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Seeking "Mamatowisowin" to Create an Engaging Social Policy Class for Aboriginal Students

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Abstract

This article recounts the author's personal and professional journey of developing a social policy social work course at the First Nations University of Canada. With no social policy text designed for and about Aboriginal peoples, and very few articles written on social policy issues in Aboriginal communities, the author was challenged to create content, pedagogy, and assignment structures that reflected the cultures of her students who come primarily from the plains and woodlands reserve communities of Saskatchewan. By consulting with Elders, colleagues, and students, as well as by paying attention to her own internal sense of stress or delight, she progressively modified the class over three years, releasing all that was'dry and detached' while building on all that was fun, relevant and exciting. Along the way, the author was introduced to the néhiyawéwin (Cree) word mamatowisowin, which refers to a state of spiritual attunement and divine inspiration. I realized that, perhaps more than head knowledge, it was mamatowisowin that she most needed in order to create a class that optimally served her students and the university's vision of a 'bicultural education' that is equally grounded in both European and Indigenous knowledge systems.

From Student to Teacher; Entering the Social Policy Domain

> *...by integrating the personal and the political, social work integrates policy and practice, and is inevitably concerned with both (Ife, 1997, p. 166).*

Social policy classes have been the most challenging, rewarding, and transformational of the many social work courses I have both taken and taught over my academic career. When I entered the social work program at the University of Calgary in the mid 1990s, I thought I wanted to be a counselor and help people. Like so many in my cohort, I wasn't particularly interested in politics, economics or political ideology, and in fact found these subjects intimidating, distasteful even. The compulsory class most dreaded, and taught by the most feared instructor, was "Social Policy and Ideology". To my surprise, as I started engaging with the course content, I found myself turned on by an emerging political framework within which to understand the various forms of suffering and oppression that the social work profession seeks to address. I read and re-read Bob Mullaly's *Structural Social Work*, marking the book with comments, questions, and stars. His uncompromising assertion that all aspects of our lives, both personal and professional, must be aligned with socialist values of equality, collectivism, and humanitarianism, resonated deeply for me. His vision of structural social work offered a radical alternative to all that I felt repelled by in the conventional, case-model social work practice I was learning in other classes.

Upon the completion of my Bachelor of Social Work degree, I wanted to expand my analysis of social problems and solutions, to include global structures and policy interconnections. So I enrolled in the international social work concentration of the Master of Social Work program at the University of Calgary. In my thesis I critiqued the dominant social work education system as based on a parochial tradition, which became universalized through a larger project of Western imperialism[1]. I also explored questions of power and privilege, voice and knowledge, inclusion and exclusion, within the discourse of 'international social work'. Although my work explored the interface between colonizing and Indigenous knowledge systems in social work globally (Haug 2001, 2004), I was not grounded in the local context of these dynamics.

Then in 2001 I was offered a teaching position in the School of Indian Social Work at the First Nations University of Canada[2]. Six years after taking my first social policy class, I now found myself assigned to teach the very class that had been so pivotal in my own academic journey. I knew that this class could make

all the difference in whether or not students go on to integrate a political analysis and activism in their social work practice. While I felt excited to share the best of what had been illuminating to me, I also felt immense fear and stress. I was obsessed with the gap between what I believed I should know, and my limitations of knowledge and direct experience in the social policy domain. My idea of a real social policy professor was someone who has read all the social policy texts, has worked extensively in the field of social policy, and knows all the dates and names of the various social policies, as well as relevant statistics. I imagined real social policy professors spend hours poring over the latest government and non-government reports and documents, and scouring mainstream and alternative media so that each lecture is timely, current, and optimally informed.

With the added mandate of integrating First Nations languages, knowledge systems, histories and healing traditions, I felt completely overwhelmed with the task before me. John Taylor states that "non-Native teachers should be responsible for educating themselves about the community, culturally appropriate content, and culturally appropriate teaching methods" (Taylor, 1995, p.241). Without a native studies degree, without native ancestry myself, and without any formal preparation for university instruction, I felt completely inadequate and ill prepared for the task before me. I frequently dreamt that I was naked in front of students, for indeed I felt barely clothed by the flimsy credentials a master's degree in social work, and several years of professional work experience. Like most non-Aboriginal people of this land, I had almost no knowledge of the 'Indian country' into which I was now immersed. I knew little of the political systems and structures, cultures, languages, homelands, leaders or visionaries of the First Peoples of Saskatchewan.

As I began my research for the social policy class, I soon became aware that the information I sought was not to be found neatly packaged in a few succinct books or journal articles. There was no existing social policy text designed for and about Aboriginal peoples. So I began my preparation by taking stacks of the existing social policy texts home from the library. However, I found that just looking at these dry texts triggered tremendous tension within me. With their no-nonsense covers and seriously marching tables of contents, the social policy literature seemed overly cerebral, male and impersonal. Moreover, most did not even mention Aboriginal peoples[3]. While the ideas and analysis they contained had initially sparked my imagination and bourgeoning analysis, I now felt frustrated with the implicit Eurocentrism in these texts, and felt unprepared to link the facts, analysis, history, and information they contained, to the contexts and communities my students were coming from.

A library search of publications on 'First Nations/ Aboriginal/Indian social policy', revealed limited findings. Some publications were out of date, while others were inaccessibly laden with Marxist jargon about the lumpenproletariat within First Nations communities (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000). The historical texts I found chronicling the Canadian government's assimilation policies toward First Nations peoples (policies almost totally excluded from most social policy texts), were helpful as reference materials but inappropriate for a social work textbook. Almost all of the texts I reviewed were written by non-Indigenous male scholars. I realized that to create social policy course readings representative of the voices of both men and women alone would have been a considerable challenge, never mind the additional challenge of equally representing both First Nations and 'mainstream' voices and perspectives!

Initial Attempts at Indigenizing the Social Policy Class

> *Effective Aboriginal education addresses issues of culture and language, community values and norms, and power relations (Goulet, 2001, p. 70).*

Starting from where I was at, and using the literature that I was familiar with, my first constructions of the social policy class were drawn largely from the information I had acquired through my own studies. I reviewed the history of the welfare state as influenced by dominant western ideologies and political parties (Guest, 1997; Carniol, 2000). I explored how social policy is increasingly influenced by international trade relations and agreements, neo-liberal economics and globalization (Wilson & Whitmore, 2000; Ismael, 1996), and I discussed the model of 'structural social work' for engaging at both the personal and political levels (Mullaly, 1997). The remainder of the class was devoted to current social policy issues in Canada today. I started with Mullaly's (1997) *Structural Social Work; Ideology, Theory and Practice*, and Wotherspoon and Satzewich's (2000) *First Nations: Race, Class, and Gender Relations*, as my primary texts, and invited Elders and indigenous guest speakers to share their knowledge and experiences related to the social policy domain.

In response to my first attempts at teaching, my students were amazingly gracious. Despite my Eurocentrism and obvious knowledge gaps in terms of First Nations social policy and service delivery at the band, regional, and national level, many of my students expressed the same excitement that I had experienced when I first began to frame social work as political practice. Other students, who were perhaps closest to grassroots politics in their communities, gave me

feedback that the class wasn't connecting enough to their communities, political systems and structures, social movements, or macro guiding policies like the Indian Act. Nor was I addressing the most pressing social policy issues in local First Nations communities around the transference of jurisdiction from provincial to band and tribal council service delivery, for how could I teach what I didn't know?

I realized that the structural social work model articulated by Mullaly (1997) had inspired me as a student because I had the academic and cultural framework from which to interpret his ideas. Many of my students were coming from a very different place than I was as a student, in terms of their academic and cultural backgrounds. 'If only I had more relevant experience and knowledge, this would be so much easier' I sighed one day to my colleague Shelley Thomas Prokop as we chatted over Vietnamese noodles. Her response was immediately helpful; "Erika, you're simply coming from the outside in. Whether you come from the outside in or inside out, there is a major process involved in making the connections, no matter where you begin". Oh yeah. I realized that for anyone, it would be a challenge to construct this class according to the ideals of 'bicultural education' as upheld by the Elders who had dreamed our university into existence. And so, I decided to stop berating myself for all I didn't know and to just get on with the task of learning what I needed to know, in order to teach what I needed to teach.

Seeking Mamatowisowin

> *... while people are mainly in the state of being – the experience of being alive and seeing the goodness in all life as it is experienced – they are also in a state of being-in-becoming – the active seeking of one's purpose (Hart, 2002, p.47).*

Speaking of the knowledge embedded in the néhiyawéwin[4] language, education philosopher Willie Ermine describes how "mamatowisowin is the capacity to connect to the life force that makes anything and everything possible" (Ermine, 1995, p.110). My Cree-English dictionary translates this word as "spiritual power, talent; giftedness" (Wolvengrey, 2001, p. 86). Intrigued by the concept, I asked two traditional néhiyaw (Cree) knowledge holders to further explain it to me. Joseph Naytowhow told me that mamatowisowin relates to "being in tune with the universe, and is a sacred place of the mind." Wes Finday similarly described mamatowisowin as "a state of being spiritually gifted as a result of what we earn through practicing personal integrity." It was mamatowisowin that I realized I needed to develop within myself in order to create a social policy class that optimally served my students.

As part of the Indian Social Work program, I had a responsibility to teach to and from all four domains of the medicine wheel; body, mind, spirit and emotions, upon which the program is based. But how? How to merge the seeming great divide between the political and the spiritual? The education I had received treated spirituality as irrelevant to social policy. Yet Audre Lorde, in her beautiful essay titled Uses of the Erotic, powerfully challenged this division for me;

> *The dichotomy between the spiritual and the political is also false, resulting from an incomplete attention to our erotic knowledge. For the bridge which connects them is formed by the erotic – the sensual - those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love, in its deepest meanings (Lorde, 1984, p.56).*

Did discovering mamatowisowin lead to integrating love, passion and even eros, with politics, economics, history and ideology in the social policy classroom? Now I was really stepping beyond the conventional reach of the social policy text books! If indeed the erotic leads us to our highest standards of excellence, as Lorde asserts, I began to ask myself what a loving, spiritually inspired social policy class might look like?

I began by setting as my goal to create a social policy class that was relevant to my students' personal lives, families, communities, and was fun, pleasurable, humorous, and engaged body, mind, emotions and spirit. To add fun and physical activity to my classes, I began to integrate exercises such as asking groups of students to create 'tableaus' of the different ideologies we were studying, while the rest of the class guessed what ideology the group was portraying. Another method of engaging the body through 'play' was to divide the class in two, and start a sentence on the board such as "social policy is….", and have both teams race to complete the sentence by each student writing only one word.

As I began to focus on creating a class based on pleasure and personal integration, I was shocked to realize how deeply invested I was in the academic model within which I had been socialized. 'What it my duty to teach?' I asked myself. 'Is it possible to ditch what I dislike and focus on what is most 'delicious' without compromising core content?'; 'Is it possible that by doing so I can actually do my job better, or do I indeed have an obligation to force feed dry readings, like a parent making her children eat Brussels sprouts, "for your own good"?' (as the residential school system had done with devastating consequences). Even as I was anxiously trying to catch up myself with all that I thought I should know as the instructor, I found myself trying to 'catch up' my students with what I believed they should know,

and distracted by all they didn't know. While I had begun my teaching with strong ideals of Paulo Freire's liberation education, and social work philosopher Eduard Lindemans' focus on "the primary importance of the learner" (Lindeman, 1961:p.6), I realized that I really didn't know yet how to actually practice these models in the classroom!

When feelings of tension arose around the gap between what I wanted to create and what I had in fact constructed, became overwhelming for me, I would sit down with my journal and I would create positive affirmations for myself such as, "I am able to facilitate an engaging social policy class that is relevant to the lives of my students, and all the supports I need to teach this class optimally, are available to me." I would journal about what an ideal social policy class would look like; action-oriented and inspiring; a class that combined intellectual rigor with nurturing of the emotional and spiritual body.

Increasingly I came to admit to myself the uncomfortable truth that to a large degree, I wasn't enthralled with much of the course content and materials, and that I too felt intimidated and overwhelmed by all the course expectations. Like my students, I would rather be participating in some other class that had more 'attractive' readings and content. Social policy texts were the last thing I felt like reading at home in the evenings or on weekends. I felt like a hypocrite and imposter trying to be enthusiastic about something I didn't even feel enthusiastic about myself! I wanted to inspire students to find and live by their truth and passion, and yet I wasn't being truthful to mine! If I wasn't enjoying the course content, how could I expect my students to? As I was struggling with these questions, I discovered the words of Lakota Wisdomkeeper Noble Red Man, which became a touchstone for me:

> *God made you so you feel good when you do right. Watch when you feel good and follow that good feeling. The good feeling comes from God. When you feel good, God feels good, too. God and you feel good together (Arden, 1994, p.13).*

When I used readings that I really loved and that resonated with the students, and when I was able to create a classroom community that was fun and participatory, I felt good inside. Maybe I didn't have to be and know all I had thought an ideal social policy professor should be and know, in order to provide an excellent policy class after all! It occurred to me that if classes like social policy are left only to the few who love and write social policy texts, the majority of social workers will continue to be politically disengaged, thus continuing the fracture between progressive social policy advocacy and daily social work practice. Slowly I came to see that my own sense of aversion to some of the course content was actually a gift, as it offered me a challenge to create something more rich and holistic.

To not dissociate knowledge from first-hand experience is a fundamental First Nations ethic, as Willie Ermine states, "only through subjectivity may we continue to gain authentic insights into truth. We need to experience the life force from which creativity flows. . ." (Ermine, 1995, p.110). I realized that I couldn't support my students to trust in the authority of their own voice and experiences, if I couldn't do this for myself. My colleague Joan Sanderson told me that she teaches as though life experiences are the primary text and the written texts are supplementary. Such an approach profoundly challenged all my former academic socialization; that the primary role of both the teacher and student is to acquire the knowledge of 'the experts' who write the textbooks! And so, with each passing week, semester, and year, I practiced letting go of privileging the knowledge of those who wrote text books, while exploring more deeply what it means to teach to and from our collective lived experiences. Over three years, I continued to modify the class by releasing all that was 'dry and detached' while building on all that was fun, relevant and exciting.

Exploring Sharing Circles

> *...learning is a holistic experience that occurs physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Certainly relevance requires restructuring the approach to social work practice and to teaching practice courses, creating a more holistic model that recognizes, in the case of the former, the importance of kinship ties, and in the latter, that learning holistically involves healing . . (Harris, 2006, p. 132).*

Lecturing, the traditional social policy pedagogical model of choice, just didn't fit for me. Not yet thirty, I was younger than most of my students, and felt ridiculous presenting myself as 'The Knowledge Holder', and they, as 'tabulae rasae.' To practice culturally relevant pedagogy (and to escape the pressure to be in the spotlight at the front of the room), I structured every class in a circle rather than the conventional line by line seating arrangement. Upon consultation with our resident Elders, one of my first steps to indigenize the class was to give tobacco to a male student to lead us in a smudging ceremony each time we met, according to the traditions of the néhiyawak (Cree) people of this territory. For the first class I would also invite an Elder to pray with us. I then began each class with a 'check in'/ sharing circle, giving each student a chance to share thoughts, feelings and ideas about the class materials and the connections to their own lives.

The advantages of the sharing circle format were many. For one, everyone had a chance to speak, and thus, as Jean Graveline (1998) enthuses in her book 'Circle Works,' a sense of classroom community was strengthened, so that students' insights and thoughts were shared collectively. This method also gave me a chance to begin the class by collecting my thoughts and composure while students talked, and helped me to address my comments to theirs.

The circle method also presented certain challenges. My idealistic hope, was that in the circle the course readings would be synthesized, thus doing in many voices and from many perspectives what would otherwise be done only from only my own. I also hoped that the circle method would increase motivation for students to have their readings done for class (my own agenda). The reality however was that many times we would go around the circle and very few would be in a position to comment on the readings. Thus, in our passing of a stone, there would often be broad wanderings from topic, repetition of points, and limited coverage of the ideas and content I intended to focus on that day. In conducting the circle according to the traditional way where each person is given as much time to speak as they desire (Hart, 2002, p.65), just doing a `check-in` and comment on the readings could take a good hour of class time. Some of the students privately expressed to me boredom and frustration with the circle method.

It occurred to me that the ideal of 'shared teaching' requires certain preconditions. In order for students to be optimally engaged with the course materials, they need to have the necessary academic background to integrate the readings, they need to feel a sense of personal relevance of the course content, and they need to feel a sense of confidence in their ability to master the materials. Moreover, in order to be physically and energetically present in the classroom, it is necessary that students' life circumstances outside the classroom, including housing and family relationships, support their classroom learning (Horsman, 1999). In her book *Too Scared to Learn*, Horsman (1999) speaks about how both present and past experiences of violence and trauma deeply affect adult students' ability to learn in the classroom. Similarly, Feehan (1993) notes that there are a number of factors outside of the classroom that disproportionately affect Aboriginal students such as family care-taking and community responsibilities.

"In order to understand your students you must understand the residential schools" one of my students told me during my first year teaching. I thought I did. Just like I thought I understood what liberation education was. It was only by listening, with tears streaming down my cheeks, as students and friends described to me being young children and forcibly taken by the authorities from their parents to attend these schools, that it began to really sink in how deep was the pain, intergenerational trauma, and link between academic learning and violence, disrespect and dispossession. And so I realized that undoing the 'banking model' that Freire describes (in which students are seen as passive repositories into which knowledge is placed to be retrieved at a later date), requires great intra-psychic healing and transformation on the part of all involved in the education project. As Colorado instructs,

> *Western instructors must be able to enter into the reality of Native students. They must feel and express regret for what Westerners have done; they must honestly experience and share the loss of their ancestral European lands, ways, and connections. In the mutuality of this moment, true reconciliation occurs (Colorado, 1993, p. 90).*

I was discovering that ideals of 'liberation education' could not be reduced to a simple formula; 'apply circle and culturally relevant education is achieved.' As I continued to experiment with pedagogical models, my questions deepened; 'What are the various ways that power sharing in the classroom can occur?' 'Is it naïve to expect students to enthusiastically claim ownership and leadership of knowledge creation just because we sit in circle?' 'Is it even fair to ask students to share the instructor's role?' 'Can ideals of 'co-teaching' simply add more burden and expectation to students who are already feeling overwhelmed?' 'In trying to be so culturally sensitive, am I actually abdicating my role as instructor to guide students through the course content?' 'Can the lecture method be used in a non-paternalistic way?'

Experimenting with Course Readings and Assignments

> *...educators must realize that students learn holistically, which involves watching, listening, and doing, as well as reflecting on these activities; that learning involves healing; that anti-racist practices and policies are paramount in creating a relevant milieu for students; and that the curriculum must provide a context for working holistically with family and community (Harris, 2006, p. 126).*

As I was seeking to integrate culturally relevant pedagogy, I also was seeking accessible class textbooks and readings that contained a minimum of academic jargon, and that were optimally relevant to the communities which students were coming from. Over three years of teaching the class, I experimented with a variety of social work policy text books (including Mullaly, 1997; Swift and Delaney, 2000; Pollak 2000;

Wharf and McKenzie, 1998), as well texts that dealt more indirectly with Canadian social policy (such as Acoose, 1995; Shields, 1994; Wotherspoon and Satzewich 2000). When I discovered Mel Hurtig's (2000) *Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids*, I found that his journalist storytelling style of inquiring into poverty and inequality in Canada, was a wonderful way of accessibly conveying social policy issues. Janet Silman's (1997) *Enough is Enough*, which tells the story of the MicMaq women from New Brunswick whose search for adequate housing ultimately ended with a policy change to the Indian Act, was a perfect complimentary text that my students could really relate to and get enthusiastic about. I also created a supplementary course reading package drawn from edited volumes[5], policy documents[6], and portions of books[7].

To clarify connections between the readings and 'real life' outside the classroom, I developed a variety of action-oriented assignments. The first was a 'letter to the editor' assignment, worth 10%, assigned in the first two weeks of class. This short practical assignment not only gave students the opportunity to learn a potent advocacy tool, but it also gave me an early chance to assess their work. I also created a 'social policy event report' assignment. Drawing from various email list-serves, I provided students with a list of relevant local events that would be happening over the semester, such as local municipal town hall meetings and elections, the Legislative Assemblies of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, food security forums and child welfare conferences. Students were to choose an event to attend (preferably in groups), and then write a paper describing the links between the event and the course content.

As well, in order to build student's knowledge of, and connection to, progressive social policy bodies, I developed a 'social policy body' assignment in which students researched and presented a review of a social policy organization such as the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Canadian Council on Social Development, Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, National Anti-Poverty Organization, and Fraser Institute. I also invited a variety of guest speakers who were involved in social policy development at various levels of First Nations and 'mainstream' Canadian governments to share their experiences with our class.

With a belief that standard term exams don't best reflect student's synthesis of course materials, I experimented with alternative final assignments. At first I assigned term essays, but found that the integrative component of the assignment was too often missed, and students who were fluent First Nations language speakers seemed to be most disadvantaged in this form of expression. I then assigned integrative journals (submitted at mid-term and end of term), which were less academically structured, ensured original work, and gave me an opportunity to learn what students were getting from the class, to hear the voices of those who tended to be quiet, and to learn the connections they were making between the course content and their lives. Many times I was amazed at the depth of insight and synthesis these journals displayed, with students creating linkages that I might not have. As well, though more time-intensive, journal marking was certainly more enjoyable than essay or exam marking.

Still unsatisfied with the limitations of essay and journal assignments in terms of optimally assessing course content 'mastery' and synthesis, at one point I decided to revisit exams. On the day of the scheduled mid-term exam, I informed my students that they would be put in groups of four, and that each group would receive a collective mark. This worked very well, as students were able to talk through difficult questions and learn from one another in a context less stressful than individual exams, and students reported positively on this experience. Yet still I was not totally satisfied, because the knowledge I was mostly `received` rather than `integrative`.

At last I arrived at a 'final integrative assignment' design that best met my goals of equally honoring both Indigenous and Euro knowledge systems, languages and communities. On the assigned exam date, student groups delivered formal presentations on select topics related to social policy. In order for each group to have an audience, each student signed up to be audience members for two other group presentations, and everyone provided positive written and oral feedback to the presenters. The exam day now became a day of interaction, discussion, and inevitably good food as well. The students were evaluated on their presentation skills, displayed knowledge of their topic, and ability to communicate social policy concepts to communities they may work with. Bonus marks were assigned to those groups who gave bilingual presentations in a First Nations language, (thus finally I found a way to privilege rather than disadvantage those who spoke their first languages). In order to assess the bi-lingual presentations, I had to humbly relinquish my role as 'knower,' and specifically invited audience members who possessed the language skills that I did not, to help assess and give feedback on the presentations.

While I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge some inevitable group tensions and struggles occurred, most students reported a positive experience with this collaborative alternative to the standard individualized exam or essay. For me it was a great joy and source of pride to see my students working together by building on each other's strengths and knowledge, while gaining skills for community education. Through these interactive

final assignments, the sense of classroom community and connectedness was deepened, and shared with other members of the campus. In their final evaluations, students offered comments such as, "It is so empowering to have knowledge to be able to look at the whole picture, rather than parts. I have gained confidence to be able to participate in policy and political discussions," and "I feel like my world has opened up so much. I realize how little I knew about policies and politics before I came to this class. I know I will be a better social worker, and a much better person,"

Conclusions

As instructors we play a significant role in defining the nature and scope of the subjects we teach. I have learned that I have as much academic freedom to experiment with course content, pedagogy and structure, as I choose to claim. Creating a classroom community that engages Aboriginal students required me to deeply question inherited notions of 'academic rigor,' and to consider what it means to engage the body, mind and spirit in the learning process. I learned that providing an excellent social policy class is not so much about what I know, how many social policy or history texts I have read, or even the specifics of my professional work experience. Rather, transformational teaching is primarily about heart, spirit and creativity applied holistically to integrate and synthesize 'textbook knowledge' with the knowledge from lived experiences of everyone involved. I learned that a social policy class need not be about forcing dry formal knowledge on resisting students. Rather, when honored and listened to, expressions of resistance from myself and students, can lead the way to developing a class of greater alignment, joy, and integrity. As an instructor, the more I am connected to the mystery that guides me towards inspiration, creativity, truth, and love, the more I am able to teach from `heart to heart` rather than simply `from head to head`. As I learn to tap into the divine inspiration that guides each one of us, I find myself on the way to discovering mamatowisowin.

Endnotes

1. Haug,E. (2001) '*Writings in the Margins: Critical Reflections on the Emerging Discourse of International Social Work*'. Masters thesis, Department of Social Work, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

2. Known as the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College until 2004.

3. Wharf & McKenzie's (1998) *Connecting Policy to Practice in the Human Services*, Armitage's (2003) *Social Welfare In Canada*, and most recently Westhues' (2006) *Canadian Social Policy: Issues and Perspectives* (4th ed), are three 'mainstream' texts that have done the most to include First Nations perspectives in their content.

4. The language of those people the Europeans called Plains Cree.

5. Howse & Stalwick, 1990; McKenzie, Seidl, & Bone, 1995; Durst, McDonald & McPhee, 1995.

6. Hanselmann 2001; Assembly of First Nations 1998; Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations 1997.

7. Acoose, 1995; Adams, 1989; Hudson & Galaway 1995; Hylton, 1999.

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