nations education programs, there are non-Native people involved in instructing, administering or funding. This is the nature of working on the borders. This involvement of non-Natives at least for the time being is essential to the struggle for control within the existing social context.

Self-selection, desperation, invitation, and happenstance — in these ways non-Native people first visit the border world. The missionaries, romantics, and scientists select themselves. The missionaries, touting a variety of panaceas in addition to those associated with organized religion, come as they always have to impose their views on the people, to save souls and to “lift” people to some level of an arbitrary, pre-determined hierarchy. The romantics, sensing a “better” way of life, come to save themselves. The scientists come to view the “bug under the microscope” as one border worker put it. They come for the joy of “pure research,” create change, and leave changed, for better or worse, by their experience. Those who come in desperation include people who are misfits in their own world. Often jobless in mainstream society, they come for basic survival — for the salaries. They hope that their lives on the border will be easier than they were in the worlds they come from. The third group comes by invitation. They possess something which people in the border zone see as valuable. Preferably, a First Nations person issues the invitation. The final category are those who find themselves in the border zone by chance. The teacher or professor accepts a job and just happens to have First Nations students in her class. As one person I interviewed commented, “I arrived at my first job to see all these cute little brown children.” No matter how they come, all these border workers influence and are transformed by their social interaction during what amounts to a visit.

When I first began border work I thought invitation was the only acceptable

entry. While invitation does involve choice in that a person can refuse to accept, in some ways it addressed a hesitation I felt. I did not want to associate myself with the patronizing experts who came to work with First Nations people ultimately as servants of the colonizers. The idea of invitation helped justify my presence to myself. This need to justify raised itself even before I became involved in border work as I had experienced some hostility of First Nations people to members of the dominant society. I knew some of the history which grounded these attitudes.

My family history reveals an important component of my work in First Nations education. My parents, through example, taught me to respect the Kwalguelth people on whose traditional lands we lived. During my childhood, I was aware the Kwalguelth had made the breakwater in the small river bay where we left our canoe. My father, although perhaps carrying a somewhat romantic vision, recognized the history and the power of the cultures and, as a conservationist, honoured traditional First Nations respect for the independence of land, life and waters.<sup>11</sup> He explicitly taught his children this same respect. My brother, who chose work in Native education after an initial career with his Kwalguelth father-in-law on a seine boat, drew me into this border work.

In addition, I identify strongly with my generation's idea of schools in which students are treated respectfully as human beings rather than as vessels to be filled or clay to be moulded. I came to work in First Nations teacher training valuing these ideas and with an appreciation of the need for a teacher to provide direction while listening carefully to and negotiating with the students.

In 1975, after five years teaching in secondary schools in Kamloops, B.C., I was caught up in what I now recognize as the networking system around First Nations education. My brother, then Co-ordinator of Native Education in Williams Lake, asked me to teach for a month at an alternative school for First Nations teenagers "back in the bush." As a result of this month the co-ordinator of the Native teacher training program encouraged me to apply for a job with the program in Kamloops. I was not sure I was qualified for the job, but assumed those encouraging me were better judges than I. By invitation I had become a visitor in the border area, but I got the job and chose border work as a career.

### *III. The Agents: Choosing to stay in the border world*

A third category is composed of people, both First Nations and non-Native, who decide to remain working in the border world of First Nations education. They come initially in any of the ways described, but the work "gets in their guts" as one person described it, and they decide to stay as long as they feel that they may contribute to the struggle. These people serve as active agents between the warring nations.

I no longer think that invitation is the only legitimate entry to border work. Three

times now, I have decided to participate in the border world without invitation. Each time, I thought I had something to contribute to the First Nations struggle for control, although I recognized that I could never assume the perspective of a First Nations person. I saw the contradictions of the work as I tried to change the inequitable system while being in some ways a part of it. I reconsidered Paulo Freire's notion of "class suicide" in which a member of an oppressing group, upon reflection, recognizes the role her people have played and commits herself to fight at the side of the oppressed.

I had resigned from co-ordinating the Native teacher training program when I had two small babies. Two years later, the position was open again and I needed and wanted a job. For the first time I applied without invitation. In my letter of application, I acknowledged that this had been the most challenging job I had ever held and I wanted another opportunity. When I mentioned my decision to the First Nations person in charge she responded very coolly. At that point, I felt unsure but persisted. I had decided that I could do the job well. I sought the encouragement of First Nations and non-Native friends and faculty with whom I had worked.

Five First Nations people interviewed me. When I got the job, I felt for the first time confirmation for the work I had done before. Simultaneously, I knew that several people were disappointed that the job was again filled by a non-Native person. My sense of accomplishment was tempered by a sense that, as a non-Native, I was the "right" person for the job only in a limited and temporary way. I remained very sensitive to this concern and knew my time in the position was limited.

In order to continue my work on the border, I had to clarify my perspective. I could no longer rely primarily on the judgment of others. I had to know that I had a significant contribution to make always acknowledging the tentative nature of that acceptance and recognizing that as the context of the struggle changed, my usefulness or uselessness would also change.

When I decided to pursue a graduate degree, I wanted to reflect on the work I was doing primarily with First Nations adults. Development and expansion of First Nation educational programs were occurring at a time of funding cutbacks everywhere else. As a counsellor, I had been intimately involved in the personal histories of many of the people. I tried to understand how a strong commitment to education comes out of the racist trials of integration and before that the cultural invasion of residential schools. Every person I know who attended residential school had stories to tell: stories of laughter, learning and maturation, and stories of hardship, pain and abuse. One of the ways I could make sense of First Nations education was to understand this history more clearly. I focused on the residential school for my thesis and, for the second time, ventured into an area of the border world without invitation. I felt I had gained much from the time I spent working there and hoped that the work I was about to do, in addition to satisfying my curiosity, would in some way reciprocate.

#### *IV. Border working*

In 1975, during my first visit to the border area, teachers in training taught me how to listen carefully and led me to see more about stereotypes than I knew existed. One taught me the limitations of the land-bridge theories which say that First Nations peoples are just more groups of immigrants. For people whose creation theories put them on these lands since time immemorial, land-bridge theories approach heresy. I had expected too that during practice teaching in schools, the student teachers would notice the quiet students in the back, often Native students. Instead, like most student teachers, they thought primarily of themselves, their next steps, their plans, maintaining order. I was forced to recognize my romantic assumption. Their need to meet the requirements of the dominant society's education system became paramount at these times.

In this job, I learned to speak in an informed way of aspects of First Nations histories which, like so many of the students, I had never learned in school. I revelled in a special brand of humour. I came to see the frequency of the pain with which so many oppressed people live. And I began to understand the nature of border work for First Nations people: to see the contradictions students continually resolved as they struggled to maintain and develop connection to and knowledge of their heritage cultures while participating in a university program, a clear manifestation of the dominant culture.

When I turned to research and what became publishing, I sought a way to communicate the strength of the stories I had heard. Interviewing, recording, and transcribing verbatim the words of former students seemed the best way to re-present the stories which had moved me so deeply. Coincidentally, unstructured interviewing — asking lots of questions and engaging in dialogue — allowed me to research in a way which was already integral to the way I made sense of my life. I had read enough ethnography to know that this was an acceptable, although perhaps not mainstream, way of conducting educational research. Again I found myself on a border, this time trying to balance my everyday life with the demands of academic research and to do research in a way that made sense to First Nations people, to academics and to myself.

I began my interviews with people I knew and then expanded to include some of their relatives and friends. When I felt really brave, I approached one person to whom I introduced myself at a conference. When people hesitated or responded negatively, I did not approach them again. Some would sooner leave memories in the past. Previous exploitation by non-Native researchers working in the Kamloops area, as has happened so frequently throughout the country, made others reluctant to become involved.

Throughout, the work was a joint venture. I never really felt like an author, but fell back on the trite but nevertheless appropriate image of the quiltmaker. The

people provided the substance of the work while I provided some concepts lifted from radical educators, the interest, and the time to stitch the accounts together. Every interview was filled with emotion and often we cried. But the people wanted to speak their piece and asserted that they wanted others to hear what they had to say. When I completed my draft, I returned to most of the people and asked them to read what I had written — to see that they had said what they meant, to affirm that I had heard and transcribed appropriately and to view the words which I had chosen in the context in which I had placed them. Without exception, people approved of what I had written. I was pleased but later wondered if they were only being polite to me, or if their respect for the written word inhibited suggestions for change. One man refused to look, but sent me a message through his wife: “What I have said, I said.”

The first publisher I approached, an academic press, was concerned that the book did not represent the views of the teachers and supervisors at the school. She said she had a friend who taught there who was not a bad person. I got a curt rejection from the second publisher and moved to a third, the Native-controlled imprint of a small publisher. In striking contrast, Randy Fred, a member of the Nuuchahnulth Nation and the publisher of Pulp Press’s Tillacum Library, responded most favourably. About the same time, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society in Kamloops also indicated interest. The mainstream response was repeated when Pulp applied for a grant to help with the publishing. The first application was turned down with this comment, “A history of a period or event should explain the whole story, not just one side.” Concern for a balanced view was not one which had guided previous publishing on residential school, and Fred pointed out to me that this trust fund had recently helped publish the diary of a sea captain which clearly represented a single person’s perspective.

I arranged to split the royalties with the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society as the main representative of the people whom I had interviewed. The book was launched in Kamloops in a celebration organized by the Society. Three of those interviewed spoke and acknowledged their participation in the work. Others were there and celebrated anonymously. Throughout this time, despite the fact that these and other First Nations people were offering clear support of my work, I was aware that I would be seen by many as an inappropriate collaborator in this work based on Native people’s experiences. It was much later that I found a satisfactory answer for myself. A Métis friend introduced me as another one of those non-Native people who had written a book about Indians. I said the residential school was a white institution, clearly on the borders, and it was most appropriate that I write about it.

But the book did create controversy, partly because a non-Native person had written it. There was also disagreement about the stories I included. Some First Nations people said I had made the school look worse than it had been for them; others said I had been too gentle — that actual conditions were much worse.

A First Nations friend suggested that her experience in the school was not represented in the collection. She was not like the people I had written about. She focused on her perception of First Nations belief in non-interference: that the people themselves will work through the necessary experiences and reflections. From that I inferred that she saw my work as a kind of interference. I agree and believe this kind of interference contributes to change. I wanted my work to produce, in this case, different accounts of residential school than those in most existing literature, and ultimately lead to a more complete view of an aspect of Canadian history.

I told her of another discussion with a Kutenai woman who told of her appreciation of the book. She had attended school in the Kootenays and said, "I thought we were the only ones who went through that." She found the book had many incidents similar to her experience, but felt that it did not have the "really bad stories." She stated clearly that her experiences had been much worse than most of what I had included. After hearing this second woman's story, my friend acknowledged that she could not speak for all First Nations people, but must present her reaction as a personal but legitimate one.

The conflict I felt participating in border work without invitation is reiterated in the conflict many people feel about my work. I sought criticism and found it. In one review, a First Nations person comments "that Haig-Brown does not really understand what our cultures are because she is an outsider."<sup>12</sup> A non-Native former residential school supervisor, in another review, echoes the words of the first publisher: "there is no attempt to balance the author's interpretations of events with opinions from anyone who might have a different opinion or interpretation such as former teachers or supervisors."<sup>13</sup> He discounts the range of views expressed in extensive quotations from First Nations people.

And I got some support. A First Nations woman involved in writing her own book about residential school wrote to say, "I see now how the residential school system fitted into the larger scheme which I didn't fully understand before reading your book. Our book should have a better impact if I can show this."<sup>14</sup>

I was asked to do a workshop in Kamloops on the strength of Native culture. Both non-Native and First Nations people attended the workshop. For the first time in my border work, I met First Nations people who trusted me before they met me because they had read the book. At the same time, there were some who came to say the school wasn't that bad. In response, one of the people whom I had interviewed and for whom the school had been an excruciating experience, made it clear to all in the workshop that for some people it was a time of great pain, one which she was only beginning to come to grips with.

Most non-Natives are amazed at hearing the stories in the book. "The work you do is for us. We need to know of these things you are writing about," said one. A few were aware of the existence of the schools, but had not known that the goals of the schools were to have First Nations cultures disappear. Very few know the

extent of the cultural invasion in the border zones by the residential school and the resistance of First Nations people which defeated these efforts.

As I was dealing with the ramifications of the publication of the book, I began work in a doctoral program. Again I agonized over the suitability of centring my research in First Nations education. Recent developments in experimental ethnography<sup>15</sup> played an important role in my eventual decision. Through reading and discussion of the current soul searching going on in the field of ethnography, I came to understand that no individual can adequately represent the experience of any other. An ethnographer, while acknowledging that she can never come to a full understanding of an other's existence, must try. This intense work in the halls of academe brought hope for and clarity to the work I was doing among people whose social and personal histories and cultures diverged greatly from my own.

I have learned to take risks. As a non-Native person focusing on First Nations education, I have come to accept myself and the work I do as a part of what has become my culture — a culture of the border. The next phase of my research focuses on the process of taking control in a First Nations educational centre. I asked permission to conduct my study. I was not invited. I originally approached two places and was turned down by one. The sentiment expressed by the majority of the board at the first was that they wanted to reserve this area of research for First Nations people. This is an increasingly articulated perspective of many indigenous peoples. In the second place, I was given opportunity to explain my work to board, staff, and students. Ultimately, I was accepted and even welcomed by some.

My brother gave me a metaphor which captures some of the process which accompanies work in the border worlds. He said:

You have a cultural window. . . . If you use the window for interaction with another culture, its frame will expand. This expansion is not infinite and is controlled by your cultural self. If you really concentrate on another culture . . . you get a pretty broad window. But at some point, if you're stretching over on the left hand side, you pull the right hand side over a little bit. You either forget things or, more significantly, you don't develop things you might otherwise have developed. Just some routine cultural skills and knowledge. That is where the dominant society people will look at you and say, "Hey, hey, he's sure gone Indian, sure got bushed." (Alan 1987)

"Going Indian" is a term of mainstream culture which banishes a member to marginal status. Members of the dominant society may use this label for a non-Native person who becomes deeply involved in First Nations work and who expresses this commitment openly. At this point, the non-Native person becomes a full-fledged member of the border world in that members of her original culture see her as an outsider and she feels she belongs nowhere else. A non-Native person talked about her life changes as she works with First Nations people:

I am becoming a social misfit. . . . I've become less and less tolerant of my own social group because of the frivolousness of their lives, a lot of them. . . . A lot of people in my social life, in my family life have pretty strong racial biases. . . . Where does that lead for a person like me? I feel totally alienated from all kinds of people that I never felt alienated from before.

There is always tension in this border work: the tension between members of different cultures, between the researcher and the other study participants as they negotiate reality, and between the text and those who read it. How can one tell the whole story when we all have different stories to tell? Overall is the goal as a non-Native to be able to hear clearly and portray clearly what aboriginal people are saying. Sometimes, when I wonder about this work I have done, I remember a friend's father I had interviewed. She visited home and found that he had marked all the spots in the book in which he was quoted. He read them to her and discussed each one. For me, this demonstrated that I had managed to represent his stories in a way that was acceptable to him, in a way that he felt was appropriate to share with his children.

The border work continues. I have been asked to facilitate occasional workshops involving First Nations and non-Native people. I have been asked to develop curriculum for First Nations adult education and to write articles such as this. I remain in contact with many of the students I have come to know in my teacher training work. They kindly include me in many events. We visit often.

An increasing proportion of my time is spent in mainstream education. Anti-racist work has become an important focus for me. In classrooms of predominantly non-Native people, I present my understandings and find some people shocked and fascinated with histories they have not heard before. As I wonder who I am to do this work, I hear the words of a Latin-American Jewish feminist, Judit Moschkovich, "It is not the duty of the oppressed to educate the oppressor."<sup>16</sup> In all my work, while I include the words of First Nations people, I never presume to speak for anyone other than myself.

## *V. Concluding*

Within the border world, I think, grow, and learn. I am affected by my time here as I affect those around me. I am not the same person I was when I first visited by invitation. I cannot forget my past, the choices I have made, and go on as if nothing has happened. As I have shown in this paper, I have come to see a role for myself as an agent between the warring nations, although it is of course always a transitory role and dependent on others' acceptance. I have found justification for my work in terms of efforts to work by the side of the oppressed to combat racism. My increasing experience with those subjected to racism and its effects on a daily basis has led me to address racism directly in all the work I do. This border world has become my home.

In research, my project is to get as close as possible to another's life experience, and to present that experience in a way acceptable and useful to the other study participants and myself. Our reality is mutually constructed in the border world we inhabit. My role in the construction of this reality has an impact on it, as do the roles of the people with whom I work. Always a tension exists between a researcher and the other study participants as they mutually create reality in their intersecting worlds. I have a responsibility to conduct more than an academic exercise. At the very least, I must produce a document which can be used by the people with whom I work.

Because of my ethnicity, class background, and personal history, some of which I have re-presented in this paper, I occupy the border world by choice. Many of the First Nations people with whom I work recognize the tenuous nature of my choice. At any time, I can choose to leave the struggle for a more comfortable existence. I hope my work in conjunction with that of so many others will ultimately reduce the injustices immigrant people and their offspring have wrought against First Nations peoples in the five centuries non-Natives have been in North America. I feel strongly that no matter where I choose to work in the future, all my work will acknowledge the ever-present struggle for control in which First Nations people continue to engage. Their struggle mirrors the efforts of oppressed people and their supporters throughout the world. There is one struggle; there are many fronts. Critically or uncritically, as academics, as politicians, and as active agents in the world, we choose to act on this knowledge or to deny it.<sup>17</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988), 104.
- <sup>2</sup> John Horgan, "Profile: Ethnography as Art," *Scientific American*, 261.1 (July 1989).
- <sup>3</sup> The definition of culture, for the purposes of this paper, lies somewhere between conventional anthropology and contemporary sociology. Random House gives the anthropological definition as "the sum total ways of living built up by a group of human beings transmitted from one generation to another" (2nd ed., 1987). Aspects of contemporary sociology incorporate the notion of dynamism into culture. The ways of living people build up are subject to change as the social and physical environment changes. Lawrence Stenhouse, in *Culture and Education* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), 13, says that it is important "to assert not what culture is but what it does. Culture serves as a medium through which individual human minds interact with one another in communication. . . . [It] is a dynamic field within and through which individuals make contact with one another. It lies, as it were, between people and is shared by them. . . . [T]o live within culture is to be able to understand, albeit in a partial way, the experience of those around us."
- <sup>4</sup> In the current Canadian context, one could argue that all First Nations people live on the borders. At the same time, there are unilingual speakers whose interaction with the dominant culture remains minimal. It takes place primarily with offspring serving as go-betweens.

- <sup>5</sup> J. Donald Wilson, "No Blanket to be Worn in School': The Education of Indians in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," in Jean Barman et al., *Indian Education in Canada Volume 1: The Legacy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 66.
- <sup>6</sup> British Columbia, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs. Evidence submitted to the Royal Commission. Kamloops Agency 1913: 75.
- <sup>7</sup> Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Examine and Consider the Indian Act. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* No. 1 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1947).
- <sup>8</sup> National Indian Brotherhood, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (Ottawa: National Indian Brotherhood, 1973).
- <sup>9</sup> National Indian Brotherhood, 18.
- <sup>10</sup> National Indian Brotherhood, 9.
- <sup>11</sup> In many First Nations, rivers are living beings with all the characteristics and projects of human beings at the same time as they are rivers.
- <sup>12</sup> Bill Mussell, "Schools were multi-national," *New Directions*, 4.4 (January/February 1989), 41.
- <sup>13</sup> Colin Kelly, "There was no such thing as Native culture," *New Directions*, 4.4 (January/February 1989), 40.
- <sup>14</sup> Ruth Smith, 14 November 1988, personal correspondence.
- <sup>15</sup> See James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
- <sup>16</sup> Judit Moschkovich, "'— But I Know You, American Woman,'" in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, eds., Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981), 79.
- <sup>17</sup> I wish to thank those who read and commented on earlier versions of this paper: Shauna Butterwick, Ann Cvetkovich, Jane Gaskell, Alan Haig-Brown, Rita Jack, Michael Law, Bill Maciejko, Maria Myers, Bob Smith, and Joann Watson. I am also grateful to the Radical Educators Breakfast Group for giving me the opportunity to present the ideas in their raw form and for their supportive discussion.

## INUKSHUK

*Daniel David Moses*

You were built up from stones,  
they say, and positioned  
alone against the sky  
here so that they might take  
you for something human

checking the migrations.  
That's how you manage this,  
standing upright despite