

## Editorial

### Wahbung: 37 Years Later

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The Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre is now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year of operation. The centre, whose mandate is to provide educational support for First Nations, has developed into a reputable educational institution where curricular materials, professional development opportunities, and consultation services have been prepared for and provided to First Nations schools in Manitoba. Highly educated staff and an informed First Nations network of chiefs, educators and Elders have facilitated the development and delivery of educational services of sound quality. Although our centre merits the highest of regard, it may be befitting to acknowledge those whose efforts and sacrifices have allowed us to come as far as we have.

The journey of self-determination and self-realization for Manitoba's First Peoples in the realm of education began with a crisis that occurred in the late 1960s. Acting on the tenets put forth by the Hawthorn Report of 1966, the result of a study that revealed numerous social, educational and economic hardships prevalent amongst the First Peoples of Canada, the newly elected Trudeau government, whose political platform was *A Just Society for All Canadians*, produced a plan for enacting equality for all Canadians. The subsequent document, a proposal for how this new era would develop, was titled *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, a document that became popularly known as the *White Paper*. The White Paper's principal tenets were based on the belief that Indian people have the right to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada. The White Paper proposed a "framework" to ensure that individual Indians and bands could achieve full participation in Canadian socio-political and economic life. It would be an "equality" that called for relinquishing all First Nations rights, beliefs, and identity in order to be Canadian.

Response to this assimilationist move was rapid and pronounced. First Nations across Turtle Island reacted in a highly charged and deliberate manner. In the Province of Manitoba, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood developed its response titled *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*. A cooperative effort on the part of the five First Nation tribes of Manitoba - the Cree, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, Dene and Sioux nations – *Wahbung* articulated a declaration: a statement by the First Peoples of Manitoba that asserted their identity, their status as a distinct group of people, and the Treaty relationships that exist between these nations of Manitoba and the people of Canada.

Every little step that we have taken as the First Nations peoples of this province in these last 37 years has counted towards realizing a vision set in motion by our past leadership. The Assembly of the Manitoba Chiefs became the political body for Manitoba's First Nations; an assembly that represents all of our people living throughout the province. Through this forum of leadership, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre was established. The voice of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood as it was then known can still be heard as we continue to overcome the challenges we face as First Nations peoples.

We honour and remember with pride all the tireless efforts of the many strong individuals that have contributed to the betterment of our people. We are proud that as representatives of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, we are able to achieve the first publication of this scholarly journal. We have been greatly encouraged by the level of participation and the number of manuscripts submitted for consideration. The selection of articles published in the first edition is another indication of First Nations achievement: our inaugural issue contains articles on First Nations education research and issues, early childhood development, post-secondary problems, and language issues. We would like to express our thanks to all the people who made the effort to submit manuscripts and a very special thank you to our other partners in this process. We wish everyone good reading and good health and hope that you are inspired to write as we have so much to offer to one another.