Official-Language Minority and Aboriginal First-Language Education: Implications of Norway's Sámi Language Act for Canada

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Norway has given official-language status to the languages of its aboriginal peoples, the Sámi, yet Canada has accorded that status only to English and French, the languages of the colonizers. In Norway, the 1992 legislation giving major language and cultural rights to the Sámi has had a major impact on Sámi education. This Norwegian experience has significant implications for official-language minority and aboriginal first-language education in Canada, shedding light on such important topics as minority teacher education, minority first-language pedagogy, curriculum texts, community attitudes to minority languages, language support services, school administration, devolution of control, cultural incorporation, and the maintenance of cultural identities. As a result, in this article I question the appropriateness of official policies and language practices in Canada.

La Norvège a accordé le statut de langue officielle aux langues de ses peuples autochtones, les Sámis. Cependant, le Canada n'a accordé ce statut qu'à l'anglais et au français, langues de ses colonisateurs. En Norvège, la législation de 1992, accordant des droits linguistiques et culturels majeurs aux Sámis, a eu un impact considérable sur l'éducation de ceux-ci. Cette expérience norvégienne qui comporte des implications significatives pour l'éducation relative à la langue officielle des minorités et à la langue maternelle des autochtones au Canada, jette un éclairage sur des sujets importants pour les minorités tels: la formation des maîtres, la pédagogie relative à leur langue maternelle, les attitudes de la communauté à l'égard des langues des minorités, les services de soutien linguistiques, l'administration scolaire, la dévolution du contrôle, l'incorporation culturelle et le maintien des identités culturelles. Par conséquent, je remets en question dans cet article le bien-fondé des politiques officielles et des pratiques linguistiques au Canada.

The history of contact between indigenous peoples and their colonizers has been a steady escalation of pressures on aboriginal peoples to conform to the imposed cultures. The injustices and the inappropriateness of dominant-group educational policies and practices for minorities of all kinds, have had their most strking impact on aboriginal peoples. In short, an alien culture, imposed on aboriginal peoples by invasion and conquest, became institutionalized for them when a system of schooling based solely in the alien culture and in its language(s) became their only route to education. As a result, the task of reforming aboriginal education has important implications for reforming education for minorities of all kinds.

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Whereas Norway has now given official-language status to the languages of its aboriginal peoples, the Sámi, Canada has given official-language status only to the languages of the colonizers themselves. Although Canada's action is a desirable and necessary recognition of the importance of French and English to this country, our policy makers' failure to give some matching legitimacy to the country's aboriginal languages seems unjust. It reinforces the injustices of dominant-group educational policies and practices that have left aboriginal peoples with few alternatives other than linguistic assimilation and eventual cultural assimilation.

THE CANADIAN PARALLELS

Official-Language Minority Education

Although most major educational constituencies in Canada have policies that give official-language minorities their own schools, the territories and some provinces do not routinely give official-language minorities control over the running of their own schools, as stipulated in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Corson & Lemay, in press). In addition to these differences across regions, other more tacit policies and practices still combine to make the country's official-language minority provisions less effective and fair than they could be.

Rampant assimilation of official-language minorities is a problem in many places. Landry and Allard (1987) argue that effective minority control of schools is needed to ensure that mother-tongue usage is encouraged and valued in as many contexts as possible. They recommend that minority-language schools should try to offset the constant contact with the majority culture and tongue that children receive outside schools. Where official-language minorities are not in control of schooling, this counterbalance is likely to be missing (Cartwright, 1985; Landry, Allard, & Théberge, 1991).

Lack of home support also helps official-language minority assimilation, because schools can only do so much and cannot replace the family and institutional role in promoting language vitality (Churchill, Frenette, & Quazi, 1985). Landry and Allard (1987) also indicate that without a dynamic curriculum which not only promotes belief in a minority language's value, but also increases competence and use of a mother tongue in the home, this assimilation will continue. Clearly, the value placed on a language by the wider community, in its laws and in its policies, affects the value its speakers will attach to it.

To increase the value placed on French in Ontario, Cartwright (1985) proposes the creation of territorial zones in northern and eastern Ontario in which both French and English would be the official languages. This proposal would increase pride in language and culture for the Franco-Ontarian minority. In Francophone schools themselves, Levasseur-Ouimet (1989) recommends that the pedagogy be culturally liberating. Pedagogy should avoid reproducing dominant

aspects of the majority culture by giving legitimacy to the minority students' culture and by respecting their variety of the language. Because teachers in these schools are agents of change and liberation, they need to be specially educated in their own training institutions to prepare them for this role.

Aboriginal First-Language Education

Similar points can be made about aboriginal first-language education. But, as mentioned, Canada's aboriginal peoples are in a far more parlous position, because they lack the linguistic protection the Charter offers official-language minorities, and there are relatively few guarantees of schooling in their own languages, much less widespread aboriginal control over that schooling.

Exemplary school programs using an aboriginal language as the medium of instruction do exist in Canada, but they are few. In a survey of 458 schools, Kirkness and Bowman Selkirk (1992) found that less than 4% of schools reported use of an aboriginal language as a medium of instruction, and most of these were in the Northwest Territories (Blondin, 1989; Brossard, 1990; Feurer, 1993; Herodier, 1992; Littlejohn & Fredeen, 1993).

Many writers offer policy recommendations to promote revival of aboriginal languages and cultures (e.g, Annahatak, 1994; Armstrong, 1993; Burnaby, 1984a, 1984b, 1989; Chartrand, 1988; Crago, Annahatak, & Ningiuruvik, 1993; Dorais, 1990; Drapeau & Corbeil, 1992; Faries, 1993; Heit & Blair, 1993; Kirkness, 1989a, 1989b; McEachern, 1988, 1993; McEachern & Moeller, 1988; Paquette, 1989; Pitawanakwat, 1989; Sawyer, 1988; Stairs, 1994a, 1994b; Toohey, 1986, 1989). Burnaby (1987), Dorais (1988), Heimbecker (1994), Ryan (1992), and Toohey (1985) all see aboriginals' control of their own institutions as basic to any kind of reform aimed at ending deculturation and language-stripping.

THE NORWEGIAN EXAMPLE

Major educational reforms followed legislation in 1992 awarding language and cultural rights to Norway's Sámi people. These aboriginal peoples are now guaranteed first-language education in and official status for the Sámi languages, as the languages of identity of most Sámi people living in Norway. Although the new provisions for Sámi-as-a-second-language education (Corson, 1995) are also relevant to Canadian education, in reviewing the effects of the Sámi Language Act, I concentrate on provisions for Sámi as a first language.[1]

The intricate links between successful first-language planning policies for the Sámi languages, the development of Sámi identity, and the reduction of social problems in the Sámi community seem relevant to the sometimes desperate social situations of some aboriginal peoples in Canada. Valuable insights can be gained from recent research on Sámi identity in the Sápmi (Sámiland) about social and behavioural issues among aboriginal youth. Kvernmo (1993) indicates that the

presence or absence of behavioural problems among Sámi young people and the quality of their future lives is closely linked to the relative strength of their ethnic consciousness. This Sámi identity, in turn, is strengthened by parents' positive attitude towards their own Sámi identity and especially to their Sámi language. Kvernmo presents use of a Sámi first language at home as the key factor in establishing Sámi identity. But because the eradication of the aboriginal languages of the home and community was a deliberate educational policy in Norway as late as the 1970s, as it was in Canada and elsewhere (Brossard, 1990; Corson, 1993), the ending of those policies in recent decades has not been enough to end the language eradication. Consequently, school systems, not only in Norway, are now reversing that language-policy emphasis, so that the school allies itself with the home and the community by supporting aboriginal language-medium education throughout compulsory schooling. Norway's experience in this area is highly instructive.

THE NORWEGIAN SCHOOLING SYSTEM

In Norway, because responsibility for curriculum is delegated to schools, innovation to suit local contexts is encouraged. Cooperation between home, school, and local community is seen as essential, because the school is required to address the differing religious, political, and/or cultural values children experience in their homes. Primary education (first to sixth grades) presently begins when children are 7 years old.[2] It is policy in primary schools for one teacher to take the same pupils from the first to the sixth grade, and for the children to remain with the same class group throughout all nine years of basic education. In the lower secondary years, team teaching is common, with the same three teachers sharing the teaching and management of two classes. This practice reflects the marked commonality of the basic schooling offered in Norway: individual differentiation exists, but mainly within heterogeneous classes, which include children who might be treated elsewhere as exceptional and withdrawn for some of their classes. The integration of linguistic-minority children is part of this pattern for Norwegian education. All young people between the ages of 16 and 19 have a statutory right to three years of upper secondary education or training, regardless of qualifications at entry level.

THE SÁMI CULTURE AND LANGUAGES

The Sámi are the oldest known population of Scandinavia, dating from prehistoric times (Aikio, 1984). Like Canadian aboriginal peoples, the Sámi have been known by other names given them by dominant cultures. In English, they have been called Laplanders, but their officially accepted name is now "Sámi." The largest Sámi population lives in Norway. About 25,000 of these are Sámi speakers, and this figure is increasing rapidly, following the proclamation of the Sámi

language laws. Most speak Northern Sámi, which is the largest of the nine Sámi languages and the basis for the standard Sámi orthography. But two other Sámi languages, Southern Sámi and Lule, are also spoken in Norway. Speakers of Lule can understand the two other languages with some effort, but Northern Sámi and Southern Sámi speakers cannot communicate directly with each other.[3] As a result, the training of Sámi teachers is based in three different centres: Trondheim (Southern Sámi), Bodø (Lule), and Kautokeino (Northern Sámi).

Half a million people live north of the Arctic Circle in Norway, but only about 50,000 of these are Sámi. In recent years, the Sámi have had to engage in major public protests to protect their environmental rights and territories. Like some Inuit and First Nations peoples, many older Sámi in Norway are trilingual (Aikio, 1986). As well as using their own language, they speak the language of their colonizers, the Norwegians, and also Finnish, which from the Middle Ages onwards had status in Northern Scandinavia as the language of commerce. Because the Finnish and Sámi languages are related to each other, but not to Norwegian, the Sámi find Finnish easier to learn and they communicated with Norwegians in the 1800s using that language (Aikio, 1986).

Early missionaries from the 15th century insisted that the Sámi drop their own language for religious purposes and use Finnish, which the missionaries commonly spoke. Later missionaries burned sacred artifacts of the indigenous material culture or sent them off to museums. They also put Sámi shamans to death. What remained of the material culture in Finnmark was destroyed by a German scorched-earth policy in 1944, when every building in the County of Finnmark was systematically destroyed in expectation of a Russian attack.[4] Like Canada's aboriginal peoples, the Sámi have been the victims of strong official assimilation policies, lasting for almost 400 years. Norwegian and other settlers in Sámi areas rarely acquired the Sámi language, and were often offended by its use. Even today, traditional folk music practices (the *yoik*) are still lowly regarded by parents in the heart of Sámi territory, because older Sámi parents have been made to feel ashamed of some of their culture's customs. But the clan cultures remain very distinctive, with many customs and practices comparable to those found in Arctic Canada.

For other Scandinavians, the Sámi languages are closely associated with reindeer herding and breeding. This is a common but far from exclusive occupation of the Sámi, practised in the nomadic heartland, around the town of Kautokeino, by about 20% of the local clan members, but by only 5% of Sámi in Norway as a whole. Entire specialist categories of classification in the Sámi languages are linked to technical aspects of reindeer herding and also craftwork (*duodji*). Consequently, the continuation of traditional activities such as reindeer herding, small farming, *duodji,* and fishing is a strong factor maintaining the Sámi languages. These activities are now fully integrated into the Norwegian economy.

The research reported here was carried out in Kautokeino,[5] a town of 3300 people, most of whom are Sámi clan members. Karasjok is the other major

centre of the Sápmi, which stretches across Norway, Finland, Sweden, and into Russia. Clan cultures are different in each centre. Because the reindeer migration routes concentrate in the area around Kautokeino, it has the largest Sámi clan group in Scandinavia and is the nomadic and cultural centre.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

Some social issues in Arctic Norway parallel those in Arctic Canada. Although there is relatively little substance abuse among the Sámi, partly because of a long history of prohibition on alcohol enforced by conservative members of the culture themselves, unemployment at above 20% is a leading social issue for Sámi communities. This unemployment especially affects many older people, who are less well educated. Associated with youth unemployment is the large number of adolescent students in senior secondary schools who bring their own children to school with them. The number of unmarried mothers is unusually high, partly because of the Sámi custom of having children at an early age. The birth rate among Sámi is also well above the country's average.

Many more highly educated Sámi have graduated in recent decades, and there is great demand in Norway for educated bilingual and bicultural Sámi. Although many more Sámi teachers-in-training are graduating each year, their range of job options in bureaucracies, policy agencies, and politics means that relatively few enter teaching, or if they do, few stay very long. Young Sámi women are now the highest-educated social group in Norway, and they noticeably outnumber Sámi men in senior administrative and professional positions. This unusual situation has come about largely because young Sámi men from nomadic backgrounds see the traditional occupations as more desirable for them, whereas young women have recognized the value of education and seized it when it became more freely available in recent decades.

The maintenance of Sámi cultural identity is a major concern inside and outside the Sápmi. A revitalization of Sámi identity and culture followed the building of modern towns on the ruins of war. Sámi people now prefer to describe themselves as Sámi first, and only as citizens of Norway. A new image of a Sámi person has developed, integrating the modern world into the traditional culture to make the Sámi more self-confident and secure in their identity. As mentioned, pressure to sustain identity today is mainly in terms of language, and less in terms of traditional activities. Pan-Sámi solidarity is also an important expression of identity, as the Sámi develop more formal links across the four countries they inhabit. The new youth radicalism in the 1990s is a factor promoting cultural unity and identity. The young regard even the wearing of small items of traditional clothing at rock concerts or discotheques, or using a few Sámi words as greetings, as cultural bonding actions of great importance.

Cultural identity is also sustained by the factional tension within Sámi, dating back to the 19th century, when two rival but cooperating factions, the conserva-

tive and the radical, began to develop. These two factions are a complex sociocultural phenomenon. The radical faction has its roots in the more economically disadvantaged Sámi who inhabit the coastal regions of Finnmark and Troms, people heavily affected by the depression in the 1930s, who became involved in radical, Marxist, and later social democratic political movements. The more conservative faction centres on the relatively affluent and more bourgeois reindeer-herding families, whose privileged economic position is now guaranteed by the reindeer-herding laws that give Sámi sole control of this industry, even though it is now integrated firmly into the Norwegian national economy. This factional divide is institutionalized in the Sámi Parliament, where it may be having a positive dialectical effect, with the radical wing trying to drive the culture forward politically while the conservative wing works to sustain the culture's values. The relative absence of this dialectic among many Canadian aboriginal and official-language minority groups may be significant for cultural maintenance and future revitalization.

SÁMI LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION

Norwegian compulsory schooling has operated much in its present form for 200 years. For the Sámi, there is thus an historically shaped, conservative view of what the school is and what it can be. Even so, there is growing interest in changing schools to make them more "organic" to the cultural communities that they serve. Experiments using the Sámi language in primary schools began in 1967. It is now both a medium of instruction and a subject in secondary schools. The first Sámi language-medium senior secondary school (16- to 19-year-olds) opened at Karasjok in 1969, and a vocational senior secondary school operates in Kautokeino. The latter emphasizes Sámi traditional crafts and the modernization of such traditional occupations as reindeer breeding and marketing. Two universities also offer the languages as a subject, and the Teachers College at Alta offers courses in the Northern language and culture for Sámi and non-Sámi. In large towns such as Kautokeino and Karasjok, the Northern Sámi language is the everyday language of almost all Sámi.

Although the Sámi College (Allaskuvla) in Kautokeino originally (in 1989) offered only teacher training, it now provides a variety of courses and programs in higher education to students drawn from across the Sápmi. Fluency in one or other Sámi language is a requirement for permanent appointment to staff, because most classes are conducted in Sámi, and Northern Sámi is the language of administration in the college. Staff members conduct research on cultural needs, language planning, and educational innovation. As well as four-year programs of training for basic school teachers, there is also a three-year kindergarten teacher training program. According to staff at the Allaskuvla, the Sámi education system is strongest in early childhood education, but all provisions have gone ahead rapidly since the early 1980s. As in other aboriginal

settings, the preschool and kindergarten years provide more flexibility and opportunity for integration of Sámi culture and values.

FIRST-LANGUAGE PROVISIONS IN THE SÁMI LANGUAGE ACT

Following Norway's ratification of the International Labour Office (ILO) convention on indigenous peoples in 1990,[6] the Norwegian Parliament introduced the Sámi Language Act to strengthen official use of the Sámi languages and to declare Sámi and Norwegian equal languages with equal status. Enforced from 1992, this Act affects three areas (Magga, 1995): laws concerning the Sámi Parliament, operating since 1989, courts of law themselves, and laws for education. The Act's purposes are to enable the Sámi to safeguard and develop their language, culture, and way of life, and to give equal status to Sámi and Norwegian (Magga, 1995). To oversee the language's future, a Sámi Language Council is yet to be created. Its members are to be appointed by the Sámi Parliament and its role will be to advise and report on all matters affecting the language. The legislation responds to Article 27 of the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," which is interpreted as obliging nations to discriminate in favour of indigenous minorities by taking affirmative steps to ensure the integrity and survival of the minorities themselves.

The administrative area for the Sámi languages covers six municipalities in Finnmark and Troms, Norway's northernmost counties. Obligations under the Act apply to any public body serving an area that includes these six districts in whole or in part. In relation to Sámi first-language education, the new Act is interpreted as providing the following for children living in these "Sámi areas" (Magga, 1995):

- all children have the right to receive instruction through the medium of Sámi in all subjects;
- until the seventh grade, parents have the choice of whether their children will receive instruction in or through Sámi;
- from seventh grade, the pupils are able to decide this for themselves;
- children receiving instruction in or through Sámi are exempted from instruction in one of the two forms of Norwegian (*bokmål* and *nynorsk*); and
- local education councils may allow children with Sámi as their mother tongue to be taught through the language for all nine compulsory years.

Outside Sámi areas, the following first-language provisions apply:

- instruction through Sámi may be given to pupils with a Sámi background;
- if there are no fewer than three pupils in one school whose mother tongue is Sámi, they can ask to be taught through the language (this requirement is likely to change so that even one pupil in a school can ask to be taught through Sámi);

- anyone, regardless of background, has the right to be taught Sámi; and
- Sámi history and culture are included in national curriculum guidelines as topics that all children should be familiar with.

Initial fears that many parents would withdraw their children from Sámi-medium instruction in Sámi districts, thereby weakening the language's range of influence, seem unwarranted. Sámi parents in five of the six districts are already strongly supporting Sámi-medium education. Under the Act, local authorities are entitled to make the language obligatory for all nine years of compulsory schooling, and this seems to be eliminating the incidence of opting out.

THE PRACTICE OF SÁMI FIRST-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Support Services: The Role of the Sámi Education Council

The National Curriculum Guidelines (1987) set out only entitlements to weekly hours of instruction in the Sámi languages at each grade level. But these are being rewritten to treat Sámi-medium and Norwegian-medium schools in the same way. Making schools more Sámi is not a problem in theory, because the guidelines are so wide, but school practices as yet have not come even as far as the guidelines. Real power over the curriculum is presently in the Minister's hands. But proposals are going to the Sámi Parliament to give greater levels of curriculum control to the Sámi Parliament. Sámi politicians are reluctant to accept this development, except in partnership with the Ministry, because the need to change schools totally to reflect the culture, in the interests of cultural survival, is not apparent to many older parliamentarians, who have experienced only one type of schooling and can conceive of no other.

Organizational control lies with the municipal board and with each school's administrators. Every school has to have its parents' board, which includes all parents, but because schools in the Sámi districts seem large and forbidding places to many Sámi parents, there is still widespread parental alienation.

Sámi instruction outside the six counties is paid for by local municipalities out of special Sámi supplement funds, provided by the national government and channelled through county education offices. Inside the six districts, every teacher must study Sámi, but only for two hours per week, which does not produce much proficiency in those beginning from scratch. Because several generations were discouraged from using their own languages, individuals equipped to use Sámi as a medium of instruction are often not from these generations. The present curriculum guidelines insist that all teachers show respect for the culture, be able to use the language, and be familiar with the way of life.

Key external functions lie with the Sámi Education Council. This council has a statutory role to advise Sámi parents, both inside and outside the six districts,

who write to them, or who are referred by school boards and other agencies. This advice can cover several things: language maintenance matters, including inquiries about motivating children to maintain the language; what language rights the Sámi possess under law; and how to get school boards to act in recognition of the Act. The Council also advises the Ministry on Sámi affairs.

The Sámi Education Council also produces high-quality texts for all levels and all subjects of basic schooling, in Northern Sámi, Southern Sámi, and Lule languages. Some of these textbooks are similar to those used in Norwegian-medium schooling, but are written for Sámi as a first language. The Council also translates some texts from the Norwegian for such curriculum areas as mathematics, where direct translations of the Norwegian are sufficient. But mainly the Council's staff write new texts, with Sámi cultural content, to replace existing Norwegian texts written for the national curriculum. These sometimes cost 500,000 krone (Can$100,000) per published book, which is expensive, because of the small print run. So far almost every subject for every year of the nine years of basic schooling has a textbook, a teacher's guide, and a student workbook written in Northern Sámi. Work on books in the other two languages is well advanced. In those areas of the curriculum where no materials have so far been produced, most teaching is still through the medium of Norwegian.

Finally, the Council engages in corpus language planning to augment and intellectualize the Sámi vocabularies, so that education can be carried on in those languages at increasingly more senior levels. Word borrowing and creation goes forward as the need arises. To preserve the native morphology of Sámi, the preferred source languages for lexical borrowings are Finnish, English, and Norwegian, in that order.

Independent of the Sámi Education Council, a high-quality teen magazine is produced monthly. This is funded by the Ministry of the Family, and by the Sámi Culture Council, which began work in 1993. The magazine is distributed to all Sámi children in Norway. It gives the Sámi languages genuine status as first languages among adolescents and encourages them to use Sámi themselves. It also helps unite children scattered in regions away from the official districts, and encourages them to see the culture as a unity. Sámi students in Kautokeino greatly appreciate this glossy magazine and look forward to it each month. Most articles are in Northern Sámi, with some in Southern Sámi and Lule.

Policies and School Organization: Culture and Language Incorporation

In the Sámi districts, schools opt for specially modified first-language syllabuses, but when Sámi pupils outside the six districts want Sámi, they still often receive Sámi only as a subject. Although the Act prescribes entitlements, it is difficult to change this practice, because without a large injection of teachers and money, just getting the Sámi language in many schools is difficult enough, even in big cities.

Although qualified teachers are available throughout the country, only now are teachers-in-training at the Sámi College being taught in Sámi, using Sámi cultural values. Previously all teachers were taught "the Norwegian way" or "the Swedish way." But "the Sámi way" tries to see the world with Sámi at the centre, not at the edge. It uses Sámi cultural ideas, values, and literature. The Sámi way is more holistic; there are fewer subject boundaries. Emphasis is laid on oral ways of teaching, especially based on "living" cultural stories as parables for teaching values, ethics, and lifestyle. Sámi College teachers-in-training are motivated to incorporate this traditional narrative approach into their teaching so that future Sámi children will not have to learn so much from books.

A developing problem is how to extend the Sámi way into teaching Sámi children living outside the six districts. It is hoped that teachers trained in this way at the Sámi College will gradually infiltrate the wider school system. College staff already feel the need to become activists for this method. This initiative is especially important for the very young, because once they come to expect this in their education, education at later stages will gradually change to meet that expectation. Later, teachers-in-training graduated from schools of this kind will themselves insist on a greater incorporation of the culture. Sámi parents have to be educated too, so that they see the advantages of all this for their children and expect to receive a more sophisticated cultural product from schooling, along with broader forms of personal development for their children, not just a bland qualification.

The growing curriculum influence of modern information technology poses a new problem: how to get Sámi values represented in that technology, when those values are best manifested in face-to-face interaction? To address this problem, the Sámi College has become the only place in Norway where students learn how to produce their own teaching materials and computer software for developing classroom resources. This program is operating in cooperation with the Sámi Education Council, who have much experience producing materials. Publishers also visit Kautokeino to teach students to produce their own materials, and teachers come from all over Norway to study in this course.

An innovative form of egalitarian school administration has been undergoing trials in many Norwegian schools for over a decade. This practice is relevant to the non-hierarchical way the Sámi relate to one another. In Kautokeino's primary school, the three school leaders have only three-year contracts as co-administrators, and then return to teaching posts in the same school. As administrators, all three are equal in status and each has an area of responsibility: one for teachers, one for children, and one for curriculum and pedagogy. Responsibility for plant and facilities rotates, and a budget policy committee handles finances. After three years of trials, the arrangement seems to be working well, with few problems. Parents appreciate having more than one person to relate to, and the approach makes use of the special skills and strengths of each person as an administrator. Over time, many staff in schools with this form of administration will fill

leadership roles, if elected to do so by their colleagues. As a result, no-one in the school setting has the unusual powers of ascribed control that principals conventionally have.

Sámi First-Language Instructional Practices

Sámi-as-a-first-language schooling is provided in basic schools across the six districts, and in many other centres across the country. The choice of Sámi language used in schools (i.e., Northern, Southern, or Lule) is decided according to the needs of students and the region of the school. In the capital, Oslo, only Northern Sámi is taught. In Kautokeino primary school, all three Sámi languages are taught because some Southern and Lule speakers have come to Kautokeino to study *duodji* and reindeer herding. Around Trondheim, Southern Sámi is the principal language, whereas in Bodø, Lule is the medium.

Sámi first-language pedagogy remains rather conventional. Following the Welsh immersion model, immersion in the language as a medium of instruction was provided for teachers-in-training for the first time in 1993. Genuine immersion for many children is difficult because of the languages' low status outside the six districts. But in Kautokeino and Karasjok, Northern Sámi is widely supported and is happily used, even by adolescents, who are subject to the strong inducement to use Norwegian that the teenage entertainment culture offers. This readiness to support and keep using the language is expected to spread gradually to adolescent Sámi outside the six districts.

Especially in Kautokeino, "learning [the language] while doing" is fostered by reindeer-herding activities and through *duodji* in the curriculum, because the specialist vocabularies for these practices do not exist in Norwegian. Also, for three or four days and nights at a time, children live with nomadic families in a kind of "mountain school," living in *lavvos* (teepee-like tents) and learning the culture and language. There is an immersion preschool in Sámi open to all children in Kautokeino, with daily half-day attendance paid for by the municipality.

In 1994 a new first-language methods course for teachers-in-training was introduced into the Sámi College. This course uses the communicative method (Corson, 1990) and aims to produce fully bilingual school graduates in the Sámi districts, and considerable bilingual proficiency among Sámi-as-a-second-language students elsewhere. There is no staged testing or assessment across the system. More oral assessment will be used when the new communicative method is introduced by teachers fully trained in its use.

For Sámi-as-a-first-language pupils, all subjects are taught in Sámi until Grade 9 (when students are 16 years old), provided that teachers and texts are available. Norwegian-medium classes are provided where there are gaps in the Sámi-speaking staff. The Sámi-as-a-first-language pupils are entitled to as much Norwegian-as-a-second-language instruction as Norwegian-medium Sámi-as-a-

second-language children receive in Sámi. Inside the six districts, Norwegian receives a balanced place in the curriculum. In Kautokeino, Sámi first-language pupils begin Norwegian in Grade 2, for two hours weekly, with four hours weekly in Grades 3 through 6. In Grades 7, 8, and 9 at Kautokeino basic school, there are three classes for each grade (two Sámi-medium and one Norwegian-medium). Elsewhere, withdrawal teaching is sometimes used for Sámi-as-a-second-language learners in classes with mixed Sámi-as-a-first- and Sámi-as-a-second-language students. Norwegian classes in Kautokeino are getting smaller each year, as the prestige of knowing Sámi increases. In 1994 there were not enough children for a Norwegian class in Grade 7.

Parents in the Sámi districts are now very willing for their children to learn through Sámi, reversing parents' earlier tendency, still found in some places, to stigmatize the language. But students begin to use Norwegian more, as a language of play, as they get older. This may be because of the influence of television, where all leisure activities are presented in Norwegian. There is no more than 50 minutes of Sámi television fortnightly, produced in Karasjok and of only moderate quality. There is no Sámi television pitched at teenagers, and only an hour of Sámi radio daily. But the teen magazine, mentioned above, already fills a very important language-support role.

Kautokeino and Karasjok are the only two senior secondary schools that give Sámi-medium instruction in many subjects. They also provide Norwegian-medium instruction in separate classes where numbers warrant, or, more commonly, where the teachers are not proficient Sámi speakers. No more Sámi senior secondary schools are planned. Students travel to these two schools from the other Sámi districts if they prefer a Sámi-medium senior secondary school.

Kautokeino senior secondary school has 150 students aged 16 to 19. The curriculum includes the world's only course in reindeer herding as well as *duodji,* general education, commercial subjects, and mechanical and agricultural training. Because few teachers at this level are fluent in Sámi as yet, and because every class includes Norwegian-speaking students, most teaching is in Norwegian. This is not likely to change soon, even when all Sámi school graduates are Sámi first-language speakers, because many students come from outside the six districts, especially to study *duodji* and reindeer herding. Assessment occurs at the end of secondary education in a Ministry examination, written in the Sámi language. This examination is prepared by a teacher of Sámi. Almost all Sámi-as-a-first-language teachers are Sámi.

School graduates in Kautokeino and Karasjok are genuinely bilingual in Norwegian and Sámi. They are the most successful bilinguals in the country. There is now greater Sámi language use among children than 15 years ago, including children whose parents are culturally mixed. Even non-Sámi-speaking parents in the six districts prefer to enrol their children in Sámi-medium classes because the status of Sámi has increased due to the Sámi laws. But Sámi

graduates outside the six districts are much less proficient in the languages, although this varies with the quality of the teachers and the teaching they receive. For example, only about 30% of Sámi-speaking teachers at the lower secondary level are formally trained. Unqualified teachers are paid a little less and are appointed only from year to year in Norway. Teacher unions see this as a necessary way to get language and culture expertise into the schools; they agree to it for the sake of the children and the aboriginal culture.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADA

Although some point to the relative strength of Canada's ancestral languages compared with those in other countries (Wardhaugh, 1983), there has been a rapid and alarming decline in retention of these languages in recent decades. In an overview of work on aboriginal language retention across Canada, Shkilnyk (1986) reports that Quebec is the only province where a pattern of decline in aboriginal languages has been reversed. As a result, most of Canada is rapidly losing the main bearers of aboriginal cultural identity that supports self-esteem and promotes positive social behaviour, as Kvernmo's (1993) research suggests. Authorities note that only Inuktitut, Cree, and Ojibwe have enough mother-tongue speakers to survive as living, community languages (Foster, 1982). Yet very little is being done in education to remedy this situation (Kirkness & Bowman Selkirk, 1992). At the same time, many official-language minority communities are experiencing such strong pressure to assimilate that their continued existence as language communities is at risk (Landry & Allard, 1987).

Through this rapid language loss, the majority of aboriginal and many official-language minority children in Canada are losing touch with who they are, where they come from, and what place there might be for them in the contemporary world. Their cultures are being gradually stripped from them. The results of this tacit policy, in remote communities and in urban centres, need no rehearsing here (Heimbecker, 1994; Landry, Allard, & Théberge, 1991).

The Norwegian government and education system have responded to the accumulated research evidence about the importance of mother-tongue maintenance for minority-language peoples. When they are without this maintenance, and where their languages are not languages of wider communication, minority first-language children may arrive in schools with their first languages relatively underdeveloped in certain contexts, styles, and functions. At the same time, their grasp of the majority language may be limited to a small range of functions, often linked to passive activities such as television viewing. For these children, intensive early exposure in school to the majority language, and school neglect of their first language, may result in low achievement in the majority language, a decline in mother-tongue proficiency, and academic failure. The crucial recommendation for policy makers seems straightforward: Early and continuing programs that maintain the languages of minority first-language speakers are

needed to avoid the routine injustice of widespread and discriminatory school failure, and to help reverse the culture-stripping mentioned above.

In Canada, the need for more coordinated language planning at the national level to revitalize aboriginal languages under threat, to maintain and develop those capable of survival, and to foster and promote mother-tongue education, seems an urgent concern for policy makers. The Sámi Education Council offers a model for Canada to learn from, especially in the non-partisan way the Council works to develop and promote all three Norwegian Sámi languages. This unity of purpose and the single-mindedness of the organization in advancing the educational and linguistic interests of all Sámi, are among the Council's many attractive features.

Official-language minorities do have the Official Languages Commission in Ottawa to advocate on their behalf. But this seems an educationally limited role when compared with that of the Sámi Education Council. A planning and coordinating agency, similar to the Council, has long been recommended for aboriginal education in Canada. For example, Larose (1984) argued that as the first step in allowing "une amérindianisation réelle de l'école," it will be necessary to develop "un réseau de commissions scolaires autochtones sur une base nationale" (p. 70). A National Aboriginal Language Policy Conference in the late 1980s additionally urged the creation of a National Native Languages Institute to ensure the revitalization and survival of aboriginal languages across the country. Although this initiative was rejected in a later Assembly of First Nations study (Jamieson, 1988), the narrowness of a "languages institute" hardly captures the potential for unity of educational purpose that the Sámi Education Council is realizing through the strength derived from the official status Sámi languages now have. As a first step in development, aboriginal languages need extensive status as official languages of Canada, within clearly defined districts, not unlike the territorial zones for Francophone Ontario proposed by Cartwright (1985).

Although official-language minority control of schooling is already mandated in the Charter and is in place in many constituencies, there is also a trend now towards devolving control of education to aboriginal communities (Taylor, Crago, & McAlpine, 1993). This devolution should lead to variety and diversity in the educational and language planning responses of bands and provincial authorities, to suit local contexts and needs. But what this scenario lacks is overall coordination of the kind the Sámi Education Council offers to all Sámi in Norway, and increasingly across all the Nordic countries where Sámi live. Supported by the reforms of the Sámi Language Act, the Council is now authorized to give special attention to those geographical areas where Sámi languages are "officially proclaimed."

Endangered languages in Canada need the protection of some similar legislation proclaiming language territories within which special resources can be mobilized. Also, some similar authority is needed to oversee that mobilization

with advice and support. But Norway goes beyond even these provisions, through its minority teacher-training efforts.

The Sámi Allaskuvla complements the work of the Council and also gives life to the Act. In doing so, it offers official-language minority and aboriginal first-language educators an example of a culturally and linguistically appropriate form of teacher training. The Allaskuvla's use of the minority language as the vehicle of teacher education, and its development of "the Sámi way" as its backdrop of living cultural expectations, prepares the minority teachers as genuine agents of cultural revival and legitimation.

All these things are contributing to the elevation of the Sámi community. Political consciousness and sense of identity are also awakening among the many Sámi living outside the Sámi homeland, even in places where previously they had a negative view of their own culture. Following the proclamation of the Act, the Sámi languages have become available as a recognized political voice at the same time as the people's political will has begun to assert itself. It is likely that schools controlled and run by remote and paternalisitc bureaucracies, staffed by teachers whose culture is not the culture of the local community, will get in the way of these developments. Aboriginal communities in Canada commonly play little role in policy making. Non-residents who work for remote ministries or boards tend to assume these responsibilities (Toohey, 1985), although for a minority of peoples the situation is changing (Brossard, 1990), as it already has for many official-language minorities.

But when majority-culture educators look at minority children, they tend to focus on what those children lack, and usually what they see is the absence of a high level proficiency in the majority language. This lack becomes the focus of the schooling they offer those children. It is common for observers of educational reform to claim that policies of compensatory, multicultural, and anti-racist education imposed from afar make little difference to inequality.

These externally devised policies can ignore the root cause of that inequality, which is very often linked to an absence of first-language maintenance, vernacular literacy, and cultural incorporation within the curriculum of minority schools. Only a local community can really decide what is right for them. But this is no extraordinary concession for governments to be making to groups of their citizens, because devolving social policy decision making in this way is no more than consistent with modern notions of social justice: To act justly in policy action does not require a conception of what the overall just society would be, because this will ignore real differences in interests between groups; rather it requires as many conceptions of justice as there are distinct possible conditions of society or subsets of society or culture (Corson, 1993). Every situation is a new setting for instigating the search for a contextually appropriate conception of justice.

Such a devolution of decision-making power would mean real changes in Canada's public policy ground-rules. The Sámi experience suggests that these

aims cannot be achieved by tinkering with existing policies. Nothing less will do than the devolution of real control over education to the official-language minority and aboriginal peoples themselves, including real control over all aspects of their lives that bear upon it. As Dorais (1985) concludes: "[on] ne pourra remédier à cette situation qu'en changeant les règles du jeu et en rendant [aux eux] des pouvoirs économiques, politiques et culturels bien réels" (p. 97). In Norway, these powers have been returned to a once-oppressed group, the Sámi, and the result is a revitalization of Sámi identity and a consciousness of cultural unity and uniqueness. Above all, there is a sense that the Sámi themselves are now the agents of their own emancipation.

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NOTES

[1] This study was undertaken with the support of two agencies: the Royal Commission on Learning in Ontario, and Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada in Ottawa. Unless otherwise indicated in the text of this article, factual details came from two or more of the informants listed in the Acknowledgements. The study involved focus groups, with key informants in their institutional settings; unstructured and semi-structured interviews with other key informants; documentary and archival analysis; and observations of schools and classrooms in the town of Kautokeino (Guovdageaidnu). Two informants commented on a draft of the study.

[2] From 1997, all children will begin school when they are 6 years old and there will be 10 years of basic education. At present, 6-year-olds attend compulsory play-oriented pre-schools. There are subsidized government and privately run daycare provisions for children from their first year of life.

[3] The differences between these Sámi languages may parallel the differences between three of Ontario's Native languages: Cree, Oji-Cree, and Ojibwe. This is not to say that the Norwegian diversity is equal to the much broader range of languages in Ontario, much less Canada as a whole. However, Norway has less than half the population of Ontario, and far less than half the educational resources to spread over a very extended geographical territory.

[4] Part of the tragedy of this German action is that on the day Hitler ordered the burning of Finnmark, Stalin decided not to mount an offensive by way of Norway.

[5] The Sámi spelling for the town's name is "Guovdageaidnu," and this is gradually replacing the Norwegian spelling.

[6] Articles 27 and 28 concern rights to independent forms of education and general language rights:

> governments shall recognise the right of these peoples to establish their own educational institutions and facilities, provided that such institutions meet minimum standards established by the competent authority in consultation with these peoples . . . Children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong. (International Labour Office, 1990, p. 16)

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