

Progressing Toward an Indigenous Research Paradigm in Canada and Australia

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Introduction

Let me first introduce myself. Some people call me Shawn Wilson; I am also called Daddy, Uncle, Son, Husband, Brother, Oyate Tawa, and Friend. I am Opaskwayak Cree, and I am also of Scottish heritage. My grandparents are Alex and Marie Robertson and Charlie and Beatrice Wilson. My Cree ancestors are Wassenas and Kanacheech.

Part of what I do is teach counseling at Brandon University. Another part of what I do is conduct research. As with all the other roles that I fulfill in my life, I do my best to teach and do research following Indigenous¹ beliefs and ways of doing. I call the set of beliefs that guide me an Indigenous paradigm.² I am now completing my doctoral dissertation, further articulating this Indigenous paradigm as it applies to research. Paradigms shape our view of the world around us and how we walk through that world. All research reflects the paradigm used by the researcher whether that researcher is conscious of the usage or not. Included in a research paradigm are our ontology and epistemology as well as our axiology and methodology.³

I wish to present here some of the ideas that I write about in my dissertation. While helping to explain the motives of some of the non-Indigenous people who have conducted research on us in the past, I hope that my work honors and builds on the work of Indigenous scholars who have gone before me. It is also my wish that future Indigenous researchers will be able to use this progression in their own work.

One of the main points that I stress is the importance of relationships and the realization that everything needs to be seen in the context of the relationships that it represents. Just as writing this personalized introduction allows me to express my thoughts in a way that is culturally relevant, writing this article can be seen as the culturally relevant way to communicate with dominant-system academics.

Ray Barnhart and Oscar Kawagley (2001), in their explanation of complexity theory, clarify what I am doing—and what most Indigenous scholars must do in academe. We must meld “formal” and Indigenous knowledge systems. Applying this theory allows room for negotiation as Indigenous scholars see and work within both Indigenous and dominant world views. This becomes important when working with most dominant-system academics who are usually not bicultural. As part of their “white privilege,” there has seldom been a requirement to see other ways of being and doing or even to recognize that other ways exist. Often, then, ideas coming from a different world view are outside their mindset. The ability to bridge this gap then becomes important in order to ease the tension that it creates.

In writing this article I attempt to follow a linear or tiered style rather than expressing myself in an Indigenous cyclical-relational manner. This linear style requires me to meld the works of several Indigenous scholars as the topics of their writing overlap. I am fairly sure that they will forgive me for doing this, as I am equally sure that they have had to do the same thing themselves at times in their academic careers.

I am indebted to Lester-IRabinna Rigney of the Narungga Nation of South Australia (1999); Judy Atkinson, who identifies herself as descended from Yiman from central Queensland and Bundjalung from northern New South Wales (2002a, 2000b); Patsy Steinhauer, a Cree woman from Saddle Lake Cree First Nation in Canada (2001a, 2001b); Karen Martin, a Noonuccle woman from the Quandamooka people of southeast Queensland (2003); and Evelyn Steinhauer, who is also Saddle Lake Cree (2002) for their work in mapping the progression and articulating the stages that Indigenous research and researchers have taken and are now entering. Their work has guided this article, and it is through standing on their shoulders, and those of other Indigenous scholars before them, that I am able to present these ideas on the progression of an Indigenous research paradigm.

A Chronology of Events Affecting Aboriginal Peoples and Therefore Aboriginal Research

Academic research and researchers reflect the sociocultural and political context in which their research is framed. Karen Martin (2003) has aptly outlined this context in a chronology of Indigenous research with time frames based on political, social, and historical events and experiences in Queensland and the rest of Australia. She offers some general reference to international events and movements in order to further contextualize her thoughts. Karen explains that the purpose of this chronology is to "reconceptualise and reframe from an Aboriginal position, the structural relations towards Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands and the role research has played in these relations" (p. 7). She further explains that the evolution of one phase to the next is diffuse or fluid so that features of each may appear in earlier and later phases. Although the phases may have a somewhat staid beginning decade, I think that there is no real end date for any. The mindset established in one carries forward and is compounded in the next and either nourished or placed into a state of remission by the political climate of the time.

Martin (2003) divides the phases in the development of Aboriginal research chronologically as the *terra nullius*, traditionalizing, assimilationist, early Aboriginal research, recent Aboriginal research, and Indigenist research phases.

Terra Nullius Phase: 1770-1900

The *terra nullius* phase of research with Aboriginal Australian people and Aboriginal lands began with Captain James Cook declaring Australia as *terra nullius* (empty land). This declaration gave recognition to the existence of the land not as lands of Indigenous people, but rather as the "new world." The first phase of research on Aboriginal peoples takes its name from this event. Research during this phase consisted mainly of observations of Europeans as they colonized Aboriginal lands (Martin, 2003). Aboriginal people were physically present at the

time, but were viewed with indifference (Stanner, 1972) and as "possessing barely human status" (Allen, 1988, p. 80).

The sociopolitical context of this era was concerned first and foremost with controlling Aboriginal lands, so research focused on identifying and cataloguing flora and fauna. The resource potential of the land was of prime importance. In order to control Aboriginal land, the land first had to be cleared of all things deemed unnecessary, particularly Aboriginal people. Hartwig (1985) explains this dispossession of Aboriginal peoples as follows:

For the colonist participating in the process of dispossession, it was psychologically desirable ... to persuade himself that Aborigines were inferior beings, pests and nuisances who deserved their fate ... Except during the few decades before and after the turn of the century, it was the squatter and his men, the men on the spot doing the actual dispossessing, and the killing that it entailed ... were given official encouragement ... in the belief that killing Aborigines was no crime. (p. 12)

In fact it was during this era in New England in North America (in the present location of the province of Newfoundland) that a head bounty was placed upon Indians, including the Beothuk and Mik'mak. The Beothuk Nation was annihilated to the extent that only isolated individuals survived in hiding. It was at this time also in the then British colonies in North America that smallpox-contaminated blankets were issued to Indians with the explicit hope that the disease would decimate the population such that their presence would be negligible (Thornton, 1987).⁴

Martin (2003) explains that in Australia, under the paternalistic guise of protecting Aboriginal peoples, the Queensland government, through the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897-1901 (Qld), became legal guardian of all Indigenous people who met the government's definition of *Aboriginal*. In essence, the new colonial government then took control of their lives and their lands. Churches and various other religious entities then became agents of the government, setting up missions and in general dispossessing Aboriginal people of their lands, their religions, their spiritual practices, and their languages (Harris, 1994; Hefferan, 1993; Kelly & Lenthall, 1997). Often the actions taken by the church, by government officials, and by the public in general were based on theories of race and racial superiority, making it justifiable to deny human status and thus legal status to Aboriginal peoples (Allen, 1988; Kidd, 1994).

During a somewhat parallel era, the economic need for fur in Europe drove the fur trade in Canada. Queen Victoria, as head of the British government, questionably negotiated treaties with the Indians of Canada, thus forming a *treaty commonwealth* rather than declaring *terra nullius*. Courts are only now establishing that in many cases Indigenous leaders were not even present at these supposed negotiations (Henderson, 2000). At other times when Indigenous leaders were present, they could neither hold dialogue nor write in English, the language in which the treaties are written. In still other cases where an X indicates the mark of an Indigenous leader, it is questionable whether the interpreter present was able to speak either language or understand either world view with enough clarity to explain the complexities of the transactions. As the economic need for resources located on Indian land grew, it became necessary to enact legislation that would

ensure that Indigenous people were considered wards of the state, thus more easily controlled.⁵

As a further means of controlling the movement of Indigenous peoples, designated lands were established as reserves or missions into which all Indigenous peoples were forced to relocate. Under government acts and policing of policy, occupants were not allowed to leave the designated areas, nor to continue ceremonial practices. Parallel governing policies were enacted in both Australia and Canada.

Traditionalizing Phase: 1900-1940 and in Some Instances to the Present

Following a period of enforcement of the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897-1901 (QLD), which specifically related to the Aboriginal peoples of Queensland, the *terra nullius* phase of research evolved into the traditionalizing phase (Martin, 2003). Martin states that in this period from 1900 on, as Aboriginal lands continued to be invaded, Aboriginal people continued to be dispossessed by physical removal, disease, or death. Indigenous people in both Canada and Australia were viewed as impediments to progress, and in this context research on Aboriginal lands and people occurred with government structural support through agents such as the church. In fact Martin, quoting Coombs (1994) says:

During the period of open warfare between white settlers and resident Aborigines for control of the land and its resources, the attitude of government authorities in the various colonies was either that it was a matter they had neither the desire nor the capacity to control, or was one in which their purpose was to validate the settler's hegemony once it had been established. (p. 19).

Any and all measures that would allow settlers to "develop" the "new" land were encouraged. Allen (1998) explains this mentality further.

European-Australian history [had] two inter-related themes: first: "man against nature," the pioneer heroic, and secondly the building of "civilisation in the wilderness," a new "Britannia" in the Promised Land built free of evils and injustices of the mother country. The Aborigines were never on centre stage in this drama, they remained little more than part of the wild, savage backdrop of the nation-building actions of the Europeans. Land, trees, animals and Aborigines suffered in common. (p. 83)

Martin (2003) says that under these circumstances research was very much a colonial discourse. Aboriginal people if recognized at all were viewed as part of the flora and fauna. Their lands were viewed as resources awaiting European exploitation. Any research that was conducted on Aboriginal people in either country during this time was based on a racist view that deemed them inhuman. Unfortunately, the effect of this research has forever racialized their existence.

Martin (2003) goes on to explain that research was conducted and condoned on the basis of proving Aboriginal humanness (or inhumanness) by describing hunter gathering lifestyles as evolutionary quirks, curiosities of nature. Experimental and empirical data collection in the form of "scientific measurements" of "native" intelligence by procuring specimens of human remains and material goods to send overseas to the repositories of universities and museums was widespread and acceptable. It was (is) because of this original research that theories of eugenics

were allowed to thrive. The “scientific data” collected during this era still inform the mindset of many if not most dominant-culture members, and it is precisely for this reason that a particular form of research and colonization is still condoned, now in the guise of psychological intelligence testing.

Kidd (1994) explains that as the health and living conditions of Aboriginal people in the missions and reserves of north Queensland grew critical (in the 1920s and early 1930s), clinical investigation escalated. As epidemics of hookworm, malaria, leprosy, venereal disease, malnutrition, and dysentery occurred, government-appointed physicians conducted clinical investigations that would enhance their careers and further the notion that Aboriginal peoples were unable to care for their own health and well-being. Today this testing and investigating continues in the form of “outside” researchers studying fetal alcohol syndrome, diabetes, and substance abuse among Aboriginal peoples. The research results are seldom if ever explained to those who have been studied, and have little or no effect on the people who suffer from the conditions.

Alongside the arena of clinical investigation came the anthropological drive to “traditionalize” Aboriginal people. This research prescribed and imposed a pan-identity and experience based on physical categories established in the discipline of anthropology. Some of this research has been called “salvage research” (Stanner, 1972; Swain, 2000), because it proposed recording the cultures of peoples who were thought soon to become extinct (Martin, 2003). Toward the latter part of this era, Aboriginal people became prime subjects for investigation.

As researchers strove to categorize Indigenous people in both countries into typologies, judgments were placed on those who were less or more traditional (as defined by the researcher). Spindler (1971), in his study of the Menominee, *Dreamers Without Power*, for example, categorizes the Menominee into groups according to how acculturated, how bicultural, how assimilated, or how traditional he deems them to be. This era of traditionalization produced the concept of the noble savage: one that was romanticized and carried forward through the Hippie movement of the 1970s and the New Age Movement of the 1980s and 1990s. Research on Indian people by non-Indigenous academics became fashionable, although it is certainly true that some maintained or even regained their interest in Indigenous peoples because of a particular missionary zeal by which they believed that they were serving mankind by assisting in the Christianization of the people they studied.

Assimilationist Phase: 1940-1970

Until and throughout the assimilationist phase, Aboriginal lands continued to be examined, explored, and exploited for their natural resources. Nature was “raw material” for the economic growth of the country (Martin, 2003), and research moved from describing and measuring the physical traits of Aboriginal peoples to examining their social structures (Coomer, 1984), their kinship structures, and their mythologies (Beckett 1994). Again interpretation of this research served to prescribe Aboriginal experience and Aboriginal identity as being “traditional” or “nontraditional.” Martin (2003) says, “whilst the salvage research of the previous research phase continued, its focus shifted from preserving our cultures to preserving us” (p. 12). As before, research proffered solutions for “Aboriginal problems”

and was used to inform government policy, thus reshaping structural relations. And once again, through the use of such research frameworks, the voices of Aboriginal peoples were silenced. Non-Aboriginal people became experts on Aboriginal people. Anthropologists, archaeologists, physicians, psychologists, historians, professors, and even classroom teachers who had studied Aboriginal people or who might even have simply read a study about Aboriginal people now felt qualified to pass on their learning. Beckett (1994) says, "Aboriginal people in Australia were virtually without a voice. Administrators, missionaries, scientists, novelists spoke of them, and occasionally for them, with authority as to make a native voice seem unnecessary, even impossible" (p. 19).

In Canada this practice continues. In some universities entire departments of Native studies or of anthropology are staffed by non-Aboriginal faculty members who claim to be and are recognized as "Indian experts" by their colleagues. Throughout Canada and Australia, Indigenous children on a daily basis see and hear themselves being identified through text and teachers whose experience is grounded in the research of this era. The study *of* and *on* (but very seldom *by*) Aboriginal and Indian people became and remains profitable business for academics who wish to advance their careers.

Assimilationist research had its roots in government policy. Taking on a guardianship role, acts were passed (in both Australia and Canada) that would impose regulations to control movement, marriage, schooling, employment: indeed every aspect of Aboriginal life (Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act, 1937, Canadian Indian Act [Revised], 1952). This "protection" (they believed) would then equip Aboriginal and Indian people to live in the dominant society by assimilating them into that society. Children were removed from their families (often by force) and placed into residential schools. In an effort to "educate" Indigenous people, it was believed that if children were removed from the cultural influences, the customs, the language, and the practices of their parents, they would soon adopt mainstream (i.e., Euro-dominant) practices. In this effort to assimilate Indigenous children they were often removed from their parental homes at an early age and not allowed to return home until much later (if ever). This practice took on parallel overtones in Canada and Australia. In Canada priests and nuns taught in and ran residential schools as agents of the government. As attested to in numerous court cases in Canada during the past decade, some of the children were sexually and physically abused on a regular basis. In Australia the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families relates incidents of abuse too numerous and too horrendous to relate here. It is not the function of this literature review to go into the effects of these policies, but rather to illuminate the damage caused by research that reflected the political climate of the day.

Extending back to and ostensibly justified by research from both the traditionalizing phase and into the assimilationist period, a practice known in Canada as *The 60s Scoop* began (Fournier & Crey, 1997). Children had previously been taken from their families ostensibly to become educated. During the 60s Scoop, Child and Family Services, another government department, forcibly took Aboriginal children from their homes. They were then adopted by mainstream

(white) families. The name given to this practice in Australia, the Stolen Generation, is much more descriptive of what occurred (National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, 1997).

Early Aboriginal Research Phase: 1970-1990s

During the 1970s and well into the 1990s, Aboriginal peoples continued to be researched. In its aim, construction, and implementation, research of this phase inevitably continued to view, interpret, and represent Aboriginal lands and Aboriginal people: their world views, their cultures, their experiences, and their knowledges through Western eyes and ears (Martin, 2003) using a colonial world view as the dominant and sole research discourse (Coomer, 1984). Research with an Indian focus became the "just" thing to do, particularly as the Human Rights movement spread across North America. Still, for the most part an Indigenous voice was neither heard nor felt, and only those portions of their cultures that researchers found either exotic or exciting and easily understood from a Western perspective were studied. Martin (2003) quotes Michael Dodson (1995), Aboriginal lawyer and former Social Justice Commissioner, in saying:

One of the fundamental problems in Australia (since the active and conscious endeavour to destroy our cultures was dropped as official policy) is that only those aspects of our cultures which are understood and valued by white fellas have been considered valid. The recognition and protection of Indigenous cultures has been extended from a non-Indigenous perspective. Our values have been filtered through the values of others. What has been considered worthy of protection has usually been on the basis of this scientific, historic, aesthetic or sheer curiosity value. Current laws and policy are still largely shaped by this cultural distortion and fail to extend protection in terms which are defined by our own perspective. (p. 5)

There is a definite perception among Indigenous peoples worldwide that they were among the most researched group of people on earth during this time (Dodson, 1995; Van den Berg, 1998; Huggins, 1998; Smith, 1999). Martin (2003) explains that "as structural relations turned welfarist in nature, research escalated in the fields of linguistics, religion, education and health" (p. 15), and Aboriginal welfare dependency was mediated by academics, professionals, and researchers (Beckett, 1994).

Recent Aboriginal Research Phase: 1990-2000

Martin (2003) believes that during the phase of Aboriginal research from the 1990s onward, an extensive movement occurred in Aboriginal affairs and conjointly in qualitative research "that contributed to the emanation of Indigenist research" (p. 17). She explains that during this phase of recent Aboriginal research, many developments occurred, three of which were fundamental in describing structural relations between governments and Aboriginal peoples. The first was the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1991), the next (CTH) the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act (1991), and then the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children* (1997). Simultaneously in Canada, the *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) was completed. Each activity challenged governments to review the place of Indigenous people in Australian and Canadian society and asked for redress of the effects of structural

relations since colonization. Although Martin explains that there was a rash of “emergency research” by non-Indigenous scholars after these initiatives, the climate had begun to change. It was now time, some government officials (and some researchers) believed, to hear the Indigenous voice. A place was made for collaborative research.

More important, Indigenous scholars began to assert their power. No longer would they allow others to speak for them. They began to articulate their own Indigenist perspective and demanded to be heard in doing so. This leads to Martin’s articulation of the Indigenist Research Phase, which we are now entering.

Martin’s (2003) chronology goes deep into the context of Aboriginal research, why it was conducted, and by whom. It brings us to the present from an historical perspective. Then, with this background knowledge in tow, it is pertinent to describe the path, the effect, and the stages that Indigenous scholars themselves have taken as they attempt to break into (and possibly disrupt) a dominantly controlled Euro-western paradigm.

Aboriginal Researchers and the Development of an Indigenous Paradigm

During the Assimilationist period a small number of Aboriginal scholars did manage to enter mainstream educational facilities and through diligent effort began to understand and even mimic Western scholars. It is from this period onward that Patsy Steinhauer (2001a, 2001b) describes the development of an Indigenous Paradigm by Indigenous scholars.

First Stage

Steinhauer (2001b) says that the understanding and articulation of an Indigenous paradigm has progressed through at least four stages. During the first stage, she explains,

Indigenous scholars [and others who sought to align themselves with research “with” and “on” Indigenous peoples] situated themselves solidly in a western framework. There is little evidence that they attempted or even considered that this “western” way could be challenged. In fact in order to have their work considered in scholarly academic realms they strove to be western researchers of the highest calibre. (p. 15)

Indigenous scholars during this time were somehow able to separate their own Indigenous lives from their academic endeavors. Medicine (2001) gives an excellent example of this dichotomy in her text *Being an Anthropologist and Remaining “Native.”* Still other Aboriginal scholars used a Western paradigm in order to write about their discontent and to give voice to sentiments that were decidedly non-mainstream, as in *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Deloria, 1988) *Prison of Grass* (Adams, 1975), and *God is Red* (Deloria, 1973). For the most part, however, Aboriginal scholars in mainstream dominant-culture universities were few and far between. Those who did seek and find research positions were either decidedly dominant-system in perspective or led parallel lives that may have conflicted with the Indigenous knowledge that was inherent in their world view.

As in the explanation of a chronology of political and historical events that affects Aboriginal research, the stages in the development of an Indigenous paradigm are somewhat fluid. Although there is a definite progression from one stage to the next, some Indigenous scholars will always choose to remain working

from within a Western framework. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this *if* it is a choice. Some have particular reasons for making this choice. This is the reasoning that leads to stage two.

Second Stage

Steinhauer (2001b) explains that the second stage in the development of an Indigenous paradigm introduces the notion of the paradigm, but seeks to maintain mainstream Western influences to avoid marginalization. Urion (Urion, Norton, & Porter, 1995) explains: "The first problem is that it [Indigenous research] will be defined in comparison with western or European models for the acquisition of knowledge, rather than on its own" (p. 56). He further cautions, "Indigenous perspectives will be defined in terms of the exotic, and in the larger context this will marginalize Indigenous perspectives in the world of research" (pp. 56-57). Still other Indigenous scholars of this period felt challenged to restrict the Indigenous paradigm to one research method. Hermes (1998) expresses this categorization as troublesome, explaining that, "the method still refuses a single category or any other formula that may make it a formula for research ... [For example,] a grounding in Ojibwa culture and community made it impossible for only one predetermined methodology to accommodate the paradigm" (p. 156).

For Indigenous researchers of this era, the struggle to be accepted permeates their work. They believed that incorporating culturally specific models of Indigenous research would present problems to predetermined methods available, and yet they teetered on the edge, "wishing that they could, but not attempting to do so." Hampton (1993) expresses this quandary: "I finally could not deny the six directions as I sat with Miles and Huberman's (1984) *Qualitative Data Analysis* and tried to formulate a tactic for generating meaning" (p. 281).

Third Stage

The third stage in the development of an Indigenous paradigm began a focus on decolonization. This stage, best articulated by the Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) in *Decolonising Methodologies*, suggests a process of Indigenizing Western methodologies. Although it does not necessarily focus on what Indigenous methodologies actually are, it does challenge Western methods and Western-focused researchers who have studied Aboriginal peoples. The decolonizing movement has a large following of Aboriginal scholars, among them Marie Battiste (2000) and Youngblood Henderson (2002) and Battiste, Bell, and Finley (2002).

It would be foolhardy for any Indigenous scholar to ignore the effect that colonization has had on research. This awareness of colonization, and the firm belief that Indigenous peoples have their own world views and perspectives, have led finally to the present stage in the articulation of their own research paradigm.

Fourth Stage

Only recently have Aboriginal scholars been allowed the respect of conducting their own research. Equally important as the number of Indigenous researchers and scholars grows is that the use of an Indigenous research paradigm has allowed them to do research that emanates from, honors, and illuminates their world views

and perspectives. This present stage, that referred to in Martin's (2003) chronology as the Indigenist Research Phase, challenges Indigenous scholars to articulate their own research paradigms, their own approaches to research, and their own data collection methods in order to honor an Indigenous paradigm. These researchers, Atkinson (2002b) among them, believe that

Research within Aboriginal communities can be problematic if it is not informed by Aboriginal people themselves, based on ethical knowledge(s) and procedures which locate the protocols of working with Aboriginal peoples within themselves. Research must be approached with integrity and fidelity to these knowledge(s) procedures and protocols. (p. 4)

The news that an Indigenous perspective can be (and is) respected as yet another equally significant paradigm in a number of mainstream university settings has brought Indigenous scholars to these institutions as never before. The University of Alberta in Canada, for example, offers a First Nations Graduate Education program that emanates from an Indigenous perspective with core courses taught by Indigenous faculty who teach from this unique stance. Four Aboriginal people have graduated from this program with doctoral degrees in the past year, a number that exceeds that of Aboriginal doctoral graduates in the university's long history (Wilson & Wilson, in press), yet the university is surrounded by 46 Aboriginal reserves (First Nations' communities).

A Shift in Terminology, a Shift in Understanding

A growing understanding and awareness of the similarities of experiences of autochthonous peoples worldwide has shifted and reshaped the terminology now used to define their own lives. No longer are tribally specific or local terms such as *Indian*, *Metis*, *Inuit*, or *Native* (as used in Canada) or *Aborigine* or *Aboriginal* (as used in Australia) inclusive enough to encompass a growing resurgence of knowledge that encompasses the underlying world views and systemic knowledge bases of the original peoples of the world. The term *Indigenous* is now used to mean that knowledge system that is inclusive of all. Indigenous scholars are now in the process of shaping, redefining, and explaining their positions. They are defining the research, outlining the ethical protocols, and explaining the culturally congruent methodologies that can be used at the behest of their communities. The language chosen in this article reflects this shift from *Aboriginal* or *Indian* to *Indigenous*.

Rigney (1997) says, "Indigenous people are at a stage where they want research and research design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggles, as it is defined and controlled by their communities" (p. 3) because, as he states, "indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values" (p. 8). Evelyn Steinhauer (2002), explaining this movement, says that her formal education left her conditioned to believe that Indigenous ways of knowing were only important to Indigenous people, that "we could never use that knowledge on a formal basis, therefore I never took a keen interest in the topic until now." She continues,

It is exciting to know that finally our voices are being heard and that Indigenous scholars are now talking about and using Indigenous knowledge in their research. I think it is through such dialogue and discussion that Indigenous research methodologies will one day become common practice, for it is time to give voice and legitimize the knowledge of our people. (p. 70)

Developing this Indigenous paradigm increases the possibility that research done with Indigenous people will, according to Weber-Pillwax (1999), be "a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration" (p. 38). A new level of awareness is growing worldwide as the academic climate changes. The need for research that follows an Indigenous research paradigm has come to the fore.

The Criterion for Indigenous Research

Indigenous researchers have often had to explain how their perspective is different from that of dominant-system scholars. It is unfortunate that any justification is necessary, as it seems that for generations dominant scholars have needed no such qualifiers in order to conduct their research. Yet Indigenous scholars have met this task. Sefa Dei, Hall, and Rosenberg (2000) explain that Indigenous knowledges are unique to given cultures, localities, and societies and are "acquired by local peoples through daily experience" (p. 19). With yet more depth, the Mayan scholar Carlos Cordero (1995) describes the difference by saying that within the Western knowledge system there is

A separation of those areas called science from those called art and religion. The [Indigenous] knowledge base on the other hand, integrates those areas of knowledge so that science is both religious and aesthetic. We find then, an emphasis in the western tradition of approaching knowledge through the use of the intellect. For Indigenous people, knowledge is also approached through the senses and the intuition. (p. 30)

The idea that knowledge is approached through the intellect leads to the belief that research must be objective rather than subjective; that personal emotions and motives must be removed if the research "results" are to be either valid or credible. Hampton (1995), another Indigenous scholar, speaks to this notion by saying,

One thing I want to say about research is that there is a motive. I believe the reason is emotional because we feel. We feel because we are hungry, cold afraid, brave, loving, or hateful. We do what we do for reasons, emotional reasons. That is the engine that drives us. That is the gift of the Creator of Life. Life feels ... Feeling is connected to our intellect and we ignore, hide from, disguise, and suppress that feeling at our peril and at the peril of those around us. Emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual research is a goddam lie, it does not exist. It is a lie to ourselves and a lie to other people. Humans—feeling, living, breathing, thinking humans—do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to the people around us. (p. 52)

With the notion of objectivity in "valid" research comes the idea of separating before one can unite, or of looking for the smallest individual component before seeing the big picture. Tafoya (1995) explains this by saying that Western research "has a history of people being told to amputate a part of themselves to be able to fit something that's rigid, and not built for them in the first place" (p. 27). So, he explains, practices in the Western paradigm can amputate your sexuality, your

gender, your language, and your spirituality by looking at individual components rather than by looking at the total person and the complexity of the connections and relationships that allow that individual to function. With further explanation, Evelyn Steinhauer (2002) quotes Wilson (2001) in explaining the difference between an Indigenous and a dominant research paradigm:

One major difference between those dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that those dominant paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore, knowledge may be owned by an individual. An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge ... you are answerable to *all* your relations when you are doing research. (p. 177)

In a simple yet powerfully graphic way, Graveline (1998) explains the concept, "That which the trees exhale, I inhale. That which I exhale, the tree inhales" (p. 57).

The Indigenous Hawaiian scholar Manu Meyer (2001) is able to demonstrate just how rigidly Western academe upholds and perpetuates a hierarchical world view: a way of being that is foreign to Indigenous students and scholars. She explains that in institutions of "higher learning" the adversarial dialogue that is expected and encouraged perpetuates competition. Students are *challenged* to find fault (within prescribed parameters), to find the missing link or the weak link in work done by others. They are expected to question, to argue, to challenge, to critique, and to use these adjectives in their dialogue about the work of others. The object, then, is if one can find fault with others, then one's own work will look better. There must be a winner and a loser. If a student does not believe that it is culturally appropriate to embrace this binary or is able to question from perspectives other than those seen as intellectually appropriate from within the institution, then he or she is seen as anti-intellectual. Meyer (2001) gives a classic example from one of her graduate classes at Harvard University. Although this is a rather long passage, its content is crucial.

My philosophy professor went on about Descartes [being "our" number one philosopher] and how, if the world did not have his thoughts, we would still be in the dark ages, and all I said was, "I disagree." She said "our" like he was my *kupuna*—my Elder—which he was not. For me Descartes represents reason and objectivity and science, and these three ideas have also been used as tools of "truth" that have helped heal and helped kill. It was an absolutely, fundamental and clear idea for me that Descartes was not my liberator. And so when I said, "I disagree," she turned and looked at me and said, "Okay, Miss Meyer, how would you teach a class in oceanography?" Yeeee—ha! Thank you! I was so relieved. I thought she just levelled off the playing field because I grew up in the ocean ... All right, I will. I would teach it first via science. The predictable science of litoral currents, of wave refractions, how water is shaped by the beach slope, and how beaches are changed because of the volume and speed of water. I would teach oceanography via science ... and I would teach it via culture.

Now in my book, science and culture are not separated. But this was to me a necessary separation because I didn't want her to misunderstand me at the start; I continued and said ... I would teach a class in oceanography also via culture. I would teach the names of the

moons and how those moons relate to what fish are running. And when you understand what fish are running, you understand what *limu* is on the splash zones. So the kind of seaweed also tells you about the quality of the ocean currents. Knowing the Hawaiian names of the moons tells you what the seasons and months are. An Hawaiian naming of phenomena tells us about the seasonal context and what that place has to teach you ... There are eight major currents that run through our islands. Each name tells you something of the character of those currents. What does *Kealakahi* mean? The pathway to Tahiti. We are not naming this because we have no relationship to it. We name it because we do.

So I was going on like this, and then she said to me, right in the middle of a sentence: "Well then, *you* Miss Meyer, are an anti-intellectual." (pp. 189-190)

The notion that empirical evidence is more meaningful or sound permeates Western thought, but alienates and dissociates many Indigenous scholars. Rather than their cultural knowledge being seen as extraintellectual, it is denigrated. It is the notion of the superiority of empirical knowledge that leads to the idea that written text supersedes oral tradition. If Indigenous ways of knowing have to be narrowed through one particular lens (which they certainly do not), then surely that lens would focus on relationality. All things are related and therefore relevant.

The concept of relationality permeates recent scholarly writing by Indigenous scholars. They question whether in fact it is even possible for dominant-system researchers to understand this concept with the depth that is required for respectful research with Indigenous peoples. In a further in-depth explanation, Evelyn Steinhauer (2001) quotes from a personal communication with Cora Weber-Pillwax, who says, "A researcher must make sure that the three R's, Respect, Reciprocity and Relationality, are guiding the research." She explains,

Respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than giving a gift. According to Cree Elders, showing respect or *kihceyih towin* is a basic law of life. Respect regulates how we treat Mother Earth, the plants, the animals, and our brothers and sisters of all races ... Respect means you listen intently to others' ideas, that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently you show honour, consider the well being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy. (Blue Quills First Nations College, 2001, p. 86).

Although these human conditions would seem basic to many researchers, they have most certainly not governed or guided research done on Indigenous peoples in the past. Only with their articulation and enforcement by Indigenous scholars themselves will these conditions become commonplace. In an attempt to make this happen, Indigenous scholars are now making clear lists of criteria and conditions so that their research will be honored and respected by their own people. So much the better if dominant universities and researchers also adopt them. These conditions in varying forms are now being adopted by many Indigenous communities that will not allow entry by researchers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike) until they have met particular conditions as set out by these communities.

Atkinson (2001) believes that Indigenous research must be guided by the following principles:

- Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods;
- A knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community;

- Ways of relating and acting within community with an understanding of the principles of reciprocity and responsibility;
- Research participants must feel safe and be safe, including respecting issues of confidentiality;
- A non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching;
- A deep listening and hearing with more than the ears;
- A reflective non-judgemental consideration of what is being seen and heard;
- Having learnt from the listening a purposeful plan to act with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and acquired knowledge;
- Responsibility to act with fidelity in relationship to what has been heard, observed, and learnt;
- An awareness and connection between logic of mind and the feelings of the heart;
- Listening and observing the self as well as in relationship to others;
- Acknowledgement that the researcher brings to the research his or her subjective self. (p. 10)

She believes that by incorporating these principles and functions into the research, the researcher honors the world views of Indigenous peoples and does so with ethical responsibility and sensitivity.

Cora Weber-Pillwax (2003), in her doctoral dissertation at the University of Alberta, sets out the principles that she believes are foundational to Indigenous research:

- All forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected. "The measure of the land and the measure of our bodies are the same," said Chief Joseph (McLuhan, 1971, p. 54). Respect means living that relationship in all forms of interactions.
- The source of a research project is the heart/mind of the researcher, and "checking your heart" is a critical element in the research process. The researcher insures that there are no negative or selfish motives for doing the research, because that could bring suffering upon everyone in the community. A 'good heart' guarantees a good motive, and good motives benefit everyone involved.
- The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Indigenous researchers ground their research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individuals and social beings, not on the world of ideas.
- Any theories developed or proposed are based upon and supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology. We as Indigenous scholars who wish to participate in the creation of knowledge within our own ways of being must begin with an active and scholarly recognition of who our philosophers and prophets are in our own communities. These are still the keepers and the teachers of our epistemologies.
- Indigenous research cannot undermine the integrity of Indigenous persons or communities because it is grounded in that integrity. Clearly this is both a test and a statement of definition for Indigenous research and is made simply as a response to the argument that Indigenous research poses the same threats to the Indigenous community as does non-Indigenous research.
- The languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples are living processes. Research and creation of knowledge are continuous functions for the

thinkers and scholars of every Indigenous group, and it is through the activation of this principle that Indigenous university scholarship is conducted. Indigenous scholarship reflects inherited Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies and it is the responsibility of Indigenous researchers associated with a university to maintain and continuously renew the connections with our ancestors and our communities through embodiment, adherence, and practice of these. (pp. 49-50)

Indigenous research, according to Indigenous researchers, is a ceremony and must be respected as such. A ceremony, according to Minnecunju Elder Lionel Kinunwa, is not just the period at the end of the sentence. It is the required process and the preparation that happens long before the event. It is, in Atkinson's (2002a) translation, *Dadirri*: the many ways and forms and levels of listening. It is, in Martin's (2003) terminology, Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being, and Ways of Doing. It is the knowing and the respectful reinforcement that all things are related and connected. It is the voice from our ancestors that tells us when it is right and when it is not. Indigenous research is a life-changing ceremony.

Notes

¹I use the term *Indigenous* to refer to the original peoples of Australia and the Americas. I believe that it is a more globally inclusive word for original peoples than many of the labels (e.g., Indian, Aborigine, Native American) that have been imposed on us. *Aboriginal* is also used to refer to the original peoples of both Australia and Canada. *Aboriginal* is in common usage today in both countries and is often used in older literature in place of *Indigenous*. Capitalizing *Indigenous* serves to distinguish this word from its usage by dominant-system people to describe something that is home-grown. For example, settler Australians may claim to have an indigenous psychology that is unique to Australia; however, this usage does not include or refer to the original peoples of the continent.

²A paradigm is a set of underlying beliefs or assumptions that guide our actions, be they in research or teaching or life in general. Paradigms are based on theory and as such are intrinsically value-laden.

³Ontology is the theory of the nature of reality: "What is real?" Epistemology is the study of systems of thinking and knowing: "How do I know what is real?" Methodology is the theory of how knowledge is gained: "How do I find out more about this reality?" Axiology is the ethics or morals that guide our search for knowledge: "What part of reality is worth finding out more about, and what is it ethical for me to do in order to gain this knowledge?"

⁴It is during the eighteenth century that we find written reports of Indians being intentionally exposed to smallpox by Europeans. In 1763 in Pennsylvania, Sir Jeffery Amherst, commander of the British forces ... wrote in the postscript of a letter to Bouquet, the suggestion that smallpox be sent among the disaffected tribes. Bouquet replied, also in a postscript, "I will try to inoculate the[m] ... with some blankets that may fall into their hands, and take care not to get the disease myself." ... To Bouquet's postscript, Amherst replied, "You will do well as to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets as well as try every other method that can serve to extirpate this exorable race."

On June 24, Captain Ecuyer, of the Royal Americans, noted in his journal: "Out of our regard for them (i.e. two Indian Chiefs) we gave them two blankets and a handkerchief out of the smallpox hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect." (Quoted from Stearn, E and Stearn, A. "Smallpox Immunization of the Amerindian," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 13: 601-13. (Thornton, 1987). Thornton goes on to report that smallpox spread to the tribes along the Ohio River.

⁵Without consent (from the First Nations), the first Indian Act was passed in 1876 by the Parliament of Canada. It is, therefore, a federal law, which to this day gives the Minister of Indian Affairs a full range of powers over virtually every aspect of First Nations lives from birth to death. The primary purpose of passing the Indian Act was to consolidate previous colonial legislation and give the federal government the legal authority to carry out its civilizing and assimilation process of the "Indians." In 1857 An Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Canadas was passed; in 1859 The Civilization and Enfranchisement Act; in 1876 the Indian Act; and in 1884 the Indian Advancement Act. Civilization and assimilation of the "Indians" into mainstream society became firmly established as Canadian Indian policy. What started out as a relationship between equals quickly deteriorated into a paternalistic and domineering one as the newly forming country of Canada asserted (what "it" viewed as) its power, authority, and jurisdiction over its former partners and allies, the Indian Nations. The original and historical relationship between Aboriginal and European peoples was based on a Nation-to-Nation concept that precluded each Nation from making laws to govern the other without its consent. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 recognized this concept and outlined that Indian Nations were not to be molested or distributed in the lands reserved for them. Unfortunately, "protection" of Indians soon became oppression of the Indians as successive pieces of legislation gave government officials increasingly more control over the lives of Aboriginal peoples. The Indian Act also formalized the federal government's responsibility for Indians. Lands historically occupied or set aside for the exclusive use of Indians evolved into the present-day reserve system. The reserves in turn became the staging grounds for the civilizing process. Fundamental to the success of the process was the suppression of traditional forms of government; the imposition of the Indian Act band council system; and the start of the process of government bureaucrats determining who was eligible to be an Indian. The current Indian Act contains more than 80 provisions granting the Minister of Indian Affairs a full range of powers. The power and authority of the people to determine their own destiny now rested in the hands of the Minister. (Paraphrased from <http://ndhrcanada.visions.ab.ca/indianact.htm> and <http://www.socialpolicy.ca/such/m8/m8-t7.stm>)

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