

ANTHROPOLOGY *IN PRACTICE*

News from the Society for Applied Anthropology in Manitoba (Inc.) S.A.A.M. INC.

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/saam/>

Volume 7, No. 1 October 2002

President's Report

Another SAAM season has begun, and we have some exciting events planned. To kick off the new season, we are privileged to draw upon the critical insights of one of our outstanding local citizens. Lesley Hughes is known to many of us as that insightful voice in the morning, and more recently, as a media critic in our neighbourhood newspapers. We begin our season with a stimulating challenge of our thinking in the most basic of issues – the control of information in our media.

SAAM has worthy goals, and the organization is flush with interesting and challenging ideas. But to thrive, SAAM needs more membership, wider participation, and consistent member commitment. Our organization challenge is to find a balance between exciting periodic gatherings and the many other activities in which most of us are involved. We also need practical application of exciting ideas. Perhaps one way we can achieve some of our laudable goals is to balance meetings with applied projects. Menno Wiebe, our long-serving VP, suggested that we turn ourselves into a public

practice monitoring body, and into a constituency that assesses positions taken by public agencies and political office seekers. This would be a most challenging initiative, and one worthy of membership discussion. Our newsletter can serve as a forum to discuss this issue and other issues.

It has been some time since we have enjoyed our *Anthropology in Practice* newsletter – the summaries of talks, reviews of books, member poetry, and news of interest to the membership. It is a pleasure to see the return of our newsletter. Let us extend our thanks to Allan Suchan for initiative and commitment. I urge all our members to cooperate with Allan by offering timely written commentary, book reviews, hot-off-the-press items, and other contributions of value to our membership.

SAAM has additional specific needs. Our website needs a new “master” – someone who can enter information in a timely fashion and care take the site. We extend our gratitude to Roy Dudgeon for our site foundation and its management for several years; Roy now needs to turn

that responsibility on to others. SAAM offers an opportunity to students to learn skills and to express their creativity in this area. A welcome addition to our website might be the formation of a chat-room – a forum for convenient exchange of ideas. This forum may also stimulate newsletter content.

For our 2002-03 season your Executive recommends a return to the Saturday meeting time. It is easier to find suitable space, and the meetings are not so frequent that we cannot sacrifice a part of our precious weekends. By moving the meeting time up to 10:00 a.m., we leave the afternoon for personal events. I urge all members to participate as fully as possible. Best wishes!

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **President's Report**
- **Editor's Corner**
- **Summary of SAAM presentations (Chodkiewicz; LaBerge; Migliardi; Capone)**
- **Member's Insight: Kevin Spice**

Editor's Corner

Hello and welcome to another exciting year of SAAM. Over the last several years the membership of SAAM, which includes anthropologists, students and professionals from various disciplines, has created forums for the discussion of many contemporary social problems. Interesting presentations by guest speakers like Lesley Hughes, lively debates, conferences, stimulating discussions, and our newsletter *Anthropology in Practice* have been some of our action. Globalization, Aboriginal and health issues, and ecological concerns have emerged as consistent themes over the last five years.

As editor of SAAM's Newsletter, and on behalf of all SAAM members, I invite you to join our society. Membership entitles you to attend interesting presentations, a copy of our newsletter and opportunities to contribute your skills and knowledge. Current members are encouraged to maintain their standing, and new members with interest, initiative and enthusiasm are desired. Remember, our dreams of making the world a better place will not come true unless we get out of bed, go to work and make them come true!

If you would like to contribute to our newsletter, please forward your submission to Allan Suchan at asuchan@hotmail.com.

Allan Suchan

SAAM Presentation Summaries

The Effects of Deforestation on Mexican Villagers

J.L. Chodkiewicz, December 10, 2001

Mexico as a whole is suffering from accelerated deforestation. Over the last 34 years Chodkiewicz observed the devastating effects of deforestation around the Mazahua village of San Simon. The

results were altered house construction, long trips to gather firewood (often illegally) and erosion that silted their little river and lake. The efficiency and productivity of their agriculture was diminished. The deforestation of all the surrounding hills resulted in erosion of the land, now pockmarked with crevasses and small landslides. This process affects much of Central Mexico, as shown in three different examples of forest management in the state of Michoacan.

1) The park of the Biosphere for Monarch Butterflies was created by presidential decree in 1986, without any consultation with the local population, comprised mostly of Mazahua and Otomi Indians. They found themselves deprived overnight of their major source of income and without any compensation. They make up for it by illegal wood cutting.

2) In 1977, Tarascan Indians of San Juan Nuevo organized in a communal forest community. In 1981, they established an enterprise to exploit forest resources that is a superb example of integrated forest management. They do not cause deforestation. All profits of the exploitation go to the local indigenous population. They built a factory which produces furniture and fittings, as well as very high quality resin for the international perfume and food industries.

3) The main source of revenue for most residents of the mestizo hamlet of La Zarzamora, above Lake Patzcuaro, is the resin they extract from the pine trees they have not cut down. Uncontrolled deforestation of the mountain sides led to severe disruption of the hydrological system. The poor water supply is not just reducing drastically crop yields; it is a daily preoccupation for every household in the village during the rainy season, which has grown shorter by a month.

Since 1992, researchers have addressed the problems of the supply and availability of firewood. They have developed and refined the design of a stove made with mud, sand and cement that is

cheap, nonpolluting and 3 to 4 more times more efficient than traditional ones. A problem that needs to be addressed is the current forestry legislation, which is so underfunded that forestry agents are very few, and cannot go on patrol because there is no gas for their car. They are in great personal danger, and so poorly paid that they are open to bribes.

Chodkiewicz offered several recommendations. A simpler and better supported plan must be established for the protection of woodlands and key ecological zones. Ejidos and rural communities should gain title to their traditional forest lands, and receive some technical backing with their forestry management. Those who come up with good plans should be supported, like San Juan Nuevo. New, more efficient technologies such as the "Lorena" stove should be promoted.

Adults Living With Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Corey La Berge, February 4, 2002

La Berge holds both a BA and MA in Anthropology from Simon Fraser University. He is affiliated with the Research Initiatives for Social Change Unit at the School of Social Work, University of Victoria. His applied research is in the area of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). While an undergraduate, he became disenchanted with psychology and its emphasis on psychometric research. He became critical of the pathologizing of deviance. This led to interest in cultural psychology, anthropological psychology and the anthropology of medicine. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, he latched on to FAS to explore how mothers of FAS children were pathologized and blamed. His research led to the discovery that the FAS diagnosis was used mostly with First Nations, Hispanics and Afro-Americans.

La Berge provided plenty of background information on FAS research. Research which goes back to the 1890's recognizes the influence of ethanol on chicks. The discussion of the influence of ethanol on human development was embedded in notions of Social Darwinism. However, the fact that children of those afflicted with FAS did not have it was not congruent with notions of inherited disabilities and the "survival of the fittest" paradigm. Research was not taken up again until the 1960's. The FAS diagnosis tends to be made by geneticists and pediatricians, not psychologists or psychiatrists.

After highlighting some of the research developments, La Berge presented the characteristics of FAS. Fetal development does not occur as normally as it should. Very low birth weight is followed by poor growth and development. There is retarded development of the central nervous system, which is manifest in atypical behavioral features. The distortion of facial features may include a thin upper lip, a flattened groove underneath the nose, eyes appearing farther apart due to the shortening of the horizontal plane of the eyes and malformed ears. Exposure to large quantities of ethanol in the first trimester of pregnancy leads to the FAS diagnosis. The term Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Effects, or FAS/E, is used to describe individuals exposed to large amounts of ethanol. This exposure leads to a selected number of symptoms in the infant.

La Berge began his research with the goal of deconstructing the notion of FAS. He had a postmodern focus. However, after viewing slides of brains of those afflicted with FAS, and those of healthy children, his perspective changed. The images provided a stark reminder that there were profound physical differences between FAS children and healthy children. The brains of the former have no convolutions on the cerebral cortex, and the grey matter is filled with small black holes that are absent in healthy brains. Furthermore, FAS brains are characterized by incomplete development. Other

slides made evident the facial physiognomy of FAS children, while those of controlled experiments showed symptoms in both humans and mice. These images demonstrated to La Berge that FAS was much more than “discourse” which needed to be “deconstructed”.

La Berge’s research was the first in British Columbia in which FAS adults were actually interviewed. Individuals who identified themselves as FAS adults were included in the study, even if they did not have a childhood diagnosis of FAS. Six communities were selected for the research. Participants were recruited for the study by community liaison workers. The liaison workers provided a personal link, gave credibility to the research team and provided follow-up support for interviewees who needed counseling. They were critical in explaining the project to participants in advance, and in ensuring the participants understood the concept of informed consent.

Informed consent posed a dilemma, as individuals with FAS have intellectual and cognitive impairments. Short-term memory deficits made it very difficult to negotiate informed consent with strongly impaired individuals. This was addressed by the interviewer constantly reminding the interviewee that answering the questions was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Many interviews proved to be cathartic for those individuals who have never had their life experiences validated before.

La Berge’s research revealed the frequently cited mantra of “education being the root to prevention” fails to account for the acute social and psychological stresses those with FAS face. As they are poor at multi-tasking, interpersonal communication and time management, they have difficulty in maintaining a job. They yearn to be included in the labor force and the community at large, but are continually misunderstood, misdiagnosed and marginalized. Moreover, there are issues of violence, racism and poverty that have

not been addressed. At present, there is very little government support, and there is the difficulty of having FAS diagnosed to recognize the disability.

Immigrant Integration Service: A View of an Organization of Immigrant Women in Winnipeg

Paula Migliardi, February 25, 2002

Paula Migliardi completed her MA degree in Anthropology at the University of Manitoba in 2001, based upon a study of an organization of immigrant women in Winnipeg. She pointed out that women’s experiences of migration, settlement and integration have been characterized as distinctive from that of men’s. Research on immigrant women’s settlement and integration experiences also reveal barriers to integration in a new society particular to women. In order to address those barriers, Migliardi noted, a number of immigrant women organizations have arisen in the history of non-profit organizations in Canada.

The case study of a local organization provides a scenario where immigrant women both offer and obtain social services. However, while non-profit organizations of immigrant women provide much needed services and spaces of representation, they are tied to and shaped by their dependency on government funding and priorities. In their struggle for survival this dependency aggravates internal problems and tensions with funding agencies. In the presentation, Miglardi discussed and highlighted the issues immigrant women face in their incorporation to Canada, the ways they have addressed the challenges they face, and the prospects for organizations serving immigrant women in a changing economic and political environment.

The percentage of non-European immigrants to Canada is increasing, and fifty percent of immigrants are women. This has implications for Canada's multicultural policy. This rising immigration of non-European women is leading to greater economic involvement of women in the labour market; yet women immigrants are particularly vulnerable to gender-based discrimination. They are employed largely as domestic workers and in the garment industry, although some are recruited as sex workers and mail-order brides.

There are several barriers to immigrant women. They typically have limited English language facility; they experience isolation; they lack access to social programs; and they are expected to assume traditional gender roles that make work outside the home difficult. Most immigrant women come to Canada on a "family-class" designation, sponsored by their husbands. This prejudices their entry as dependent wives. Sponsored wives are not eligible for various social assistance programs, even when they are landed immigrants. Under family-class sponsorships, immigrant women are sponsored for ten years (except in Quebec, where it is for three years).

The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM) was established to provide support to such immigrant women. It is the only such organization that is not ethnically specific in Manitoba. Paula Migliardi began as a volunteer for IWAM, and became involved first as a translator and later also as a Board member.

Counsellors within IWAM provide training as well as ethnic identification with clients. Immigrant women use kinship metaphors, such as "mother" and "sister", which illustrates the importance of "family" for women who lack ties in Canada.

Board of Directors has sought charitable organization, but has been unsuccessful because Revenue Canada considers IWAM a special interest group. The Provincial Government appoints

the Executive Director of the organization, but there is a lack of continuity on the Board because of rapid turnover. There are ten employees within IWAM.

Provincial grants are made to provide family services. The Province purchases a service agreement for delivery of counseling services. Funding is short-term, based on proposals for government programs.

Migliardi pointed out that there is a danger in relying on short-term grants for on-going operation of such an organization. Short term funding leads to increasing amounts of time devoted to proposal writing and gathering quantitative data about clients. Reliance on such quantitative data does not reflect clearly the work done by IWAM, and seriously overlooks the very serious needs among immigrant women seeking the services provided by such an organization. Also, such data required by the funding agencies fails to recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the volunteers who give their time to the organization. Reliance on unpaid volunteers fosters reproduction of inequities. Migliardi pointed out that there is burnout and increased tension among IWAM employees and Board members, which leads to contracting out of counselors.

Migliardi noted that anthropological research in the non-profit sector is extremely important. There is great value in a holistic approach to understanding organizational structure; it allowed Paula Migliardi to see the "big picture" that goes beyond government policy and government's limited sense of organizational structure.

From the Poverty Line

Pat Capone, March 18, 2002

Eckhardt Grammaté Hall, University of Winnipeg

Menno Wiebe offered the following summary of key points in the talk by Ms Capone:

- the prevalence of institutional relationships and lack of individual relationships between dominant society and "the poor";
- the fact that single mothers on social assistance often choose to do this in order to have access to institutional resources such as subsidized housing and social assistance that would otherwise be denied to them;
- the overarching theme of lack of control in the lives of the poor;
- the fact that society needs people who have the courage to step out of their "institutional boxes" and relate directly to the poor at a human level;
- the prevalence of attitudes of superiority and absence of respect for the poor;
- the lack of institutional/professional associations that would enable the poor to act corporately in response to government and other institutions;
- the culture of poverty, of exclusion, of fear and of transience.

Member's Insight - Kevin Spice

There are so many issues that concern me; war, poverty, ecological problems and human rights abuses toward Canada's Aboriginal populations. I would say that these all converge under the topic of imperialism. I believe we are living through a resurgence of the Age of Imperialism, when American Manifest Destiny is applied on a global level. Consistently, the United States and the other

Western countries frame their perception of non-Western peoples in a way that either marginalizes, demonizes or destroys them. For example, 8 October 2002 was the one year anniversary of the day that the richest country in the world went to war with the poorest country in the world. However, no Western television network dedicated any programming time to mourn the loss of the thousands of people who have died since the "War on Terror" began. Rarely has there been discussion on the root issues, the context or the methods of resolving the conflicts between the United States and those nations they determine are their enemy. I find it very difficult to discuss these issues for the simple reason that the United States currently seems to be at war with whomever they define as evil.

With such a loose definition of an enemy of war, I am very concerned with the efforts the Bush administration is currently pursuing to escalate global war and to limit the civil rights of its own citizens. It concerns me because these efforts are combined with fervent nationalism, and an authoritarian attitude toward anyone who challenges this effort. This is fascism. I am also concerned with how easily Americans have accepted the rhetoric of the "War on Terror". This rhetoric of retribution escalates and entrenches a cycle of violence, and masks the exploitation of people and resources, specifically oil.

The Age of Imperialism has never ended; each generation has taken for granted this imperial way of thinking. This is ingrained in Western civilization to such an extent that our institutions marginalize our own citizens as much as any other peoples. In Canada, one form this takes is the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government. The financial, social, emotional and spiritual costs of keeping Aboriginal peoples in a dependent and oppressive relationship are astronomical. In spite of this, our institutions such as health, justice and education are not designed to decolonize. Rather, they are designed for their own preservation, and to maintain peoples's dependency

on them. These Canadian institutions are simply not in the business of healing. All Canadians are in the complex situation of trying to resolve the issues of colonialism, imperialism and the illegal and immoral exploitation of people and resources.

In the West's relationship with Developing countries, organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank create dependency and increase poverty, violence, disease and the exploitation of labor and resources. This global relationship is yet another level of imperialism that demands to be resolved as the human costs rise exponentially.

How long will we continue to frame the world in terms of Good and Evil? Us and Them? How long will we use violence and war to resolve conflict? How will we work toward peace if we do not address the real root of the hostilities? How is it possible to end a "War on Terror" when the objectives, such as "to eliminate evil", are impossibly broad, simplistic and juvenile? How long will we allow the United States to justify this war with the childish reasons put forth by the Bush administration that other leaders are jealous, insane or evil? These reasons for war are insulting, evasive and destructive. Is the "War on Terror" really an excuse to conquer an oil-producing country? Is this an imperial war? If it is, I do not want to leave future generations with the responsibility of addressing the economic, social, political and ecological consequences.

Get
involved
with
SAAM!
Help define
goals and
activities,
and take
part in those
activities.