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EDUCATION, SAULT STE. MARIE, AND ALGOMA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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We have not yet realized that the Indian
and his culture were fundamental to the
growth of Canadian institutions.

Harold A. Innis

The Fur Trade In Canada

EDUCATION, SAULT STE. MARIE, AND ALGOMA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Education, from the Latin educ, educere -- to lead out, draw forth, bring up, develop -- is one of the most important and subtle of human processes. From ancient times and among all peoples this has been acknowledged and the vocation of the teacher has been accorded a unique and necessary role in the human community. It is for the teacher to know his student so that as catalyst and midwife he may assist in the drawing out of the best that resides in him. Drawing out involves assisting the student in becoming his own best friend and in harnessing self-consciously to himself his own creative powers of self-development. The modern Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran expressed this well in his popular work, The Prophet:

If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.¹

At the same time as the teacher does not give knowledge or awareness to the student though he may assist in the development of the student's knowledge, he also learns himself. Ideally, education includes the mutual educating of teachers and students, the subject being the thing at the centre.

As the teacher must know his students and continue learning himself, so the vocation of the university (or any other school) is similarly accomplished. In view of the community it serves, the university (faculty, students, administration and support staff) must create a programme of education that encourages the community to realize its own potential for development -- to draw out and actualize what already exists potentially in the community. It is thus that the presence of a university enhances

¹ Kahlil Gibran, "Of Teaching", The Prophet (New York, 1965), p. 51.

the life of a community. And thus it is needful that the university learn from, so as to know, the community it serves.

In this regard Algoma University College, a new and emergent university, is coming to know and respect the community it serves -- its aspirations and traditions. The characteristics of Sault Ste. Marie and region are many and varied. Among other things, it is industrial, heavily forested, in the northern hinterland, on the Shield edge, and with a large and recent immigrant population. This, in part, is what it seems at the moment to many. But like the larger society of which it is a part it is changing, and the crystallized view of a moment may mask underlying and age-old characteristics which, ever present, may surface at any time. However elusive in its definition, the nature of Sault Ste. Marie and the bases of attitudes regarding it must be examined by Algoma University College and built upon if the College is to have a lasting purpose and place in the community. Thus the different views of the identity and destiny of Sault Ste. Marie must be explored.

As an industrial city the Sault is new, its development dating from the late 1890's. This late and explosive development has profoundly affected its self-definition as viewed by recent immigrant groups. Morley Torgov in his book about growing up in the Sault, A Good Place To Come From, judged as recently as 1974 as follows:

Why did we ... leave home? Why this perpetual motion eastward? There are a thousand and one reasons, but they all boil down to a single reason: we left because our parents counselled us to leave, begged and pleaded with us to leave, even ordered us to leave. Only yonder in the big city, they insisted, could one be a truly big person; here in this town, one could be no more than a large fish in a tiny pond. Better to be the tail of a lion in a great city, than the head of a jackal in Sault Ste. Marie.

We, the children, resisted at first. Life seemed so simple, so attractive in the small town.²

In many respects Torgov's view may be superficial, but undoubtedly he has stated what many others have thought, said, and acted upon both before and after his time. The community has not yet shaken this albatross nor integrated its insight into its longer range view.

However, scratch the surface and a very different view takes precedence. In his great work Ancient Society, Lewis Henry Morgan, the founding father of North American anthropology, wrote in 1877 of Sault Ste. Marie:

Another illustration of how location relates to the interrelationships of tribes may be found in the tribes of Lake Superior. The Ojibwas, Otawas and Potawattamies are subdivisions of an original tribe; the Ojibwas, representing the stem, because they remained at the original seat at the great fisheries upon the outlet of the lake. Moreover, they are styled "Elder Brother" by the remaining two ...

The Ojibwas were seated at the Rapids on the outlet of Lake Superior, from which point they had spread along the southern shore of the lake to the site of the Ontonagon, along its north-eastern shore, and down the St. Mary River well toward Lake Huron. Their position possessed remarkable advantages for a fish and game subsistence, which, as they did not cultivate maize and plants, was their main reliance. It was second to none in North America, with the single exception of the Valley of the Columbia. With such advantages they were certain to develop a large Indian population, and to send out successive bands of immigrants to become independent tribes.³

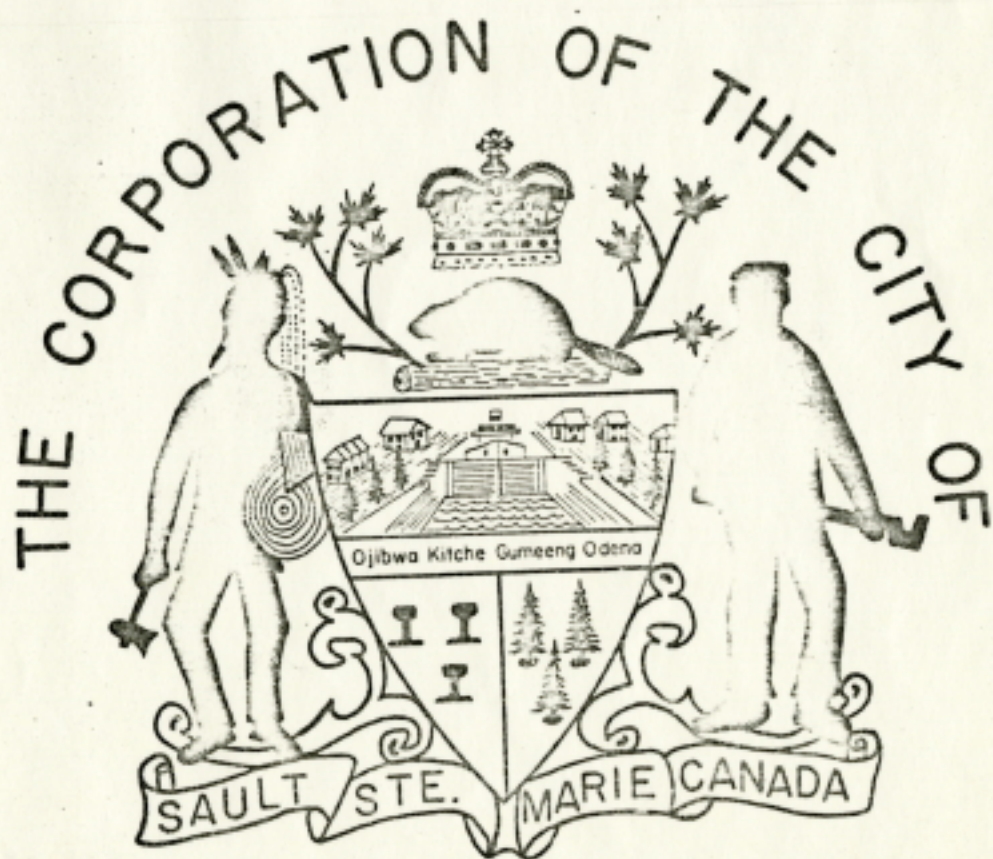
And Morgan went on to describe how the Ojibway of the St. Mary's Rapids were a parent stock of the Algonkian tribes which are spread vastly over the North American continent.⁴

² Morley Torgov, A Good Place To Come From (Toronto, 1974), pp. 15-16.

³ Lewis Henry Morgan, Ancient Society (Harvard U. Press, 1964), pp. 96-99.

⁴ See the map "Canada: Indian and Inuit Communities and Languages", Map Number MCR 4001, in The National Atlas of Canada, 5th edition, Energy, Mines, and Resources Canada, 1980. Communities in green are the Algonkian tribes forming 59.6% of the Canadian native community and living in the heartland from Nova Scotia to the Rockies.

In Torgov's view the Sault is new and lacking in depth of character and self-esteem. In Morgan's view it is one of the oldest and richest communities on the continent. Clearly a contradiction exists which has hitherto eluded reconciliation. The truth of Morgan's view that the Sault is an ancient centre, perhaps one of the most important on the island-continent of North America of which at the hub of the Great Lakes it forms the heart, is illustrated not only by legends and research data but also by the simple symbols of self-definition and ritual handed down by community elders for generations to the present inhabitants. The emblem of the City itself, for example, depicts an indian, white man, canal, boat, homes, pine and tamarac trees, and steel rails. Additionally, the City's motto proclaims its identity as "Ojibway Gitchi Gumeng Odena" -- "Village (or town) of the Great Ojibway Ocean (or lake), ie. Lake Superior)".



An analysis of the long term history of the Sault and region discloses that situated in heart of North America (the geophysical as well as the human evolutionary heart) it has long been a centre and bridge of cross-cultural exchange and as a result has developed and retained strong cross-cultural linkages and capacities.

Recently, it has been shown how the Sault became a thriving industrial community in this century.⁵ This is a very new development, however, and the real result of this grafting of modern industry onto an ancient and resilient pre-existing community is yet to become apparent. Similar to the profound continental and hemispheric, not to say global, changes of recent times, it has yet to pass the test of all great revolutions:

In revolutionary times the emotional emphasis is thrown on the break with the past; but the test of revolution comes with the problem of establishing contact with the past, when it can carry on as well as supersede.⁶

In terms of the traditions established at Sault Ste. Marie this means cross-cultural exchange and enrichment for all of the inhabitants of the City and region, for the introduction of new ideas and modes of development has been a crucial aspect of the area's history for as far back as evidence is available. Some examples will serve to illustrate this point.

Before the time of the emergent tribes there were gatherings of peoples at the St. Mary's. The Outchibous (the Crane clan) called fellow clans from Superior and Huron to assemble at the St. Mary's Rapids (Pahouting). Bear, Beaver, Catfish, and Crane clans lived together and within a shared community developed richer expressions of religion and social relations.

⁵Sault Historical Society, Francis H. Clergue (Video-Tape).

⁶ Northrop Frye, "The Ethics of Change: The Role of the University", in Arthur Koestler et al., The Ethics of Change (C.B.C., Toronto, 1969), p. 55.

Throughout the mid to late 17th century an inpouring of refugees from Iroquois and Sioux wars to the east and west brought people to Pahouting. It was a site unique in the wealth of its resources with fish enough to feed several thousand immigrants. Odawa, Pottawattomic, Cree, Nippissing, Ojibway, and Huron made Pahouting their home. From the sharing of their varied backgrounds (cross native cultural exchange) emerged new economic and social traits -- agriculture, fur trade, and large villages -- the culture of the "pays en haut".

The French -- traders, military men, and Jesuits -- were attracted to Pahouting within a few decades of settling in the St. Lawrence. A network of Jesuit missions spread out from the chapel by the Rapids. As the site chosen as mission headquarters had ready access to the Indian bands of the region it was regarded as "a place designed by God for his purpose". Bands drew in and learned from the Jesuits -- agriculture, and methods of trade and war. The French learned from the Native people the skills of surviving in their new home.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries the wars between Britain and the American colonies focused military attention on the St. Mary's River area. A militia (Indian and white), doctors, shopkeepers and others gathered and built a new and larger community at the juncture of the upper Great Lakes. But the age-old pattern and process of meetings and cultural exchange began to change. The Great Lakes Indians were still vital members of the new community. They were successful hunters, traders, and fishermen. They fought for the King and expected an equal opportunity to share in local economic development and social life -- an opportunity to learn from the white man and add new skills to the Native way of life in the manner in which

cultures had met and shared skills through preceeding millenia. Thus requests were made for a school and teacher by Chief Shingwauk in 1830 to facilitate the cross-cultural exchange between the two peoples -- Native and Euro-Canadians. Shingwauk's son, Augustin Shingwauk, continued to stress that the need for cross-cultural exchange was pressing since,

The time is passed for my people to live by hunting and fishing as our fathers used to do; if we are to continue to exist at all we must learn to gain our living in the same way as the white people.

I hope before I die to see a great teaching wigwam built at Garden River where children from the great Ojibway sea would be received and clothed and fed and taught how to read and write and also how to farm and build homes and make clothing so that by and by they might go back and teach their own people.

Shingwauk Hall, which is presently occupied by Algoma University College, is one of the many results of this long cross-cultural history.⁷

Traditionally, Sault Ste. Marie has been a meeting place. As always it has been its wealth of resources and ease of access that have been its main assets. St. Luson in declaring the sovereignty of the French in 1671 described it as "the place of assembly of all the tribes of these parts". At the junction of the upper Great Lakes and with fish enough to "feed 10,000" in earlier times it was the acknowledged hub in the heartland of the continent. Today, it is still not important because of great numbers, urban development, great monuments and structures, but it is important as an access centre to many communities in Canada and the United States as well as a meeting place for European and Native Canadians and Americans.

Distance from large metropolitan centres has had both negative and positive implications. Isolation has been detrimental insofar as both yesterday and today (unfortunately) decisions taken by people hundreds of

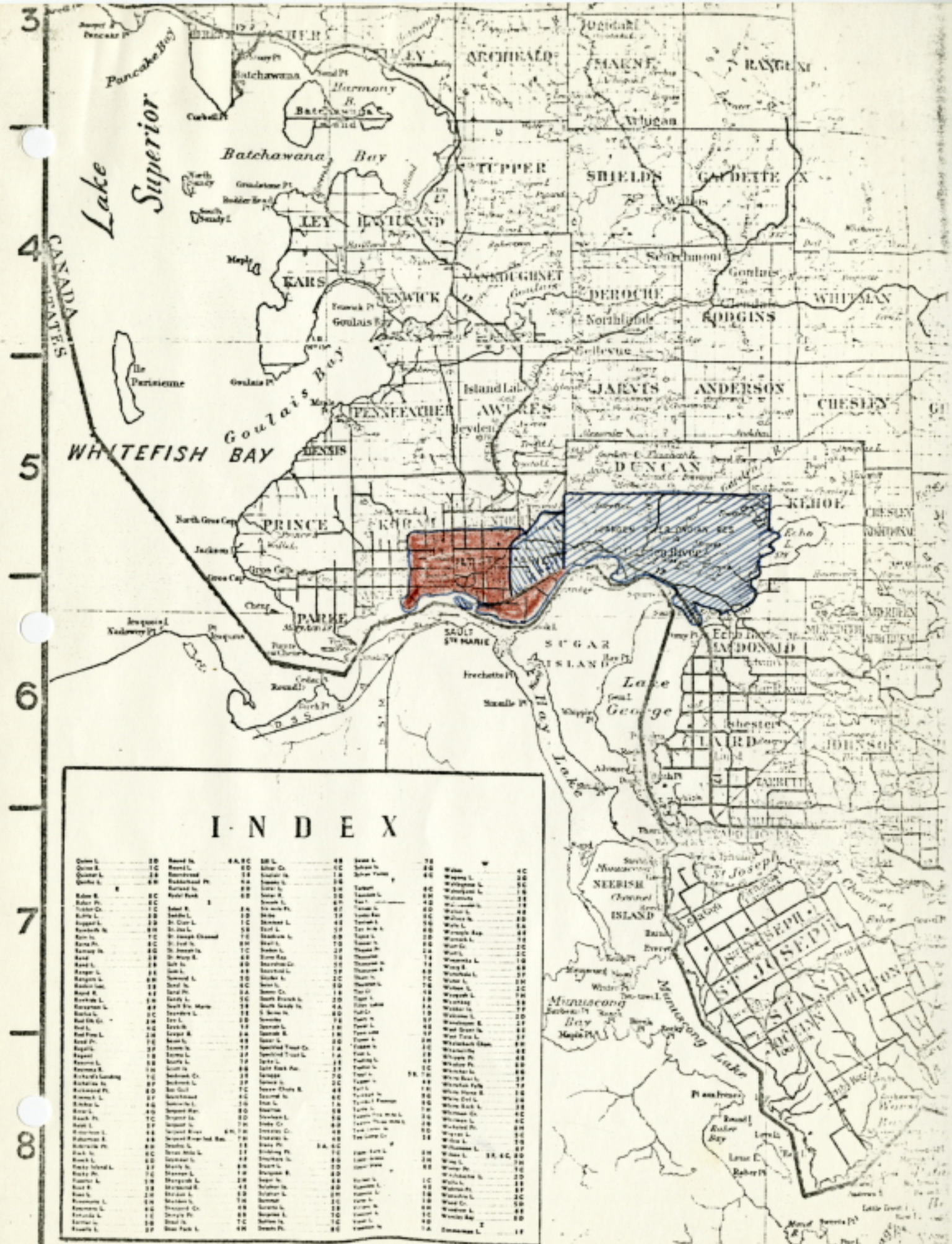
⁷ The Singwauk Project, Shingwauk Hall: A History (Sault Ste. Marie, 1980).

miles away who have little interest in or understanding of the needs and wants of the area adversely affect the community's development. In 1814, for example, the Natives of the area won their battles against the Americans and were masters of the upper Great Lakes. Yet at the treaty negotiations concluding the War Britain ceded much of the area to the United States. The Commandant complained that the people of the Sault and other upper Lakes communities had been compromised. Distant decision-makers had shown "a profound ignorance of the concerns of this part of the Empire".

Distance has had its benefits as well. Relative isolation from large urban centres has allowed for a sharing of cultural traits and the development of a synthesis that otherwise would have been impaired.

Sault Ste. Marie has carried its traditions and experiences into the present. Many of its problems as well as the resources and assets of the region and its peoples are deeply rooted these long-standing and rich community experiences. Relatively isolated it has remained central to the infrastructure of the continent and Nation. It has continued to be a City of two peoples and two histories -- Euro-Canadian and Native -- as the accompanying local map illustrates (next page).

Indeed, in many ways Sault Ste. Marie may well represent in the heart of North America a microcosm of the continent's whole history and destiny. It contains many of the characteristics and fundamental human contradictions and predicaments as experienced on a continental-wide basis. Both locally and hemispherically a cross-cultural reality exists, for example, which has yet to be self-consciously accepted and embraced. Native and non-Native people may yet have much to learn and much need of learning. In this we may assist each other. The time may well be at hand for such a dialogue and mutual learning process to begin. Perhaps the white man



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can learn from the Indian how to make this island-continent and this world a place called home. Gerald Wilkinson, Director of the National Indian Youth Council, is one among many others who has recognized in "Western" culture an immanent need for learning:

Not by words alone will people learn to understand the meaning of their lives.

That may be why Western man studies so much but learns so little. That may be why his civilization has to collapse before he knows what's happening to it. That may be why he cannot or will not change his ways of life until his ways of life change him. He thinks he can change his life by changing his words. That may be his real forked tongue.⁸

Our past has long since ceased to be Greece, Rome, Christianity, and Judaism only. It includes the heritage if not of the whole planet at least for "Westerners" that of the Western Hemisphere, and for North Americans, the heritage of this island-continent. Our house will not become our home until this important element in our destiny is accomplished.

If Algoma University College is to serve Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding region then it must learn from and know the community. It must respect and build upon the aspirations and rich heritage it finds at hand. And without doubt, the rich cross-cultural tradition of Sault Ste. Marie forms an essential element of that heritage. Indeed, as it exists in the heart it may also contain a good part of the soul (cross-cultural soul) of this continent. Algoma University can achieve this, however, only in a truly cross-cultural way which is no doubt the only way for such a project. Sooner or later it seems that such a project will have to be undertaken and no other university in Ontario, and perhaps beyond, has yet to accept the challenge and the responsibility.

⁸ Gerald Wilkinson, "Where Are We Going?", The Vanishing White Man, p. 289.

Situated at Shingwauk Hall, Algoma University College is well located for the project. It can draw upon an impressive and strong tradition that is profoundly supported both locally and across the continent which is a bequest that few educational institutions are honoured with in their inception. With the support of the local, provincial, and national community Algoma University will be well endowed to continue on its path of educational and cultural innovation already begun.⁹ Shingwauk Hall, the College's Morriveau Collection, the Thunderbird, the Keewatinung Institute, and the Shingwauk Projects are not aberrations, but testaments to the fact that a unique destiny is in the making for Algoma University College. Now dim, now clear, a vision and an identity has come to exist for Algoma that is truly inspiring.

Lately, hesitation has been evinced, perhaps out of fear of the unknown and uncharted territory Algoma University began to explore. Soon it is hoped we shall be back on track.

⁹ For the Keewatinung Institute, see Shingwauk Hall: A History, pp. 38-41. Also, "Indians Rally to Seek Centre", The Globe and Mail, Monday, October 12, 1970, p. 4 (copy attached). The Keewatinung Institute became Ontario's first Indian cultural centre. Sharing Shingwauk Hall with Algoma University College it co-operated with the College in pioneering cross-cultural programmes. Its workshops were regarded as the most innovative and worthwhile in memory by Dr. Robert Thomas of Wayne State University. See, Dr. Robert K. Thomas, "Sixth Annual Canadian Indian Youth Workshop Evaluation Report" Prepared for the Keewatinung Institute, 1972. This view has been confirmed by the many Natives who benefitted from the workshops and other work of the Institute.