The Ole Crab Story:
Analysis of a Personal Experience in Colonialism and Antiracism Theory

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The Ole Crab Story is about crabs in a pail. When one of them tries to get out of the pail and almost reaches the top, the other crabs reach up to drag it down. This story is an analogy for the dysfunction in historically oppressed communities. The Ole Crab story is a personal experience of a phenomenon that happens frequently in Aboriginal communities.

Introduction

I see the crab story among Aboriginal people as one of the consequences of colonialism. As Memmi (2000) stated,

Constantly confronted with the image of himself, set forth and imposed on all institutions and in every human contact, how could the colonized help reacting to his portrait? It cannot leave him indifferent and remain a veneer that, like an insult, blows with the wind. He ends up recognizing it as one would a detested nickname that has become a familiar description. The accusation disturbs him and worries him even more because he admires and fears his powerful accuser. (p. 213)

The colonized at times do not understand their reactions to various situations; these reactions might be called impulsive because the people do not have access to the complete picture. Often the colonizer will label the colonized for the responses that they have been set up to make, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is a small piece of the larger picture that I address through the lens of colonialism in my discussion of the Ole Crab story.

The second frame is Dei's (1996) antiracism theory—specifically, the intersection of race, class, and gender—and how it can help to analyze the phenomenon of the Ole Crab story and answer the question of how to combat racism effectively. I have used colonialism and racism as frames that are interconnected and intertwined. Many authors (Dei; Freire, 1993; Memmi, 2000; Nicholas, 1996) recognized colonialism and racism as one and the same. Nicholas wrote, "For a colonizing people to dominate other peoples requires a rationale of racial and cultural superiority, or both. Race and racism, hence, are constructs of colonialism, and as such are in-separable from it" (pp. 59-60). The macro picture is how colonialism has affected Aboriginal people and the repercussions of this oppression. We neglect to look at the big picture and how this neglect snowballs and influences the dysfunctions that become a part of accepted behaviors in

many Aboriginal communities. I am Aboriginal and come from a small northern community in Alberta. The analysis of my journey fits in well with Dei's antiracism theory, and I show how varying events, reactions, and dysfunctions from the various parties tie in with diverse aspects of his theory and colonialism.

My Personal Journey

I returned home for support and comfort after a tragic loss of two people I loved very much. My father was diagnosed with lung cancer in fall 1991, and I was overwhelmed with this news and was just digesting it when my 13-year-old daughter died in a car accident. My father died six months later, and I returned home to my family to seek support and the motivation to carry on with life. I began to work in our small community school in fall 1992 as the grade 2 teacher. The administrator, who was well liked by the children and the community members, had been at the school for approximately 10 years. Before my assignment I had spoken to this gentleman numerous times, and each time I saw him, he would ask me the same question. He would look at me with a twinkle in his eye and ask, "When are you going to return home to be the principal?" I would look at him and reply, "I'm not interested," and he would try to persuade me to return because, as he said, I would be good for the school, and the children needed me. After I arrived at the school, his talks with me became more frequent. Finally, because he was so persistent, I agreed to try it for a year. If I did not like it, I would step down and return to the classroom. The local community school board members had a great deal of respect for him and knew that he would soon be retiring. They also knew of my work and credibility, and at the April board meeting they supported his recommendation to nominate me for the position of acting principal for the following year. After this major decision, the administrator took some days off at the beginning of May; sadly, during this break he suffered a heart attack and died. It was another shock, and the community and children were devastated. We held a memorial service for him at the school, but it was difficult for us to move forward. After the service the superintendent asked me whether I wanted to take over now or wait until September. I was torn, but I had given my word to this caring administrator and quietly agreed that I would take over immediately. Because it was early May, we had two months left in that school year. I looked for a replacement for the grade 2 position and began my tenure as school principal in summer 1993.

The first few years were learning years for me, but I had strong support from the school board, and we made several healthy changes to encourage academic achievement in the school. We developed and initiated a discipline policy as well as a safe school program so that we could concentrate on bringing the children to grade level. We worked on benchmarks, had high expectations, and demanded accountability from all those involved in the education of the children. It was a team effort

among the school board, community, and staff. We worked hard and felt proud of our accomplishments. A school plan that we wrote from school board and community workshop data noted measurable objectives, which gave us direction and the initiative to move toward our goals.

Achievement testing until this time had been viewed as detrimental to the children. I offered the staff another way of looking at achievement testing as benchmarks to mark our progress each year. Our aim was a good, strong foundation of reading and writing skills at the elementary level so that the students would not have to struggle throughout the rest of their learning years. Our progress was noticeable, and we began to receive visitors from various institutions as well as from Alberta Education. They all remarked on the positive atmosphere of the school, the gradual increases in our achievement test marks, and the general academic focus of the school. All the staff members shared accountability for the change to a strong academic school. Everyone was happy and enjoyed coming to work. We knew that we still had room for improvement, but we were climbing the mountain and intended to reach the top.

Three years later there was a local school board election, and several of the incumbent trustees did not stand for reelection. Change was in the air. We heard murmurings that several women from the community were planning to run with the intent of coming in to "clean up" the school. I listened with interest because I suspected that the implications were somehow directed at me. I now faced a new school board.

The first year with the new board began with many new challenges, and I felt that I had been placed under a microscope. I knew I was being watched. Manipulation that seemed to point in one direction was evident at each school board meeting, and I suspected that the intent was to make it look as if I were not doing a good job. A new meeting format with undeclared surprise agenda items at the school board table emerged, and I found this stressful and annoying. I did not know what to expect at each meeting, which heightened my own anxiety. We were now at the beginning of my second year with this new school board, and I was feeling quite uncomfortable.

One of the topics discussed at the administrators' meeting in our school division that fall was special-needs funding. The general consensus was that we should raise the community's and school personnel's awareness and knowledge of special-needs funding. Everyone agreed that we should try to access more funding to meet the needs of the children more effectively. I hired an educational psychologist to come to our school once a week to help with such things as testing, counseling, and liaison with staff, as well as to establish behavior modification programs for some of our students. This psychologist had been with our school for four years and felt a part of the school community. At the beginning of the school year he recommended that we apply for more special-needs funding because we

had students who qualified and we had not previously applied for some of the listed categories. We discussed at length the reports and documentation that were required, and we applied for funding. The codes that Alberta Learning uses such as for severe mental disorders and minor behavior disorders have negative connotations, and I was somewhat hesitant to apply for this funding; however, I was reassured that we were doing what was right for the students. The school division recommended that we conduct the testing and apply for funding to offset some of the costs that we could not meet because of budget cutbacks. This is where I believe that I made a costly mistake. At a local school board meeting in February our school's organizational plan, which contained confidential information required for funding, was presented. This plan usually does not require extensive discussion, and the school board passes it with the understanding that it will benefit the school.

At this meeting, which I was unable to attend, a number of the school board members insisted on scrutinizing each page, particularly the funding codes for special needs. The son of a member of the board who was unhappy with me attended our school and was identified on this page as having a minor disorder. This member felt that she had been violated because this particular information on funding codes had not been disclosed to her. Her son had been placed on an Individual Pupil Plan, and behavior modification had been designed to help him change his behavior. She read the list, noted a number of her nieces and nephews on it, and the discussion did not end at the board table. She proceeded to inform her family members, and two days later I received a letter from one of her sisters in reference to the children listed. Each school board meeting is held in camera, and this information was confidential and intended only for the school board members. Immediately after this meeting I also received several calls from various community members asking me why their children's names were on the list. I informed them that this was confidential information and that I was not in a position to discuss who was on the list. All the students who were listed had been tested or were on an Individual Pupil Plan, and the plans required the parents' input and review before they were asked to sign them. Some of our applications for funding required testing with parental permission, which provided us with the documentation to create the Individual Pupil Plans. The procedure had been followed as strictly as possible, and yet it was being questioned.

The pressure was on, and it did not subside. The atmosphere became antagonistic. I received several visits from the disgruntled family members, who were upset and unwilling to listen to the school's position that I presented. I had voluntarily provided information that was required as part of my job, and now I was being taken to task for that very information. Incorrect and misleading stories were circulating, as well as com-

ments about my close family members and personal events unrelated to the school. I was angry and felt alone and violated throughout this ordeal. The superintendent talked to the group, but there was little that he could do. He tried to reason with them, but they demanded that he fire me. Shortly after these incidents, I learned that the group had organized a petition against me, and I was able to obtain a copy. It called for my firing or removal from the school so that I could not continue to be a detriment to the students. It also charged that I was not willing to listen to families and that I chose to make all decisions behind closed doors. I later learned that the petition had only four signatures and that many of the community members were upset and irritated by it. The petition did not arrive at its intended destination because the dissidents had little support from the community. However, the harm had been done.

I felt betrayed when no one openly spoke against the action and supported me. Several people chose to talk to me about the events that were occurring, and although they expressed their support privately, they would not speak out publicly against this group. I felt victimized by the family, the governing body, and the institution, and shortly after the dreaded board meeting I decided to apply for an educational leave because I did not want the hostility to affect the school atmosphere that we had worked so hard to establish. Although my professional credibility was still strong, the community had allowed this family to thrust me out. Our continued progress at the school was derailed because of the crisis at hand.

In June that school year an employee from Alberta Learning investigated the special-needs situation, and I was reprimanded for not disclosing the codes to the families. How the situation was managed seemed unfair to me because a small family had been given such great power, and I was forced to sacrifice my personal connection to the school to appease this group. I am not sure of the intent of this family group, but it was evident they did not want an Aboriginal member of the community as the school administrator; the non-Aboriginal administrators before my assignment had not experienced the same treatment. It appeared to me that they had been allowed to sabotage the progress that the school had made because it would be difficult to find a non-Aboriginal person with the determination, vision, commitment, and persistence required to facilitate the much-needed change to benefit the students of our school. Alfred (1999) commented on power inequity in relationships:

Despite all the wisdom available within indigenous traditions, most Native lives continue to be lived in a world of ideas imposed on them by others. The same set of factors that creates internalized oppression, blinding people to the true source of their pain and hostility, also helps allows them to accept, and even to defend, the continuation of an unjust power relationship. (p. 70)

As Aboriginal people we still devalue ourselves and stifle our ability to validate one another, to help combat the oppression we have been experi-

encing for years. My personal journey as an Aboriginal shows that many Aboriginal people have experienced the negativity of the Ole Crab story and feel extremely oppressed.

The Crab Pail in the Frame of Neocolonialism

Nicholas (1996) noted that it is essential to understand imperialism and colonialism. It is important that we look at the big picture (the macro) before we analyze the smaller events (the micro), according to Dei (1996). Examining all the issues that Aboriginal people face today indeed reveals a grave situation as a result of the high unemployment, poverty, social problems, and injustices that Aboriginal people have experienced for generations (Government of Canada, 1992). Colonialism and its repercussions are intertwined in the daily living activities and the survival skills of a confused group of people who do not understand the cost of imperialism and what it can do to a nation of people. Memmi (1969) explained, "Oppression is like an octopus: it is hard to tell which of its arms has the tightest strangle-hold. Injustice, insults, humiliation and insecurity can be as hard to bear as hunger" (p. 19). Nicholas defined *imperialism* as "empire building," a process in which "one country extends power and domination over distant lands, peoples and resources in order to support and enrich itself" (p. 59). With regard to our culture, Aboriginal people have also become oppressed. Freire (1993) talked about the oppressor:

The same is true with respect to the individual oppressor as a person. Discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed. Rationalizing his guilt through paternalistic treatment of the oppressed, all the while holding fast in a position of dependence, will not do. (p. 31)

In the light of this knowledge, it is useful for me to analyze the Ole Crab story as a social phenomenon that is harming Aboriginal people. I will contextualize the events that have occurred on my journey in terms of how colonialism has debilitated and affected Aboriginal peoples as a group. Although we do not fully understand the repercussions of colonialism, we do understand that oppressing groups of people is unhealthy. Freire (1993) and Nicholas (1996) reported that the oppressed seek liberation by becoming similar to the oppressor. Aboriginal people have experienced a crisis of identity and the loss of a sense of belonging and the meaning of our own lives, and many have made the choice to assimilate and adopt the culture of the oppressor.

Usually the general public will respond judgmentally and accuse the colonized of creating their own dysfunctions while ignoring the fact that colonialism played a role in these situations. Aboriginal people today are feeling the effects and high costs of assimilation. Emulating the oppressor has resulted in the loss of our language and culture and the devaluing of our own humanity and culture as a consequence of continual devaluation from the oppressor. Alfred (1996) cautioned, "Today we recognize the significance and symbolic value of terminology, and the use of our

recovered languages is important not only for the purposes of communication but as a symbol of survival" (p. xxv).

Nicholas (1996) described internalized colonialism through education as the process through which colonized people themselves have been indoctrinated to believe that they are the "White Man's burden" (p. 62), usually because of Aboriginals' limited knowledge and the fact that we have not been empowered by knowledge. Mainstream society has oppressed the Aboriginal people so that even in the educational system our opportunity to gain knowledge has been limited by various hindrances and many of us have gained just enough to buy into the theories and ideals of the oppressor. In research this indoctrination or irony of colonialism to become like the oppressor is called neo-colonialism. As more Aboriginal people gain more knowledge to enable us to broaden our perspectives, we will realize the results of neocolonialism (Nicholas). In many Aboriginal communities, as pointed out by Nicholas, it is the indoctrinated "educated people themselves who make certain that their community people move towards assimilation and cooperate with the colonizers" (p. 62). Alfred (1999) contended, "the structure of colonialism (and to a certain extent the lack of education and awareness among indigenous people) allows co-opted politicians to cloud the air with misconceptions and avoid true accountability for their compromises" (pp. 100-101).

Because many Aboriginal people who have assimilated, intentionally or unintentionally, have rejected our own language and culture, we are now participating in our own colonization, and the repercussions are evident in Aboriginal communities (Nicholas, 1996). The strongest indicator of this dilemma is the frequency with which Aboriginal people reject our own people for key positions in our own communities and expect non-Aboriginal people to rescue us. Freire (1993) warned:

It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves. It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught; and the contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of the new man: neither oppressor nor oppressed, but man in the process of liberation. (p. 38)

Aboriginal people will have to wait a long time for non-Aboriginal people to rescue them from the pail. This misconception must be corrected. Aboriginal people must learn to work together to empower each other as a cultural group. As Aboriginal people we need to support each other and work from our own cultural understanding and sense of community. This has always been one of the strengths of Aboriginal people, but because we have moved more toward assimilation, we struggle to maintain these strong connections: a detriment to the well-being of our communities. When I became a school administrator, the comfort level of the community increased. Because the people felt comfortable with me, they found it easier to come to the school to discuss decisions that we had

made about their children. I saw this as positive in the beginning, but it soon became a practice that began to make me feel that I had to defend myself or validate my credibility as an administrator.

With regard to the state of the oppressed, according to Freire's (1993) pedagogy, "The oppressors do not perceive their monopoly on having more as a privilege that dehumanizes others and themselves ... Precisely because they are 'ungrateful' and 'envious' the oppressed are regarded as potential enemies who must be watched" (p. 41). This perception of the oppressors and the oppressed as Freire described it is evident in my experience with my community:

> Submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the "order" which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized. Chafing under the restrictions of this order, they often manifest a type of horizontal violence, striking out at their own comrades for the pettiest reasons. (p. 44)

In other words, people who behave in this manner cannot understand that emulating the behavior of the oppressor hurts their own people and serves the interests of the colonizer. This clearly highlights the importance of leaders being strong role models in their community. Many times Aboriginal leaders, under pressure from family groups, will cater to the community people and disempower themselves by becoming people-pleasers and perpetuating the sense of unfairness and favoritism. A strong leader must be fair and consistent, follow through on his or her own values and beliefs, establish policies and procedures that will work for the community, and follow through with these practices.

Another debilitating aspect of colonialism is the devaluing or what Freire (1993) referred to as the self-depreciation that results from how oppressors evaluate the oppressed. The oppressed look for approval and instead hear negative statements about themselves that they soon begin to believe. They often look to mainstream culture as holding all the answers and knowledge, thereby perpetuating their own oppression. Freire called the state of mind of the oppressed ambiguous, passive, and emotionally dependent: "This total emotional dependence can lead the oppressed to what Fromm (1966) called *necrophilic behavior*: the destruction of life—their own or that of their oppressed fellows" (p. 47). As we review the consequences of dominance over an oppressed group, we see the many debilitating repercussions of colonialism. Nicholas (1996) saw this as a consequence of deliberate imperialism: colonialism that is also a manifestation of racism in society today. She explained that this state of mind is viewed as an attitudinal problem of society—specifically, the colonized group—and that although it is correctable, it depends on the desire of the colonized to correct it. These are symptoms of the deeper problem of colonialism. Colonization has devastated Aboriginal people in many ways.

The Crab Pail as Internalized Racism

Dei (1996), in writing about his antiracism theory, discussed the topic of racism as stemming from colonialism. The phenomenon that I report as my journey could be categorized from Dei's perspective as internalized racism:

> An aspect of contemporary racism (internalized racism) can be described as the reproduction of the racist discourse of the colonizer by the colonized in marginalized communities. This is clearly evident in the practice of some minority groups that critique and distance themselves from other minorities using the codes of racist language. In such situations, racial and ethnic minorities may find it difficult to form alliances that entail working collectively to fight the manifestations of dominance that continually subordinate them. (p. 50)

My analysis of the specific events of my journey using Dei's (1996) antiracism theory as my second frame leads to a consideration of the micro portion of the picture. As Dei pointed out in his discussion of antiracism education, it is important to move from the macro to the micro. The macro frame of Aboriginal people's experience of colonialism has influenced my interpretation of my personal journey. Dei noted that the integration of race, class, and gender is "an activist theory and analysis that must always be consciously linked to struggles against oppression" (p. 55). In reference to my journey, I want to begin by stating that I am Aboriginal, I am a woman, and I became a principal in my own community. Dei stated, "To be a woman of racial minority background is to have even relatively less material power and privilege in a patriarchal, White-dominated society" (p. 62). My role of principal required an adjustment for the male community leaders who clearly felt more comfortable in dealing with a male administrator. They were hesitant to deal with me directly in my first year, and some of them chose to discuss issues with my male vice-principal. I made a point of asking the vice-principal not to facilitate this type of indirect communication and to ask them to talk to me directly about issues from council. According to Alfred (1999),

> One of the biggest areas of neglect in terms of responsibility concerns women. For centuries the patriarchy imposed by Western religion and political systems excluded women from decision-making. Today this is no longer necessarily the case: in most communities women do participate actively in politics. Yet their ability to achieve the kind of change they want is still limited, and the indigenous values of respect and balance in gender relations go largely unheeded. (p. 93)

This kind of paternalism is also prevalent in Aboriginal communities. Women in leadership positions have suffered and continue to suffer at the hands of male-dominated community leadership. A well-known Albertan, Thelma Chalifoux, alluded to this in a statement about Marilyn Buffalo (Armstrong, 2000).

> Senator Thelma Chalifoux is the first aboriginal and first Métis woman appointed to the Canadian Senate, and a supporter of Buffalo's. "Aboriginal men are very chauvinistic," she says. "Women have always been relegated to the backroom. Not Marilyn. She goes straight

to the front room. And if she's not allowed to sit at the table, she stands behind the table making sure the men don't leave until women's points are addressed." (p. 46)

Leaders are choosing not to deal with these types of issues. This is an example of what Dei (1996) called the intersection of race, class, and gender. Not only does the whole aspect of oppression involve Aboriginal people who are viewed as *other* and threatening, but many times this oppression is also directed at difference, including being a woman.

> Many leaders who recognize the necessity of confronting colonialism are prevented from acting on that recognition because of their situation in an unjust system. They know what's right; they have long known what's wrong as well, and what needs to be done. But they choose to suppress their knowledge and accept the dispossession and disempowerment that are part of being colonized. Wilfully ignoring what is ultimately the only resolution—to forsake good relations with the state—they join the conspiracy of silence that has perpetuated the historical injustice done to their people. (Alfred, 1999, p. 98)

In the analysis of race, class, and gender of antiracism theory (Dei, 1996), I see how these three intersect as I reflect on and come to understand my journey. The issue of class and my heightened awareness of *otherness* and blame became evident when I built a new house in the community. Because this house is somewhat larger than the other homes, those who feel that identity and power are expressed in material means are discomforted. I have heard many rude statements and judgmental comments about my salary and my home. Because I wanted to be comfortable and own a nice home, I was viewed as part of a hegemonic system. It was a no-win situation for me because I wanted to plant some roots in my community.

One way that society expresses hegemonic power is through material means, which is reflected by how much we own. Freire (1993) stated that oppressors "develop the conviction that it is possible for them to transform everything into objects of purchasing power; hence their strictly materialistic concept of existence" (p. 40). People who do not have access to these material means will position anyone who has this access as the *other* and as a part of a hegemonic system. According to Dei's (1996) theory of integrative antiracism, we move "away from establishing a hierarchy of difference and an exclusive and problematic concern with the 'other'" (p. 60). In this analysis it is important to see how race, class, and gender continue to intersect.

In Canadian society today we perpetuate the economic interests of big business by disguising it with a response that is superficial and does not address the deep issues of racism. Dei (1996) warned that the challenge of antiracism education and addressing the topic of the hegemonic interests of industrial capital is to move beyond a celebratory reaction. A reaction such as multiculturalism does not change the power relations in each circumstance. One of the key questions he asked that highlights the above situation is, "In whose interests is difference being presented and for what material purposes and consequences?" (p. 58). An example of this is how

schools address multiculturalism in the curriculum. Jasper (1998) suggested:

> That I am allowed to teach multicultural literature is, to many, giving me much more that I deserve, and "Aren't we on the cutting edge by teaching multiculturalism?" For my students to know that many people hate other races is enough for them to think they understand racism. It is a totally unrecognizable beast to believe that whole worlds of people could feel this way about them. (p. 97)

The complexity of the events and how they unfold carry with them the varying responses or positionalities of the community, as Dei (1996) called them. In my case each individual or family group took a stand according to the aspect of race, class, or gender or the intersection of all three. As the pressure from the family group escalated, varying positionalities or responses surfaced from the community people. I saw people who chose to remain silent and distant from the events, and I saw people who assured me privately of their support, but were not ready to support me publicly. Many people in the community were disappointed, but there was not enough support for anyone to step out and orally back me. As an antiracist educator, Dei recommends that we acknowledge our own positions of social privilege and power. If we understand this, then we can determine whether we are marginalizing others and maintaining privilege and power, and therefore perpetuating oppression. The other school board members were also passive, although most were uncomfortable with the dissident member's attacks. From various conversations with other Aboriginal people, I know that I am not alone in having been exposed to this type of oppression and marginalization.

The school board consisted of five men and two women, and it is unfortunate that the two women were allied against me. How the board members responded to my situation represented a form of intragroup oppression. I recognized at the time the events were occurring that the oppressed had become the oppressor. Others who had historically been oppressed were oppressing me. As Freire (1993) stated in his pedagogy, I saw the apathy and ambiguity of my own people. I believe that I am the only person who could have strongly supported a person in such a predicament, but I was not in a position to do so because I was an employee of the board. I felt that the board members themselves were a part of the oppression because they chose to ignore issues of confidentiality. The school division administration staff were somehow a part of the oppression because they passively accepted the dysfunctional dynamics. Far too often we are afraid to take risks and deal with issues as effectively as we can regardless of our positionality in the community. It seemed as if the administrative staff felt a sense of powerlessness and therefore gave in to the family group, and it was easier for them to ask me to accept an educational leave.

Dei (1996) reminded us that we must be aware of the salience and visibility of certain forms of oppression and that it is important for others to see their place in the web of oppression and recognize how the systems of oppression play off each other. I am aware that this is also happening in many other Aboriginal communities because I have been told and know of two cases of a man and a woman from surrounding northern communities who were forced to leave their communities and look for employment elsewhere because of the same type of oppression.

The other aspect of this is racialization. If groups of people have been devalued for some time, they will not appreciate or support their own members in leadership positions. I felt a sense of sabotage because it seemed that certain people were unwilling to acknowledge my leadership role and the recognition that school success would bring to my position. In my professional estimation, I believe that the students demonstrated strong academic growth that this group chose to overlook.

From an antiracism perspective, Dei (1996) advised that we address the issue of oppression from a multiplicative rather than an additive perspective because the latter does not address the complexity of experiences. As I consider my experience, the intricacy of the reactions and responses was based on both professional and personal types of oppression because of my membership in the community. People chose to reject me because of my access to power and privilege as evidenced in my salary and working conditions. As a teacher in the school, I did not pose a threat to anyone; but being an administrator changed the situation.

The distressed mother/school board member's use of power reflects what Dei (1996) identified as the political forces that are used to manipulate a language of difference to serve one's own needs. Some families interpreted the attempt to obtain additional funding for students with special needs as further marginalizing these students, whereas I saw it as a way of improving education for students and families. Dei noted that identification as a victim of oppression results in a reduced ability to see agency and power to effect change. My response was to look at the systemic underpinnings of this conflict as a way of providing information to others who may be placed in the same pail. Initially I felt as if I were a victim, but as I reviewed the incidents over and over again and talked about them with peers, I was able to see the larger picture. Oppressed people need to understand how they are co-opted, as Alfred (1999) advised: "Some actively contend with the state; others cooperate with it. These people rationalize and participate actively in their own subordination and the maintenance of the Other's superiority. They become co-opted" (p. 73).

As Aboriginal people we have to work together to help each other to escape from the pail, and if we continually drag each other down we will never get out. Dei (1996) talked about racism as an effective tool to divide

and rule peoples because it has become the means to determine power, privilege, and prestige. It is important to move ourselves away from our own selfish desires and to look forward to ensure that future generations will see us as role models who stand up for community. As I look at the totality of my human experience in this discourse, my response today is certainly quite different from my response when I was caught in the middle of it. I needed to research this issue and look at the overall picture to analyze it effectively according to antiracism activist theory.

As Dei and Calliste (2000) suggested, it is important to understand our experiences as multifaceted. My journey was complicated with intersections of race, gender, and class; and my attempt to unravel this dilemma for my audience has not been an easy task. My intent in examining this phenomenon is to ensure that all forms of oppression are addressed, and the only way to do this is through consciousness-raising. I have chosen to use the integrative antiracism approach because, like Dei (1996), I believe that race is the central issue and the first point of entry for oppression in this case. Colonialism devalues and undermines the oppressed, and the consequence of this action is what we call racism (Nicholas, 1996). When we look at the salience of race from positions of power, we see that racism certainly is a result of the desire to colonize and dominate a group of people.

The topic of globalization and how we address issues of inequality will continue to broaden the issues of dominance and subordination. Dei and Calliste (2000) commented that certain groups will continue to be privileged, and globalization will not change this. Dei (1996) saw globalization as a new justification for asserting political and economic dominance over Indigenous and colonized peoples. As stated above, Aboriginal people suffer from a lack of knowledge: "Globalization has resulted in a crisis of knowledge about human society, a crisis manifested in the contradictions and tensions of a competitive knowledge economy, the internationalization of labour and the concomitant struggles over power sharing among social groups" (p. 68). I know that more knowledge leads to more power. Knowledge is power, and power is knowledge. Foucault (as cited in Rabinow, 1984) contended, "So long as the posing of the question of power was kept subordinate to the economic instance and the system of interests which this served, there was a tendency to regard these problems as of small importance" (p. 58). Dominant society does not readily recognize alternative forms of knowing; therefore, its members hold the ultimate power if theirs is the only knowledge that is being validated.

The Use of Antiracism Theory to Combat the Ole Crab Pail

How do we work toward a more just and caring society and address diverse forms of oppression? I believe that consciousness-raising is truly important and is a strong tool because, according to Alfred (1999), the

people who more readily have an effect on future generations are educators.

The way to overcome the bonds, external and internal, that continue to hold indigenous people down is to awaken people's minds to their situation. In the mainstream society, it is the ignorance, prejudice, and fear of the general population that allows the state to maintain its colonial dominion over indigenous peoples. In Native communities, it is the people's lack of understanding of political reality and blindness to the roots of their pain that keep them passively suffering. (p. 132)

In other words, education and consciousness-raising will help to promote change. As stated above, the crisis of the lack of knowledge of the Aboriginal community hurts the people. Consciousness-raising will spread information and alert the people to the need to begin asking questions and looking for answers.

Dei (1996) identified six interrelated key issues underlying integrative antiracism studies that help us to become activists in the fight against racism. First, he discussed the importance of understanding the process of articulating social difference. He stressed that it is crucial to understand our individual and collective identities and to be able to make the connections. We may have multiple identities and be recognized as such by others, but our collective identity will also influence how people respond to us. I understand this because although I was a school administrator, the community people seemed to see me first as an Aboriginal woman, and my collective identity as an Aboriginal woman did not empower me in this situation. It is important to consider how to use the collective identity to effect positive change.

The second related issue is the importance of personal experiential knowledge and how we use this knowledge. Dei noted that we must not present ourselves as people who know it all, which thus projects the image that we cannot be questioned. Our own experiences are not necessarily generalizable, although there will be some commonalities collectively. Our experiences will bring with them our own interpretations. It is important to dialogue and develop strong, healthy relationships with various stakeholders in the community and to share personal experiential knowledge that is accepted and validated by these groups.

The third issue is how differential power and privilege work in society. Power relations, shifts in power, and power-sharing are all important concepts to understand, especially for those in leadership positions. Although I am a part of the oppressed group, in my subject position as a school principal I held some power. Alfred (1999) affirmed,

Internally, indigenous communities must recover from the notions of power that led to the formation of respectful regimes of mutual coexistence. Along with new leaders, a new leadership ethos grounded in tradition must be put in place, one that promotes accountability to the people through the revival of traditional decision-making processes. (p. 144)

Validation is crucial to people who have been oppressed. One of my roles as school principal, which I regrettably neglected, was to validate those who shared my vision and commitment to the school. Validation would have encouraged them to stand up and support my efforts to effect change. If I had taken the time to validate them, they in turn would have validated me. As we move to varying degrees of assimilation, we are compelled to use the tools of dominant society as tools for validation, especially education. We are struggling with our own validation tools such as the wisdom of Elders, which is why the Elders' role is not viewed as critical in decision-making processes in Aboriginal communities as it once was.

Power sharing and accountability were traditionally strong in Aboriginal communities, and we need to review what made our governing systems more effective than they are now. We need to assess how this worked and whether some of this power-sharing can be brought back into our communities. As Aboriginal people we need to look at a governing system that will reflect our culture and language. We need to ensure that we integrate our values and beliefs into our governing system so that the decisions that we make are applicable and appropriate for Aboriginal people.

The fourth issue is the salience of race. Integrative-antiracism studies acknowledge that the point of entry for oppression is race, and to understand this is to recognize that concerns about race are integrated into other forms of oppression. The decision to make race an important component of antiracism studies is a political decision. The idea that we are all the same does not work when in reality society acknowledges differences and perpetuates subtle undervaluing and discrimination, which becomes more harmful than acknowledging publicly that one is different.

The fifth issue is antiracism in the global, political, and economic issues. We must view social oppression as a product of the political, capitalist arena and an aspect of domination. Globalization can be defined as consumptive commercial mentality, as coined by Alfred (1999), that is shaped by state corporatism and is damaging to both the earth and human relationships around the world. Globalization involves exploring a process to increase the power of dominant society and its power over Indigenous and colonized peoples.

The sixth point is how educators, students, and community workers can engage in active social transformation through antiracism education. For social transformation to occur, the material condition of peoples must be taken into consideration. Alfred (1999) stated that money itself does not solve the problems of Aboriginal people, but that it is through the process of building economic and trade relationships with others that we can begin to strengthen and sustain our communities. People will have to come together collectively, and for this to happen we have to acknowledge

the need for healing and be open to dialogue on antiracism and the identity of community. Alfred acknowledged:

One of the most overused words these days is "healing." I don't like using it all. But it is true that some healing has to take place before you can exercise self-determination. You have to have strong families before you can have strong communities, before you can have a strong nation. (p. 108)

For healing to take place, we have to learn to validate our own language and culture to help with our own identity-building. If as Aboriginal people we continue to push away our own language and culture, then we are somehow rejecting ourselves, and this will inhibit healing. If we choose to ignore our collective identity as Aboriginal people, then we will be rejecting the politics of identity and difference. Dei (1996) cautioned that we must be sure not to get caught up in what Mohanty (1990) observed as the move to reformulate race in terms of individual difference rather than by attending to the politics of difference collectively. For social transformation to occur, Aboriginal people must work together collectively to strengthen our differences so that they work for us rather than against us. We will have to help each other out of the pail, because if we wait, then we will continue to be disempowered. We must also work toward an understanding of the history of colonialism and recolonization so that as Aboriginal people we can produce valid knowledge for ourselves. As Freire (1993) stated, the oppressor will not jump up to free the oppressed. As Aboriginal people we have to work toward validating, supporting, and empowering each other as peoples of Canada.

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