

Blood n' Thunder

B&T needs a new name?

Dear Editor,
 You should consider changing the title to "Blood of the Aboriginals n' Thunder of the Whites". I hope that no person will take my response to "Glad's" letter as "white person bashing". In order for me to receive a full time education here at UNB, I've had to work two jobs for the past year so that I could pay for my tuition, travel and living expenses.

I thought that when I left home that I would not only leave my family and friends, but also the prejudices of the people. I am from an area in which three groups of aboriginals occupy the land for many generations and someday these three groups will settle their claims to their respective areas.

I really believe that if the federal and provincial governments who are discussing these "land claims" with these groups, that they educate other Canadians as well on what these claims are about. I also believe that if these governments do not have the money to settle these claims, then they shouldn't enter into negotiations of any form with these aboriginal groups. Ask your M.P., get your tax dollars worth, find out what the claims

are about?

Two aboriginal groups in Labrador have overlapping claims to an area in which a major company, Diamond Fields Resources Inc. owns Exploratory Drilling Rights only. This company seems to be of the impression that they could just run over these aboriginal groups who really own this area. If these two groups decide that they approve the development, then this area is worth over one billion dollars and will provide job opportunities for both aboriginals and other Canadians!

These land claims represent not only the social, economic and cultural aspects of these two aboriginal groups. They hope to one day achieve self-government in which the aboriginal people's will decide who they want and not what they receive. It is not sad that "Glad" seems to object at all aboriginal people's, but it is sad that "Glad" does not seem to remember the "Beothuk Nation" that once occupied Newfoundland. This race of human beings were overwhelmed by the "white" people's ignorance and fear and were wiped off the face of the earth!

I hope that one thing that "Glad" remembers is that underneath our physical characteristics, language, culture and religion, is that all people belong to homosapiens, no matter who they are!!! It doesn't matter who you are on the outside, but it matters how you behave between different groups of people's that make you human. We must not forget where we come from and that all people have to treat everyone in an equal manner.

SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Walk

Religion in the Classroom?

A student in the Faculty of Education mentioned to me the other day that they had a discussion in class about religion and education. Most students, he informed me, felt religion did not belong in the schools. I have been involved in similar discussions, with similar views expressed. Murray Webber, in a letter to the editor of the Daily Gleaner (Sept 7/94), argued that "Religious Instruction belongs in the Churches", not in the schools. The Newfoundland government is desperately trying to convince its people, but to no apparent avail, that denominational education is an anachronism, and that secular education is more sound, economically and pedagogically.

Though these views should not surprise us, perhaps they should alarm us. Within the span of a few generations, the non-sectarian public school has become a secular school. Religion has become distanced, even divorced, from education. Small wonder that students argue it has no place in the schools.

In Canada we have always advocated the separation of church and state. That's probably a good thing. The state should not run the church, nor should the church run the state. History is replete with horrific examples of the failures of both attempts.

However, church and religion are not the same thing, even though they have much in common. To be church affiliated is to identify with a particular ecclesiastical institution, and all its attendant beliefs and doctrines. To be religious or spiritual is to live according to the particular philosophical, ethical, moral, even economic, principles of one's own choosing. One may choose, or not choose, to do so inside or outside a particular church.

Some of us affiliate with a church. All of us, I dare say, live according to some philosophical, ethical, moral, or economic principles, whatever they may be. We make a gross mistake, however, when we identify religion narrowly with the church. We make an even greater mistake when we regard as religious only those who are fundamentalists, fanatics or militants. Yet, how often is it not the case that when it comes to any discussion of religion the

latter image comes to mind? Little wonder that students, let alone the schools, wish to remain ignorant of or indifferent to that kind of religious expression, or are reluctant to discuss or teach it.

Can we afford, however, to permit such narrowed thinking to persist? Surely we recognize that religious or spiritual beliefs of some kind are intimately intertwined in the public life of all of us. Is it not the case that many charitable organizations, social justice projects, peace groups, and national or international relief agencies are endeavours born out of, or spear-headed by, people with deeply held religious convictions? Native groups, long recognizing that their very survival as a people is dependent on their spiritual heritage, engage their spiritual leaders in defining their self-identity, even playing crucial roles in settling disputes over land claims, something that the news media is slowly coming to recognize, much less understand.

A study commissioned by Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance concluded that "it is the level of our religious commitment which... is a stronger determinant of our values than whether we are rich or poor, young or old, male or female, black or white, liberal or conservative" (The Connecticut Mutual Life Report on American Values). Interestingly enough, most religions of the world teach the same thing. Yet, this flies in the face of what we are generally taught in school. Because religious beliefs and commitments are generally ignored, it is asserted, if only by default, that it is our economics, age, gender, race or politics that determine our values. And it is these subject areas that comprise school curriculum. Would it not be more honest, let alone fair, that we also include a study of religious beliefs and commitments, and how they impact our public life? The founders of public education recognized the intimate connection between religious beliefs and education. Why were they ever separated?

Plus to assist the new nation by teaching a new generation tolerance: to teach people how to get along notwithstanding their differences, especially their religious differences.

Is our claim to be tolerant today based on ignoring rather than exploring various religious points of view in public education? Has our virtue of tolerance resulted in an indifference to, or ignorance of, religion? "The teaching of toleration," argues Gagnon in Democracy's Half-Told Story, as with any other democratic virtue, must be done in relation to matters we feel strongly about" (p. 198).

Students in the Education class appeared to assume the validity of a secular view. But did they mistakenly believe this to be religiously neutral ground, by which all others could be assessed? Yet, is it really neutral, particularly when it alone argues vehemently that all other religious views should be excluded from the classroom?

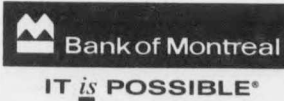
Some public educators now recognize that religion and religious points of view cannot, and should not, be separated out from the educational process. It has a legitimate place, if only because it shapes, and has shaped, the lives of so many Canadians. Are we ready then to recognize, for example, that the Catholic Bishops' statements on the economy provides a helpful balance for an economics class? Will Psychology 1000 recognize that the Greek word for psyche is the Biblical word for soul or spirit? Would a Philosophy of Law class be ready to discuss the merits of Micah 6:8? Will Proverbs 1: 1-7 be allowed as a viable perspective on knowledge and learning for a Philosophy of Education class?

Why settle for macaroni every night when now you can afford it for breakfast and lunch as well?



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need when you need it. And you only pay interest on the amount used. Find out more. Go to a Bank of Montreal branch for details, or check out our web site at <http://www.bmo.com/> Hey, now you can afford a fancy side dish with your macaroni, like ketchup.



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