

3 A Working and Evolving Definition of Culture

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I have been asked to join this conference and share some thoughts with you about Indigenous cultures and higher education. This request is overwhelming, challenging, and exciting. It is overwhelming when one is asked to synthesize in a short time information that deals with thousands of years of knowledge. It is challenging when one considers the past 500 years of experiences of Native peoples vis-à-vis the faces of conquest and colonization. It is exciting to talk about the meaning of Indigenous cultures, and the historical opinions of higher education within those Indigenous cultures, as well as educational systems of higher education that had developed before the coming of the Europeans. I have been informed as well by the comments made by both Elders and other speakers at the conference thus far, and the substance of what I am going to say is in regard to the unbroken continuation that the Elders represent to Indigenous cultures.

Let us take a moment and perceive ourselves in a time capsule just before 1492. What would we see in the Americas in comparison and contrast to what was going on in Europe on or about 1492? In Europe we would see interesting fellow human beings coming out of a period of about 1,000 years of denial of their knowledge of the world. This denial was through attempts in both inductive and deductive reasoning to understand the nature of God. The European context for this was one of war, disease, and hunger. If human beings were subjected over generations to conditions of war, disease, and hunger as the defining characteristics of their humanity, these humans would become dysfunctional and distorted human beings. This was the nature of the experience in Europe about the time just prior to contact with Native cultures and populations.

What was going on in the Americas at that time? I would suggest to you that we would see humans and cultures that were flourishing. Indigenous cultures were characterized by systems of education, including systems of higher education, that were predictable, systematic, and sustained. My earlier reference to the Elders suggests they are and were integral to Indigenous systems of education. This also characterizes who Elders are. They are part of a systematic, sustained, and predictable approach to ways of being human and to human knowledge that existed in the Americas before the coming of the Europeans.

It is important to keep this frame of reference in mind to begin to understand what form and substance the proposed programs at the University of Alberta will take in the process of educating contemporary Native people in the field of Indigenous education. Terry Tafoya spoke eloquently about discrete and idiosyncratic characteristics of Native cultures. I want to talk about the generic and similar aspects of Native cultures that we find on this continent and that existed several hundred years ago. A characteristic of those cultures was a human consciousness very different from that of Europe and very different from the one that we operate from, particularly those of us who are products of Western educational systems. The consciousness of the people of North, Central, and South America was based on a definition of being human that was not anthropocentric or hierarchical and that demanded a dynamic relationship vis-à-vis other humans and the environment. By environment I mean not only the planet, but the universe as well. This definition of being human called for that understanding of knowledge as both human and nonhuman. Here, then, are people who would continually articulate linguistically through metaphors what they knew in terms of their experience, in terms of their perception of that experience, and in terms of the meaning of that perception of their experience. We see, then, that those humans were very different from their European counterparts; not so different that they were not human as the Europeans were at that time, but different in terms of the categories and priorities of their behavior as

humans. I compare and contrast these differences with the European model.

In Europe at that time, with the heavy emphasis on analysis and reason, we see a way of being human that defines humans in a hierarchical context of having being separated from their Creator and of engaging in the name of being human through the dehumanization of other humans. Conversely, we begin to see the fragmentation of the European knowledge base, which we now have as the legacy of Western knowledge as a separation of those areas called science from those areas called art and religion. The Native knowledge base, on the other hand, integrated those areas of knowledge so that science was both religious and aesthetic. We find, then, an emphasis in the Western tradition of approaching knowledge through the use of the intellect as well as the senses. For Native people a mode in approaching knowledge requires intuition also. If you were to sketch out these different approaches to knowledge, you would begin to see that intellect and what tends to characterize western culture and western knowledge develops a knowledge field that is empirical and uses empirical criteria to test it. On the other hand, if you use the senses you develop a knowledge field with a criterion, and if you use intuition you develop a knowledge field with a criterion. The mind demands logic and reason, the senses demand empiricism, but intuition demands myth, symbol, and metaphor. The development of knowledge and culture in the Western tradition has created a fragmentation of our very essence of humanity that Native people did not have and in fact do not have. For us to be engaged in the process of education, therefore, we must develop a model of educating humans that requires the person who is educated have knowledge that is moral. As well, knowledge should be a knowledge of esthetics and a knowledge of beauty. This is a complex model of being human, of culture, and of education.

It is difficult for us to understand the possibility that humans on this continent were that complex, because it is difficult for us to understand the facility of the process of conquest and colonization. Let me take you back again to that time in history, both in Europe and in the Americas. For approximately 11,000 years the Native populations of the Americas had been isolated from the rest of the world. This was not true of the populations in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Contact between Africa, Asia, and Europe allowed pathogens to circulate freely in the rest of the world. The experiences of European contact with disease did not take place in the Americas. When the Europeans arrived on the shores of the Americas, within no more than 50 years Native populations were decimated by disease. The Native populations in Alaska, for example, were one of the last to come in contact with Europeans. Decimation of the populations, however, was by disease, not by humans. The real reason for the failure of Indigenous populations to withstand contact with Europeans had nothing

to do with their humanity; nor did it have anything to do with European humanity; but it had a lot to do with pathogens. It is important for us to understand that the explanations we have arrived at as to why the Europeans successfully conquered, and why Native people were conquered, is because of agents and factors that were beyond our understanding until recently. Science has allowed us to understand that the disappearance of up to 90% of the Native populations of the Americas was directly due not to humans, but to microbes and viruses. You begin to understand that when there is a massive loss of humanity—in modern history called a holocaust—of 90% of your people, you also lose 90% of your knowledge base. This is the crux of the problem of education both in terms of the experience with education of Native people and in terms of the efforts at innovative and alternative approaches to the education of Native learners.

Our images of ourselves from a Native perspective, as well as European images, have nothing to do with who and where we truly are. I ask you to begin that process of inquiry as to what it is we do know about our origins and sources before Columbus. What we begin to see is this massive loss of humanity followed by the military face of conquest. These processes easily overwhelmed the survivors of that holocaust. This massive loss of knowledge base and the experience of conquest can clearly be seen in a study of the faces of those colonized. These include all forms of public education—elementary, secondary, and university level—that Native people have been subjected to in the past and continue to be today. In the process of becoming educated we are in fact engaging in processes of colonization. This is why the experience of Indigenous education is negative and why the only too familiar catastrophic dropout rates exist. These in turn reinforce the stereotypes of minorities as inferior and not capable of benefiting from education at any level, elementary, secondary, or university.

Part of the challenge and the task for you as you begin to develop this process and program is to engage in an intentional process of educational decolonization, bringing educational liberation and educational emancipation. This is difficult to do. Part of my experience is working with the Tribal College movement in the United States. I was one of the founders of DQ University in the early 1970s. I served on the Board of Trustees and then went on to become an administrator. I have seen how difficult it is to put together programs that are not static, that are instead part of a historical continuum of conquest and colonization, but that can also coexist in the context of a dominant society. We know from the statistics and the experiences of Native students at all levels that, as in 1492, we are losing the educational battle. We have further difficulties in dealing with these negative experiences in education because the explanation is no longer a Native explanation: It is now a European-based explanation. You are all, I hope,

familiar with the latest book published in the United States that validates these explanations, called *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). This book reflects the continual, epistemological definition based on European structures that non-Europeans are inferior. According to this view, no matter what changes take place in society, non-Europeans are not capable in terms of performance, intellectually and educationally. We see in the United States the development of rigid formal thinking, which some historically have called Fascism, and an effort again to disenfranchise Native people from public systems of education. This disenfranchisement continues to be part of the process of conquest and colonization of the past 400 years. The Tribal College movement is an expression of the vitality and survival of Native educational systems where explanations for the failure in education do not come from a European perspective, but rather from a Native perspective.

Let me take you back to the model that required complex training and education of humans that I suggest was present in the Americas before the Europeans came. In Western society people train and develop as artists, as religious leaders, and as scientists. Imagine if you were to engage in a process, as Native people have, of developing an educated person who is scientific, artistic, and religious. Would we have produced cultures that engaged in antihuman activities? Would we have developed a science and technology that continually produced better and bigger weapons. In the context of cultures and peoples that do not do these kinds of things but where learning occurs within a cultural context where the European way is dominant, it is clear that the Native learner will fail. It is imperative, then, that Native peoples develop their own systems of education based on Native control, so that the knowledge base can be defined from a Native perspective and, I hope, pick up where things left off some 400 years ago.

In the Native model of education we have development of the person in an organic and synthetic way. Statements, for example, from Athabascan traditions, talk about an educated person as someone who has a face and a heart, which means there is substance and form. Education is not simply having knowledge. A person has to demonstrate other aspects of knowledge that reflect a grounding of one's humanity in the larger environmental, ecological, real world. This model requires that we develop the morals of the learner and that the level and degree of happiness of the learner be as real as the intellectual processes of memory and recall allow. This model will produce different kinds of human beings.

Let us again go back to the moment of contact between Europeans and Native people. Today Europeans, now as then, have been separated from their God, exiled from paradise, fragmented from themselves, and are a people who have what we talk of in modern terms as weak egos. A characteristic of people with weak egos is to shore up their reality by

developing rigid psychological ways of being, characterized as obsessive and compulsive. The behavior of Europeans, then and now, is obsessive and compulsive. The inner experience of the European, in terms of their weakness of ego, is reflected in fears of isolation, anxiety about loneliness, and fear of death. By comparison, Native people were humans with extremely strong egos. We see this in the Elders who have survived and are in Native communities in the Americas. A characteristic of that strength in terms of ego was that self was never defined as isolated from others or the environment. It is a definition of self grounded in a holism, that is, a belonging in the universe. Native people have never defined their humanity as not being in paradise. Native people believe that the sense of godliness is immanent and everywhere, not, as the Judaeo-Christian tradition suggests, one of transcendence. The sense of being in a state of grace and with God as well as other humans creates the role models we have in our communities. These are the Elders, the Medicine people, and the humans who do not engage in obsessive and in compulsive behaviors. Instead, the Native way engages in catalytic processes allowing for growth and development in a harmonious, cooperative, dynamic, and balancing way within individuals, between individuals, and between individuals and the environment. This is the kind of education and development of the person that we need to take a hard look at. Otherwise, the difficulties encountered will be those that we have seen in the Tribal College movement, where we have polarization of the educational leaders over the Indian knowledge base, use of European concepts, and views and images of what *Indian* is that have nothing to do with *Indian*, but much to do with those European definitions.

An earlier speaker referred to the importance of the definition of terms we use, that is, the etymology of words. If we look at the word *Indian*, for example, we see that it has nothing to do with Native people. It is not and has never been applicable to Native people, because what we call *Indian* is a European idea that has shifted and changed over the years, first to justify conquest, next to justify colonization, and last to justify the extinction of Native cultures. For a Native person, using European-defined terms like *Indian* is problematic. Yet this word is widely used, and we have interesting dynamics where people say to each other, in a Western way, that one is more Indian than another. When we begin to look at what was going on here in the Americas before the coming of the Europeans, we find in Native languages that people called themselves humans. They said their name was what they called people, the People.

Racism has its origin in the Judaeo-Christian tradition of hierarchies and the right to exploit individuals on the basis of group affiliation or sex. Native people did not have these constructs, yet contemporary Native people are paradigms of sexism and racism. We do not like to admit to this. We do not like to acknowledge or talk about how we have adopted

through processes of assimilation and acculturation the definitions of being Indian, or being *Native* that are European. We need to explore seriously what definitions of being human were before the coming of the Europeans. What were the differences and what were the commonalities? We will find that it is impossible for racism to have taken place in the Americas. In order for us to claim to be descendants of those people, we cannot engage in racism. When we study the history of contact between Indian and European, we find that Indian people always took in Europeans as fellow human beings and that there never was any racism. Yet we find all these definitions of *Indian* as part of the knowledge base used by educational leaders who are Native as they transact and interact with each other in the institution.

As to languages, Native languages are part of the solution to the puzzle as to why we fail in education. In the development of the mind, Western systems of education literally, physiologically atrophy our intellectual abilities. When Native students go into grade 1, they are not intellectually prepared for success in the experience. They are already behind in intellectual development before grade 1. By grade 3, when students are confronted with the need to both read and write complex paragraphs, we lose them academically. We continue to lose them academically through junior high and on, until they finally physically drop out of the system of education. Native languages are a critical component of the development of the mind and the intellect. The ability to preserve Native cultures depend on Native students using Native languages, because these languages, as complex as they are, convey complex, cultural meanings. The uses—and I mentioned earlier the metaphor—of affixes, suffixes, and prefixes in Native languages is part of that cultural definition of being human. This model is what I suggest conditions and qualifies humans, always in the context of others and in the context of the environment or nature. And so, linguistically, you can never say anything without having to say what the human is about to do depends on a phenomenological field around that human. The phenomenological field is an environmental ecosystem around that human and an understanding of history in time. The understanding of history in the time of the pre-Columbian peoples was awesome. We know from Western sources of information that the discovery of the concept of zero took place in the Americas before it took place in India. We see this fascination with the dimensions of reality like that of pre-Columbian people in a contemporary person whose name was Einstein. To begin to understand the mind of the Native person before Columbus requires an ability to understand time, space, matter, energy, and how those things are related to each other. That so-called scientific understanding of Einstein in terms of what reality was is exactly what Native people did in the use of their languages.

It is imperative for us to begin to explore the use of our languages as we engage in the development of educating humans. Through this exploration we will see an intellectual growth and development that is not now present in Native learners in elementary, secondary, and higher education. We can actually observe physiological processes of atrophy of linguistic centers in the brain. We are born with 42 to 44 linguistic centers. With the use of Western languages only, about 22 or 24 of these centers physiologically atrophy. When the brain is affected in this way, it is easy to predict the educational failure of Native students. We must insist on the survival of Native languages and the use of them by Native people as part of the solution and the change in the experience in education on which we have become the experts. In this way we can begin to develop those kinds of humans that have been suppressed for 400 years. As already explained, these humans were characterized by a high level of development in comparison and in contrast to the contemporary Native as well as to the contemporary non-Native. We begin, then, to have a view of Native systems of higher education that were as complex, if not more so, as what we now know as universities and colleges. This complex system will make it much easier for us to engage in those activities and explorations that will make the proposed program serve the needs of our contemporary communities. It does have political dimensions to it, but it also has biological dimensions, as I am beginning to suggest. These biological issues are those of nutrition. In order for the brain to function we need neurotransmitters. However, the diet of modern Native people in the Americas is a diet of colonization, which is high in sugar, salt, processed proteins, and carbohydrates as well as lacking or low in vitamins and minerals. The diets of the pre-Columbian populations were the opposite. Pre-Columbian diets did not use sugar other than honey or natural fructose and were diets of complex carbohydrates and complex proteins. They relied on the ingestion and consumption of algae, seaweed, and lichen. What is interesting about lichen is that it is algae, and it is full of amino acids. If you provide the Native learner with a diet rich in amino acids, that learner will produce the neurotransmitters required to think, to memorize, and to recall.

The failure of the Native learner at all levels is, as I have suggested, in terms of a holocaust, but is also physiological, biological. Failure has nothing to do with culture and it has nothing to do with race. Yet by going into the process, by investigating the pre-Columbian knowledge base, we begin to discover what Native Indigenous epistemology was. We discover the components and characteristics of their knowledge base, implementing these into the process of education. We will then be able to achieve the goals and the mission that you propose for this program.

We can agree, then, that it was a moment in time, an unfortunate moment in time that took place 400 years ago. We must then explore the way of being human before European contact that had developed here for

thousands of years. We may then go back to being members of the family of people in the world, and we may then be able to contribute the Native knowledge base to the problems that confront the world. To my way of thinking, it is not only coincidental that Europe in the last 400 years has experienced tremendous growth and development in philosophy, science, technology, and culture. Is it coincidence, was there a flow of ideas from the Americas to Europe? The ideas of democracy in terms of government flew from the Americas to Europe, from the parliamentary systems of government that Europeans saw in North, Central, and South America. We need to engage in research to see what ideas from the Americas, from an Indigenous epistemology in science, helped trigger the industrial revolution, the scientific revolution, and the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. What the Europeans take credit for, their eminence, may be based on Native knowledge and based on our ignorance of our Native knowledge. We thus need to open communication with European scholars who have access to Native collections of materials and information that was taken from the Americas to Europe. The Vatican, the British Museum, and German museums hold incredible treasures to which we must have access. When the Native people who had that knowledge and information died of disease, they had already shared their knowledge with Europeans who took this knowledge back to Europe. We need access to that information. It is still in European hands. We need to engage in a dialogue and a process of common research with European scholars, focusing on this pre-Columbian encyclopedia of knowledge and information so that we can give elementary, secondary, and university-level students access to sources of information that we do not now have. What we do have, particularly from the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education itself, is interpretations of pre-Columbian Native knowledge base that arise from European imperatives based on their need to justify their history of the conquest and colonization. The history of conquest and colonization had nothing to do with the search for knowledge and meaning. We must engage in processes whereby we go to sources, including European sources, working with non-Native people to engage in an archaeological process of recovering Native knowledge and information that does exist here.

It is important for us to break down the borders. I am grateful to Stan and Peggy for inviting me to come here because this breaks down borders. One reason I am in Alaska is because I think it is critical that we break the idea of boundaries and borders which are by-products of modern European nationalism. These boundaries contribute to fragmentation and our inability to address the problems that confront us. Yesterday I was sharing with some of you that the so-called Aztecs of Meso-America are Athabascans and the person I was talking with said, "Oh really? I should have known that." The Athabascan people from Alaska to Central

America are a continuum, a cultural continuum. Therefore, the knowledge that may have been lost here may still exist in El Salvador. So the Athabascans of Canada may have to go to El Salvador and recover some of their knowledge base. I come from the Maya group of Indigenous people who have always felt a longing for connection with those who remain in the North who happen to be called the Zuni of New Mexico. The Maya group is connected as well to those who went into South America who are known as the Araucano of Chile and Argentina. There was an ebb and flow of humanity in the Americas; the Cayuga or the League of Iroquois are Arawak Indians from Venezuela who traveled north. This continuum of the interchange of knowledge, the sharing of information that took place before Columbus, must be restarted. Part of my involvement in the Tribal College movement has to do with restarting this process. I have learned things by my involvement with these tribal people that I would never have been able to learn had I been stuck in some PhD program. Part of what we have to do is to re-vision our idea of culture and begin to reconstruct the idea of culture from a Native perspective. We will find that culture from a Native perspective will be defined differently from culture in a Euro-Western perspective. The Euro-Western understanding of culture that has been imposed on us is rigid, compulsive, and obsessive. This perspective, as I mentioned earlier, is one where culture is a means and an instrument of oppression.

The Native definition of culture was never oppressive: it was truly a liberating process, allowing the development or the biopotential of being human. All the evidence of this complex development is before us in small and large communities. We are ignorant of it because we are told that Meso-America has nothing to do with Canada, or that South America has nothing to do with Mexico. Yet we know that the little dog that was in Meso-America appears about 1,000 years later among the Inca of South America. We know the Inca used to come by the ocean from South America to Meso-America. We are not told about the people of Alaska traveling by the shoreline all the way into Baja California in Mexico. And so that aspect of reacquainting of ourselves with ourselves in the hemispheric sense is part of the answer to the problems that confront us. The missing aspects of Native cultures may still be in the hands of other Native people on this continent.

This also opens up the whole issue of Oceania and the need for us to contact those people: the Polynesians, Micronesians, Melanesians, Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans. We also need to continue exploration with the Native populations in Siberia and the Circumpolar regions. They are all part of the knowledge bases of Indigenous epistemology. They are not, as we have been made to think, separate from who we are. The process of opening ourselves up to what might have been the cultural definitions present in the Americas before Columbus is something we may be inter-

ested in exploring so that we may do better at educating those learners in the continuum of education. This process must allow again for the role and function of the Elders, traditional people, ceremonial people, Medicine people, and the use of Native languages as a manifestation of Native epistemology.

Questions and Answers

- Q. I was interested in your comment where you said that Native children are intellectually behind. I am under the impression that 80% of your intelligence is developed by age 4, so do you mean that our children are behind intellectually in comparison to the European cultures?
- A. The question related to my comments about the lack of readiness in Native students and the fact that by age 4 most of the intellectual capacity is developed in humans. The answer is Yes. And the reason for that, as I suggested earlier, has to do with nutrition, with the lack of the use of Native languages, and, of course, the lack of Native culture. The colonial relationship that we have suppresses Native cultures. And these factors ensure that the intellectual development by age 4 does not occur. So by the time you reach the sixth year of your life and enter school, you are already behind and you cannot benefit from what is presented to you. By the time you go to grade 2 you are already behind, and it never ends. My suggestion is that Native control and so on deals with the necessity to train parents, to explore Native diets, to use Native languages so that we may begin to produce the intellectual development that should be there. Then such a person can go to a Native institution, elementary, secondary, or higher education, or to a dominant society institution, and benefit.
- Q. If that's true, then non-Native children are also suffering because they're engulfed by the colonial intrusion, the absence of Aboriginal images, and that whole entrained environment as well.
- A. Yes, the contribution of the Native people to the world would be to share that Native strength, because the problems of the world are a reflection of the problems of their own cultural development. The oppressors are as victimized as their own victims, and they do not believe that that is the case, but it is so. In the United States, for example, an interesting statistic is that of students who are majoring in math, science, and technology, over 70% are not from the United States. The United States is not producing its own people capable of handling math, science, and technology. So yes, the harm done to Native students is also done to the dominant society's students.
- Q. I think that an issue that is often neglected in the whole discussion of culture is the issue of class. And I think that as Indigenous scholars we have to address the issue of class in relationship to culture, because it leaves questions in my mind, for example, about the situation

of the Indigenous people in Chiapas and the role of the military, which is very much an instrument of class. How do we address this as Indigenous scholars? How do we account for the fact that a given culture is not allowed to continue in a class system?

- A. Regarding my earlier comments about the nature of Western tradition and its emphasis on hierarchy, this also includes linear thought as to the categories and priorities they use to define their own culture. Class to them is an important category. I also mentioned racism and sexism and heterosexism, which are also issues of class peculiar to hierarchical systems, to the degree that we have in the governments of our societies in the Americas western models of governments. Family, education, health, and government systems are characterized by heavy emphasis on class. And it seems to me that in education we are very aware of the emphasis on class. Unfortunately for us, it is the Native students who are put at the bottom. In Chiapas we see the unbroken process of displacement of Native people from their land base. And the Eurocentric expressions of government intervention that we see should have disappeared 400 years ago, but are alive and well in the Americas. We do need to address the issue, but we must first put it in the context of the whole western hierarchical approach.
- Q. I agree that research should be done with Europeans, but I wonder if access can be obtained and how successful we would be in getting that data.
- A. Because of the 1992 Quincentennial, a number of Native scholars journeyed from the Americas to Europe, and many requested that there be some repatriation of objects and collections, and the Europeans are open to that idea. We need to follow up on this and attempt to formalize the requests through our national governments and institutions like this university, as well as national associations of universities and scholars. We must continue to push that agenda to enable us to do the work that we need to do here. We need their help because they have access, and they need to consider this as part of their charter. They need give back that information that they are not using if only in terms of what has happened in Europe in the past 400 years. With the decimation of populations here in the Americas, 90% in the space of 400 years, Europe experienced tremendous population growth. With the introduction of crops such as potatoes from the Americas, famine declined and populations exploded. The Inca developed over 3,000 varieties of potato and worldwide we only use about eight. We know nothing about the possible medicinal uses of the other varieties and nor do the Europeans, so we need to stimulate an interest that will engage them in research that will also be of benefit to them.
- Q. Regarding language and how you can begin to revitalize our languages at the community level, do you have any suggestions on how

we can help our local people, and the process of beginning to believe in themselves, so that they can redeem their language, their culture, their customs, traditions?

- A. I think we have to return to my comments about the dimension of intuition and the knowledge that is characterized by symbol and metaphor. The criteria to check on intuition and what you know from intuition in terms of symbol and metaphor ask the questions whether what you know is idiosyncratic or universal. If you know how a language is developed, you find that metaphor is that magic function of language that takes us from the concrete into the abstract. So the change from low self-esteem and negative self-image to positive and high self-esteem requires us to focus on the linguistic uses of the metaphor. The problem with the sense of self is that there are two selves. In the Western tradition we think of ourselves only as one entity, but the binary nature of the self is that there is the *I* of the self, and there is the *me* of the self. The *me* of the self is the concrete, the *I* of the self is the abstract. The Athabascans had words that described those two dimensions: they called it the *Tonal*, which was the concrete, and the *Narwal*, which was the abstract. Members of the community then create metaphors that take them from what they know to what they don't know. And that is the magic of the uses of Native languages. Then you can engage them in discussions of the self, from the concrete to the abstract. Then you can begin to change their negative self-image and self-esteem. Remember that the problem with image and esteem that leads some people to suicide is their inability to solve problems and to think. The secret of the uses of language is that it allows the person to think. So our role as educators—and that would be the role and function of a program like this—is to work in community settings not only in terms of use of language, but also in the development of culturally defined taxonomies of educational objectives. Let me explain what those culturally based sequences are. In the Western tradition an approach to educational objectives goes from the simple to the complex, and there are some valid reasons for that. On the other hand, if we wish to revive the intuitive dimension as an approach to learning, in addition to the sensory and the intellectual, then we have to say that we are capable of having thoughts that would lead us to problem solving; that we are not capable of this if we insist on people defining themselves only in the western definition of self. The intuitive dimension that emphasizes the use of symbol and metaphor is a technology—rather than an external technology, we may call it an internal technology. It fosters the development from a cultural perspective of sequences of thought that allow for abstraction, complexity, and problem solving. It requires that the sequence not be limited to moving from the simple to the

complex; it requires that the thought process also take you in the opposite direction, or rather in the complementary direction of the complex to the simple. Metaphor and symbol are the only ways that I know to do that. So by doing these activities in the family, in small communities, in neighborhoods, you will see a change in the self-image and the self-esteem of young people. This is the reason for the unfortunate stereotype that we have all experienced, where all Native people say that they are artistic, that they all can draw, and they all can—because they are looking for alternative ways to their humanity than those allowed by the dominant society. If we can see that we must develop the mind, the intellect, and the senses, but also intuition and integrate all these processes, it will affect the sense of self, the level of esteem.

- Q. At DQ University, did you use your Elders and ceremonial people in your methodology as you suggested?
- A. From the beginning we insisted that the definition of the institution had to be different, so we established and always used Elders' advisory councils. Because of the nature of California, we made an effort to include the very small Native tribes and their ceremonial leaders, always respecting that some refused to go to DQ because of demands on their time and their own mission to be responsible to their local communities. Of course, in the context of California it has been a relative degree of incorporation of the Elders. The institution and the Tribal College Movement have been attacked by the United States government, both by infiltration of the institutions by FBI agents under the Nixon administration of the 1970s and by the hostility of Congress in terms of funding. Just this year federal legislation was completed that will make tribal colleges land grant institutions. Each state has a land grant institution, which is funded by Congress and, in addition to teaching and research, is able to do agricultural extension work. With funds going into Native communities to do that kind of work, the nexus will be strengthened. The relative degree of incorporation of the Elders has been due to lack of funds and the political intervention of the dominant society and the federal government. But from the beginning we did that, and it has been an area unique to DQ, but it still has a long way to go.

Reference

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