

ANTHROPOLOGY IN PRACTICE

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President's Report

Just before the very interesting discussion of the work of Doctors Without Borders by Nichole Riese, it is pleasant to be able to report on a so far very successful year of SAAM meetings. The meetings have been moved several times to the University of Winnipeg, and even presented during the week. The results of this experiment have been encouraging, since the attendance was good, and it included members of the University of Winnipeg who are not usually joining us. As you will see in the last page of this newsletter, our membership has changed over the years, as students and other members got engaged in new activities and "moved on" to other places and other jobs. However, I think that we should make a deliberate effort to increase our membership, and especially

to recruit more members from outside of academia. Brian Barth is now working to improve our Web

site and improve its usefulness and accessibility.

A piece of good news: our book based on the conference on Globalization and Community, organized by S.A.A.M at the University of Winnipeg is now ready for printing. Barring unforeseen delays, it should be printed next months. It will be part of the publications of the University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers, and distributed by the University of Manitoba Press. I shall keep you informed of the event when it comes out! The All essays in the book have been extensively revised and edited, thanks to the hard work of Ray Wiest and Erin Jonasson. This will be a very interesting collection that you will cherish! We plan a public lecture and announcement to launch the book, that is edited by

Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz and Raymond Wiest.

I look forward to your active participation in our next

meetings, and remember that all you suggestions are welcome!

Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz

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Editor's Corner:

A new year always brings with it reflection on the year that has passed, as well as a sense of excitement and anticipation for the year to come. In this edition of the Editor's Corner, I would like to reflect on some of the events of the past year, as well as look forward into our New Year.

The beginning of 2004 marked the one year anniversary of a campaign by the David Suzuki Foundation, 'The Nature Challenge,' a motivating study in participation and action. Like many other Canadians, I was enticed to join the program during the heated debate on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocols at the end of 2002.

The Nature Challenge is an attempt to bring Canadians together around the common goals of reducing carbon emissions by presenting ideas and opportunities that people can implement on an individual and community level. After signing on and agreeing to put into practice at least three of the ten challenges of the series, each participant is sent a monthly email message filled with specifics about the month's objective. Each month a new set of tips and stories appear, and recipients diligently attempt to execute changes where they can, as well as share in the dialogue about the programme.

I mention The Nature Challenge because I think that this program embodies some of the issues involved in action and application that we are trying to grapple with at SAAM. It provides a call to action and then presents alternatives for viewing and participating in this action. In the same way, I think that the ideas and alternatives that we have been exposed to through SAAM give us some of the tools we need to understand what and where

we will act in our personal and 'professional' lives.

Since the inaugural meeting of the 2003-2004 year, SAAM has tackled some very important and interesting topics which focus on action and practice. Our first meeting in September gave the group insight into the situation at Grassy Narrows and the non-violent, activist struggle for consultation and economic determination that has been taking place in that community. In our next meeting we were introduced to an exciting project at Pikangikum First Nation which, through the wisdom and localised knowledge of the Elders, is bridging generational and cultural divides for the benefit of the community, as well as the wider world. In our last meeting of the year a lively debate and discussion was held which brought together the perspectives of several panellists and members on the ever-important creature that is ethics.

While there are any number of continuities in the presentations and discussions that we have participated in the past few months, I want to bring it back to our major themes: action, practice, and application. What is it that we want from the world that we live in? How is it possible to aid in the implementation of changes and address our 'community' concerns? By what ethical standards do we *practice* anthropology, in all senses of the term? I think that these are some of the questions that we are focused on each time that we come together through SAAM.

Just as The Nature Challenge has served as a catalyst for small changes in the lives of those who have signed on (and that is nearly 100,000 Canadian households!), the many different expressions of practice that we are exposed to through SAAM can also serve as guides in our everyday lives.

Summary of Panel Presentation and Discussion on "**The Ethics of Research in Northern Manitoba Communities**"

On Saturday 29 November SAAM sponsored another exciting and thought provoking panel presentation and discussion. To address the ethics of research in northern indigenous communities Ellen Cook, a former chief of the Blood Vein River community, Menno Wiebe of the Mennonite Central Committee, and George Fulford of the Department of Anthropology at the University of

Whether we are in the 'field' as researchers, or at home in our communities as activists, the expressions, suggestions, options, and opinions that we are exposed to through SAAM can influence us. This has been proven by a number of members who have become involved in specific issues they learned about through SAAM.

In the coming months we will meet several more times, and each time we do we will be given the opportunity to add to the growing pool of ideas about applied anthropology. It is my sincere hope that these ideas will provide the tools and perhaps even the catalysts for our work, as well as our everyday lives. **Erin**

Jonasson

Winnipeg were panelists. In a brief greeting and introduction, our president Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz highlighted the

significance of research ethics. When conducting research in northern Canada and in other areas of the world, it is important for anthropologists to temper their lofty intentions with research ethics. Dr. Chodkiewicz shared an experience in Mexico, where he discouraged "development" projects formulated in Mexico City, that had nothing to do with the needs and experiences of the village targeted. He pointed out that research conducted without ethics often leads to problems, even tragedies, for both the researchers and the societies studied.

Menno Wiebe was the first panelist to speak. He started by sharing a special thought which is germane to anthropological research; insight, gained mutually, is more valuable than that gained individually. Then Mr. Wiebe posed the question we were to address; as far as research assignments in other societies are concerned, under what guidelines do we proceed? He recollected an experience in South America. After having coffee with an elder, the elder asked if he (Menno) was there to give advice or get advice. The moral of this, and the guideline for field research, is that anthropologists must go into research situations prepared to be good listeners. If the researcher does not have good ears he should not be there. A Spanish proverb, "*El que oye una sola campana conoce solamente un tono*" (if you listen to only one bell you will know only one tone), expresses this maxim.

According to Mr. Wiebe, when researchers work in indigenous societies, "the overwhelming are in contact with the overwhelmed." One of the unfortunate legacies of anthropology is that the wisdom and knowledge of indigenous societies was overpowered and laid underneath the relations between white and indigenous societies. Now, the media is letting our society know about this wisdom. The media opens up windows

into other cultures. Anthropologists need to address this cultural, economic and political lopsidedness.

George Fulford pointed out that contemporary anthropological research carries on the colonial legacy of European countries. Most anthropologists do research in other countries. In fact, most students at Menno Simons are sent to projects all over the world. Only a few are sent out to rural Manitoba and other areas of Canada. According to Vine Deloria Jr., author of Custer Died for Your Sins, the perspective of anthropologists, who arrive in indigenous communities in the summer to do research, is limited and guided by careerism. Deloria's acerbic and humorous portrait of anthropologists in the field raises important ethical questions, such as publications not benefiting the community in which the research was conducted.

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) used to reprimand anthropologists who were not sensitive to such matters. They have a code of ethics which addresses aspects of research such as informed consent, confidentiality, representation and the voluntary withdrawal of research participants. These guidelines, which grew out of litigation in the 1960s and 1970s, do not necessarily reflect the concerns of indigenous people. Many researchers see these guidelines as a means of protecting the researcher and the institution he or she represents. This is not to say these guidelines are unimportant. They provide a framework on how to conduct ethical research, and a focus for dialog on how to make improvements.

For Ellen Cook, respect, honesty, caring and sharing must be central to the research process. These are the ethics of indigenous people. Everyone, including individuals,

families, communities and society at large, can gain from research which abides by these principles. For indigenous people, everything has to be in balance. They look at things in a circle, not in a linear fashion or with tunnel vision. For them, what goes around comes around. It is extremely important to not break the circle. She shared an experience dealing with researchers while she was a chief. She was phoned by University of Manitoba researchers who were interested in diabetes research. They were invited to the reserve where they met community members, several elders and the chief. The researchers presented a gift of tobacco and participated in a ceremony. Only after all of this did the researcher address them about the research. Together they discussed the reasons for the research, and the researchers were told by the community that what the latter really wanted was understanding. According to Cook, when there is such openness with no hidden agendas it is possible for everyone involved to benefit.

These presentations stimulated a lively question and answer session. Some of the issues addressed were the importance of basic research even when no immediate benefits may be realized, how differences of opinion about research among indigenous community members are resolved, and how professionalism among researchers can be another manifestation of colonialism. Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz wrapped-up this exciting meeting by pointing out that ethical guidelines should always be in our minds when we do research, and that we should not just follow the rules merely for the sake of doing so.

Acknowledgement and thanks are extended to Vanessa Gurr who took notes at this meeting. Her notes were helpful in the writing of this summary.

Allan Suchan

SAAM Meeting Report: November 4, 2003:
Whitefeather Forest Initiative,

In early November, the members of SAAM and their guests had the pleasure of hosting an informational session and discussion on the Northern Boreal Initiative (NBI) and the Whitefeather Forest Initiative (WFI). Presenters Alex Peters (General Manager, Whitefeather Forest), Andrew Chapeskie (Taiga Institute) and Iain Davidson-Hunt (Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba) were on-hand to detail the initiative, giving background on Pikangikum First Nation and the extensive work which is being done in the community and surrounding forest.

The Whitefeather Forest Initiative, as part of the larger Northern Boreal Initiative, is a collaborative effort between the Ontario government, Pikangikum First Nation, environmental groups such as the Taiga Institute, and industry partners. Under the auspices of NBI, a planning initiative established in 2000 in response to First Nations' requests for input and economic sustainability in the forestry industry, WFI is a community-based project built upon principles of sustainable development. As such, the project involves the application of local knowledge and decision-making, as well as shared responsibilities and full consultation with Pikangikum First Nation. While the project was initiated in response to forestry, the project has come to encompass many other initiatives, including the potential for other sustainable forest-based economic activities.

Alex Peters, former Chief of Pikangikum and current General Manager of WFI, gave us a sense of his community and its needs, as well as reporting some of the

positive developments that have come through WFI. Pikangikum First Nation is a remote-access Ojibway community with more than 2000 residents, located 100 km northwest of Red Lake, Ontario. Peters outlined how, in 1996 Elders in his community approached several levels of government in an effort to address the lack of employment and opportunity on the First Nation, as well as the destruction of their forest environment. The Elders, with the authority accorded their age and experience, were (and remain) alert to the fact that their population is young, with 75% of the community under the age of 25, and, not only do they require employment opportunities in the community, but there is also a pressing need to retain local knowledge and culture while maintaining a respect and responsibility to their forest home.

Working with the provincial government and partnerships with industry and environmental groups, the community has set to work on an ambitious agenda: implementing a community-based land use plan with mapping and forest inventories in the surrounding boreal environment.

The Elders of the community are leading the initiative. With their exceptional knowledge of the cultural and environmental landscape, they and the youth of the community are recording local knowledge, as well as Western 'scientific' knowledge, of the forest in both Ojibway and English. Their efforts are significant in many ways, engaging the community in retaining traditional knowledge while encouraging new perspectives on development and employing youth in meaningful ways. With the understanding of their priority and responsibility to the Earth, the Elders at Pikangikum are directing the community in an impressive effort to

strengthen and express Ojibway understandings of the forest. They envision a place of learning nestled in the forest; an interpretive and teaching centre where people in the community, and from outside, can learn about their forest and lifestyle.

The maintenance of community traditions and understandings has been aided inexorably by the fact that the Ojibway language retention rate at Pikangikum is exceptionally high; in fact, it is the highest rate of retention in Ontario. For children in the community, Ojibway is their first language until they begin school in English.

The traditional knowledge of the community is recorded in many ways for this project. Again, it is the Elders who are leading the initiative. Through video and audio recordings, many of which are available for viewing on their website (www.whitefeatherforest.com), as well as charts, maps and diagrams, important environmental details are being shared, along with the sharing of unique cultural knowledge. This work, as well as the work of environmental groups like the Taiga Institute, is also being used in an attempt to have the northern boreal environment declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. If granted, the largely intact forest area would be one of very few UNESCO sites in Canada, and the only boreal forest area with this designation in the world.

While the Whitefeather Initiative and the larger NBI project have been successful in many ways, certain events surrounding the autonomy and operations of Pikangikum have come under fire by the Federal Government. Around the same time that NBI was getting off the ground in 2000, the funding and authority of the Chief and Council were revoked by the Minister of Indian Affairs. The band has

been placed under the administration of an outside 'Direct Delivery Service Provider,' or in Peters' terms, "an Indian Agent." Peters complained that this 'Indian Agent,' the first for the community since 1969, has never been to the community and lives more than 2000 km away. Not only that, he refuses to enter the community without police accompaniment. Despite winning battles in court and balancing spending at the local level, the community remains under his ultimate control. According to Peters' understanding, these actions are the result of Federal Government bitterness with the community's involvement in the NBI project. (The Feds refused to become involved in a collaborative project with the community after requests from Elders, at which point the Provincial Government was approached.)

While the initiatives in the forest are the result of public-private partnerships, the Elders were concerned that the community could lose their autonomy to economic interests. In order to prevent this, the community has retained a minimum of 51% ownership in the project. But, the Elders could also see the potential stakes of not getting involved with industry. To the south of Pikangikum they see clear-cut logging destroying the landscape and livelihoods of other First Nations communities and they are determined to prevent this from happening in their own surroundings. They also see that resistance to industry does not always lead to greater autonomy; in fact it may prove to be more hazardous to their way of life.

Community Elders speak of a story which predicted that the land would one day be cut up in a 'checkerboard' style, with all things having an attached monetary value. In fact, one community Elder, Francis Keeper, who died at the age of 100, was among the first to see this

'checkerboard' from the air while flying to Winnipeg. Though the checkerboard of globalisation is already at the doorstep of many other northern communities, the people of Pikangikum are determined to preserve the common property and knowledge of their people.

Taking a page from the successes of the Menominee of Wisconsin, the community of Pikangikum has begun a process which promises great things for the future. There are many potential expansions to the project in the works, and there is a renewed sense of purpose and opportunity in the community.

If you would like more information on the Whitefeather Forest Initiative and Pikangikum First Nation, visit their informative and interactive website at www.whitefeatherforest.com. Additional information on this project and other initiatives are available through the Taiga Institute's website www.taigainstitute.org and the Government of Ontario's Ministry of the Environment www.ene.gov.on.ca.

Erin Jonasson