Neo-Liberal Education, Indigenizing Universities?

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The focus of this article is to explore the limits of indigenizing the academy within the current context of university restructuring. Approaching the Indigenization of academia in the broader context of neo-liberalism is useful for several reasons: (1) to examine the ways in which educational reforms are being shaped and imagined by competing visions of what constitutes knowledge; (2) to explore how universities are not only responding to neo-liberal logics but also active participants in producing such logics; and (3) to analyze the impact that neo-liberalism has on resurgent knowledge. The article argues that the seemingly disparate pedagogical discourses that have been circulating in recent years in many universities do not indicate incoherence. Restructuring of education, internationalization, the focus on community, and Indigenization, among others, are part of new processes of subjectivization that are inseparable from neo-liberalism. Moving beyond the inevitability of neo-liberal governance and the flattening of difference involves making visible how discourses naturalize certain solutions and ideas about what is (im)possible.

Introduction

The focus of this article is on the neo-liberal processes that are reconfiguring higher education. More than a decade ago, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1996) noted that knowledge, its production, distribution, and consumption were central to the global economy of rich countries. Scholars have noted the dramatic changes transforming universities, involving, among other things, technology innovation, internationalization, competition, efficiency-oriented measurement, and dissemination of ideas. Canada has not been immune to this development. In this changing scenario, political engagement, critical knowledge, and practices are undervalued as serious academic activities and students are encouraged to acquire skills required in the current labour market. While these interventions are restructuring higher education, universities, we are told, are being Indigenized. Indigenous programs and degrees have been created and strategies to attract and retain Indigenous students and faculty have been implemented. Is this a contradiction?

In this article, I explore the limits of the Indigenization of the academy within the current context of university restructuring. Approaching the Indigenization of academia in the broader context of neo-liberalism is useful for the following reasons: (1) to examine the ways in which educational reforms are being shaped and imagined by competing visions of what con-

stitutes knowledge; (2) to explore how universities are not only responding to neo-liberal logics but are also actively producing them; and (3) to analyze the impact that neo-liberalism has on resurgent knowledge. I argue that the seemingly disparate pedagogical discourses that have been circulating in recent years in many universities do not indicate incoherence. Restructuring of education, internationalization, the focus on community, and Indigenization, among others, are part of new processes of subjectivization that are inseparable from neo-liberalism. As noted by Mohanty (2013), in this context, radical knowledge can be domesticated and circulated for elitist consumption.

This article is divided into four sections. First, I examine neo-liberalism as a governance project shaping the knowledge economy. Second, I discuss the configuration of entrepreneurial education as a process that has important implications for the redefinition of the student body and of what constitutes knowledge. Third, I analyze the limits of institutional-driven Indigenization processes as the social significance of colonialism, racism, and gender inequities are removed from the public space. Finally, I offer some thoughts about our responsibilities as educators in this new scenario.

Knowledge Under Neo-Liberalism

Over the past decades, neo-liberalism has been a hegemonic force in most of the world. Neo-liberalism has usually been treated exclusively as an economic project involving deregulation, reregulation, privatization, individualization, and transformation of the state/citizens relationship. Critical human geographers have problematized this uniform understanding of neo-liberalism noting that, while hegemonic, it is not typical everywhere. Rather, neo-liberalism is an uneven and contradictory project (Larner, 2003). It also has been argued that, while certainly local contexts determine specific outcomes, it is important not to lose sight of the commonalities within this project's apparent differences (Howitt, 2009; Jessop, 2002; Peck, 2004; Perrault & Martin, 2005).

Moreover, by focusing on the nexus between local and global, it is possible to explore what role the state and other public institutions play as facilitators of economic globalization by removing barriers so that the market can drive the economy (Kwak, 2013). For example, the restructuring of universities has not only resulted from the logics of neo-liberal globalization; higher education institutions themselves have been actively involved in shaping this process. Feminist geographers have noted that the distinction between the local as "being here" and the global as "being out there" has served to conceal universities' complicity in the production of the knowledge economy (Matus & Talburt, 2009, pp. 515-516). Often, univer-

sities define knowledge in terms of competences, skills, research partnerships with industries, and the need to teach courses that focus on skills required in the job market. As it will be shown, these ideas become crucial to the "survival" of the university, as "engines" in and mirrors of the global knowledge economy (Matus & Talburt, 2009, p. 517).

As a form of governance, neo-liberalism involves a set of practices, ways of knowing, and inhabiting the world that emphasize the market, individual rationality, and the responsibility of entrepreneurial subjects (Hale, 2002). The concept of governance seeks to capture how economic and societal issues are governed by networked interactions among states and non-governmental organizations (Jessop, 2002). Simons and Masschelein (2008) point out that, as a specific governance regime, neo-liberalism links the economization of the social and the strategies aimed at producing the anticipated ethics through which people produce their subjectivities. Through this process, people's subjectivities are reconfigured as productive, economic entrepreneurs managing their own lives (Kaščák & Pupala, 2011, p. 152).

As a type of "capital," knowledge has been modeled by international financial agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 17). Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist of the World Bank, suggested that the new global knowledge economy can be considered a form of global public good that requires the rethinking of the ways in which we understand the economy (Stiglitz, 1999). In this new scenario, knowledge is considered a "commodity defined in terms of its usability, applicability and anticipated expectations" (as quoted by Liessmann, 2009, p. 98 in Kaščák & Pupala, 2011, p. 153). Because knowledge is the fastest growing form of capital, the transformation of knowledge production and education itself are imperative for the development of key competencies required by the world economy. In 1998, Johnstone stated that university restructuring involves:

> either fewer/ or different faculty, professional staff, and support workers. This means lay-offs, forced early retirements, or major retraining and reassignment, as in: the closure of inefficient, or ineffective institutions; the merger of quality institutions that merely lack the critical mass of operations to make them cost-effective; and the radical alteration of the mission and production function of an institution—which means radically altering who the faculty are, how they behave, the way they are organized, and the way they work and are compensated. (Johnstone, 1998, p. 4)

Universities have been experiencing some of these changes in some form or another. According to the World Bank, the restructuring of higher education involves cutting back government funding to higher education in order to "promote greater equity" among people (1998, p. 4). However, the

World Bank is not very clear regarding what equity means, let alone what the connection between equity and government's funding reduction is. So, we may ask, equity for whom? Although, in Canada, universities are still publicly funded, the federal government has significantly reduced its subsidies, forcing institutions to seek funding from external sources and increase tuition fees. Two trends have developed since the 1990s. The first has been the tightening of control of expenses at the provincial level and local discretionary taxation/spending. The second has been internationalization. Let us review these trends.

Federal funding had declined more than 20 per cent in 1999 and 12 per cent in 2000 respectively (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2000; UNESCO, 2006). In 2005, under pressure from provinces and activists, Canada's Liberal minority government negotiated a deal with the New Democratic Party to increase transfers for post-secondary education and help provinces reduce tuition fees. However, when the Harper government came to power in 2006, it reneged the previous government's commitments (Canadian Federation of Students, 2013). According to the Canadian Federation of Students (2013), in the last decade, operating revenues paying for the day-to-day operation of universities and colleges have been reduced by 50 per cent, while large amounts of funds have been assigned to infrastructure projects, which can be shown as political successes. The largest budget for such projects was allocated in 2009, with a $2 billion stimulus assigned to research infrastructure for the future. Nonetheless, this amount only covered 50 per cent of the cost of any project, requiring institutions to find additional funds to conclude their projects (Canadian Federation of Students,2013).

Made logical by the inevitability of neo-liberal governance, the reduction of government funding has driven universities to explore different sources of revenue (Hunter, 2013; Madgett, 2008). The strategies followed by universities have been similar to what the World Bank has recommended for restructuring higher education in the Global South (the developing world of the Southern Hemisphere), which have involved privatization, the reduction of government funding for public institutions, merging of programs, and increased class size (Collins & Rhoads, 2010; Frake-Mistak, 2014). Importantly, the World Bank has emphasized strengthening the private sector as part of this process (Collins & Rhoads, 2010, p. 190). Researchers have been pressured to partner with industry in applying for grants and to focus their research on usable products instead of on research for the sake of knowledge. In doing so, researchers have become entrepreneurs seeking to create a portfolio that attracts investment (Chattopadhyay, 2012; Dahlstedt & Tesfahuney, 2010) and produce knowl-

edge that is conceived of in terms of its value use. Universities have also created different categories of instructors, including part-time and term instructors, and eliminated programs in their efforts to save money (Puplampu, 2004).

At the same time, new regulatory frameworks are being laid out to make universities accountable for the funding they receive from government and research agencies. Financing is becoming more and more dependent upon performance evaluation, and faculties and departments are being pressured to compete for funding, grants, and international students. In this context, the economic exchange between the learner and the institution becomes the defining relationship between the service provider and the customer (Newson, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This relationship has redefined the interactions between students and faculty, and the syllabus has become a contract that defines the exact materials, requirements, and expectations of both students and faculty members (Turner, 2008).

The second trend noted is internationalization. As a reaction to the imperatives of the global economy, internationalization of higher education has focused on mobility of people, exchange of ideas, and the convergence of institutional practices and policies. With a singular reading of the global economy, universities from rich countries have transformed themselves as ideal players, according to the imperatives of the international knowledge economy. In 2007, the federal government announced a science and technology strategy whose purpose was "to make Canada a global leader through world class research" (Coleman & Kamboureli, 2011, p.7). In today's global world, competition is essential, and universities must distinguish themselves in the marketplace according to a ranking system and by offering sellable programs and degrees to student-clients. In Canada, the selling of education to overseas clients has been justified on the grounds of the expansion of Asian demand (Kwak, 2013). According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, in 2010 international students spent approximately $8 billion (Canadian) on tuition, accommodation, and other spending (Kwak, 2013, p. 1861). Provincial governments have played an active role in promoting the education industry abroad and this trend has not been separated from immigration policies, which focus on social capital and business skills.

Internationalization has also involved the exchange of ideas and convergence of policies among universities. As part of this strategy, international research networks focusing on the social problems of our times are actively being pursued and funded. Neuroscience, aging population, applied research, climate change, and international business management, among others, are considered of global relevancy to the

extent that such projects can demonstrate their impact on policy decisions or can produce predetermined results supporting specific actions (Collins & Rhoads, 2010, p. 190).

Because the emphasis is on marketable knowledge and technology, the arts and humanities have been particularly affected. While the social sciences have been identified for their potential to empower local or regional communities (Matus & Talburt, 2009), social researchers have been encouraged to "share the entrepreneurial and commercial value of disciplines that are better equipped to contribute to problem driven research" (Coleman & Kamboureli, 2011, pp. 6-7). As Mohanty (2013) notes, such knowledge projects are delinked from their historical and local anchors, and reattached to a global market, flattening their difference and specificity; more concerning is the fact that neo-liberalism has transformed the material conditions in such a way that the possibilities for radical critique and insurgent knowledge are limited.

Certainly the pace of such transformations varies. Such variation is partly related to the fact that there are many types of institutional programs offered by universities, colleges, technical, vocational, and continuing education institutes, and that Canada lacks a national system of post-secondary education. While large research-oriented institutions have taken the lead in internationalization, the breadth and depth of changes implemented by smaller universities, to attract private funding and partner with industry, has been significant (Brownlee, 2014, p. 343). Administrators and boards often justify these changes as defense mechanisms, aimed at making universities more efficient, accountable, and qualified for current global economic challenges. This rhetoric represents universities as having no choice but to engage in such changes. However, the representation of this neo-liberal transformation as inevitable and neutral legitimizes certain institutional projects. Although this approach is presented as protecting the institution's position in the global economy, "it promotes an understanding of knowledge as a depoliticized resource, a commodity that can be bought" with the purpose of investing in oneself (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 3).

Questions have been raised as to whether or not higher education institutions have ever been neutral sites of knowledge production. Universities present themselves as neutral places, offering the necessary skills and knowledge to face the challenges of a rapidly changing global economy. In doing so, these institutions are producers of such an economy. In an academic climate where our concerns are to increase our enrollment numbers in our programs and to attract international students and outside funding, how can we not be complacent with easy invitations to Indigenize the academy? I will return to this question later.

Lifelong Learning and Entrepreneurial Education

As a governance project, neo-liberalism has had the ability to co-opt the political projects of marginalized groups (Larner, 2003). In Canada, both the public sector and marginalized citizens have been redefined as a result of cuts in public spending. In the 1990s, the federal government seriously reduced transfer payments to provinces, resulting in the need to restructure provincial services and offloading of responsibility to community groups, public-private partners, and municipalities. Through funding allocations, governments have driven certain claimants to conform to mainstream terms and to co-opt their demands. Carter (2009) notes, for example, that neo-liberalism has co-opted learner-centred pedagogies and redirected them at capital accumulation. The notion of lifelong learning (Rubenson, 2008), concerned primarily with adult education, has been brought into the changing environment of education and is now understood in terms of entrepreneurship. If subjects "are reconfigured as economic entrepreneurs, universities are transformed into institutions that are able to produce such subjects" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248; Kaščák & Pupala, 2011, p. 150).

Lifelong learning has been advanced to respond to the requirements of the market and changes in technology where skills rapidly depreciate. Thus, the argument is that, by constantly learning, individuals can prosper and remain competitive in the world economy. A lifelong learner, in this context, is an individual who is active and can learn apart from formal instruction and institutions. The entrepreneurial lifelong learner is an autonomous, flexible, and adaptable person, who is continuously investing in and upgrading their skills so that they can be productive. Although lifelong learning was originally aimed at adult education and preparing adaptable workers for the changing economy, this concept now shapes all levels of education (starting with early childhood education), the goal of education, and the content of education itself. Lifelong learning has given universities a window of opportunity to create new programs, summer schools, and open and online courses outside campuses, thus reshaping the student body.

In the case of Indigenous peoples, the uneven process of institutionalizing greater participation in education evolved with neo-liberalism. In the 1970s, Indigenous peoples re-emerged as political subjects demanding recognition of their rights. Since education had been a key platform for assimilation, Indigenous leaders demanded its control (Mills & McCreary, 2013). The government responded by transferring some administrative control for elementary and secondary education to Indigenous communi-

ties and, later, by providing funding for post-secondary education for eligible First Nations and Inuit students. In the 1980s, a program was created for Indigenous learners to upgrade their qualifications so as to be admitted to post-secondary education. The program was framed in terms of enabling Indigenous students to contribute to the economy and to live "productive, happy lives" (Mulroney, 1985). While the government provided a degree of autonomy and devolution of education, federal and provincial control over the terms of spending continued. After the amendment of the *Indian Act* in 1985 to reinstate First Nations women who had lost their status due to the discriminatory provisions of this legislation, the Post-Secondary Educational Assistance Program was replaced with the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) in 1989. The new program restricted annual funding and eliminated "many categories of eligible expenses such as daycare, specifically affecting potential female students" (Mills & McCreary, 2013, p. 5). The federal government continued to exert its policy influence on early childhood education, which still affected many post-secondary Aboriginal students.

The Aboriginal Head Start Program (AHSP) was first implemented in urban and northern Canadian communities in 1995 and was later expanded to include First Nations on reserve. The program targeted children and youth, and its main goal was to build a positive identity and to empower parents and communities to foster the growth of every child in order to achieve positive outcomes (Holland Stairs & Bernhard, 2002). I have noted elsewhere that the assumption behind this program was that abilities, intelligence, wisdom, good care, and motherhood were universally defined across cultures. Although the report *Liberating our Children, Liberating our Nations* emphasized the need for a culturally appropriate, holistic approach that connects self-determination, education, and child welfare, some components of the AHSP program targeted Aboriginal women's parenting skills, such as those involving first aid, breastfeeding, prenatal care, and early childhood development and nutrition. By stereotyping Indigenous people, specifically women, it was possible to shift "problems" back onto the Indigenous subject's lifestyle and away from the racialized gendered structures, processes, and relations of power (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2009).

Moreover, while Indigenous control over post-secondary education may be seen as a radical shift from colonialism, the emphasis on instrumental approaches centred on developing learners' skills to meet the demands of the labour market shows some continuity (Kuokkanen, 2007). "Residential schools implemented vocational training to both assimilate youth" and insert them into the economy (Mills & McCreary, 2013, p. 8).

Knowledge production, historically, has been at the heart of the colonial process and education has played a central role in the social reproduction of the labour force and the legitimation of the social order.

To be clear, this is not to say that Indigenous peoples have passively accepted this understanding of education. On the contrary, they continue to challenge, contest, and negotiate the configuration of higher education (Battiste, 2002; Kuokkanen, 2007; Parent, 2014). These efforts have produced some achievements. However, Indigenous students continue to face multiple and conflicting messages about Indigenous peoples within university classrooms and society at large. Claims such as Indigenous peoples are located on reserves and away from the city, contemporary Indigenous people are less Indigenous than older generations, and colonialism is a past event, are all expressions of contemporary desires to erase the colonial situation. In accessing higher education, Indigenous students see the potential to use Western knowledge to pursue self-determination in their own terms.

Indigenizing Academia: Dancing with Neo-Liberalism?

The seemingly disparate pedagogical discourses that have been circulating in recent years in many universities do not indicate incoherence. As stated earlier in this article, the restructuring of education, the focus on community and lifelong learning, internationalization, and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, among other initiatives, are part of new processes of neo-liberal subjectivization. In recent years, funding to implement plans to recruit and retain Indigenous students has been available, albeit limited. In 2004, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) defined three key priorities for the coming years: Aboriginal education, literacy, and post-secondary capacity (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2004). This entity also outlined action plans for joint activities that would involve the federal government and other stakeholders. In *Learn Canada 2020*, CMEC affirmed its commitment to improve outcomes for Indigenous students, and identified gaps in academic achievement and graduation rates. Similarly, the *Strengthening Aboriginal Success—Summary Report* of 2009 noted that programs are needed for student retention and support to help Indigenous learners overcome challenges. This report identified important pillars in post-secondary education, including culturally sensitive curricula, recognition of Indigenous knowledge, and mentors and Indigenous languages that reflect local needs.

As noted earlier, provinces and territories have been implementing changes that reflect these concerns in revised curriculum and teaching practices to different degrees. Universities have implemented programs and strategic plans aimed at Indigenization. Indigenous studies courses and

programs have been created and some support mechanisms for Indigenous students have been put in place. From the CMEC's priorities, universities have maintained that recruitment, retention, and education of Indigenous learners are central to these plans. Indigenous people also have assumed greater roles in some university governance structures, and the number of Indigenous scholars and staff hired at these institutions has slightly increased. The process of indigenizing universities also has been expressed in the creation of new programs and contents targeting the technical needs of Indigenous communities. In addition, new positions, such as Indigenous elders and writers-in-residence, have been created. In doing so, universities have relied heavily on Indigenous students' and faculty's work to support these new initiatives because of the minimal funding involved.

Although these changes are welcomed, they are limited in the integration of Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum and in self-determination being understood as the right of Indigenous peoples to determine their social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being as nations/peoples without state interference. Institutions have marketed their emphasis on diversity but they have not challenged their own structural frameworks. As sites of hegemonic knowledge production, universities are active participants in the knowledge economy and in maintaining the social order. This means that, although cultural difference is recognized and certain compensatory measures for *disadvantaged* social groups are implemented, these changes are not in opposition to neo-liberalism but, rather, integral to it. Through the linking of Indigeneity, equity, and the restructuring of education, neo-liberalism has shaped policies and forms of recognition that are mediated by international financial institutions. Indigenization in this context of restructuring has meant that Indigenous students are encouraged to *adapt* and to *catch up* with the university's culture. As Kuokkanen (2008) has argued, this implicitly means that Indigenous people are in "disadvantage" and in need of intervention to be like somebody else. The targeting of a specific group of people who are considered to be in disadvantage justifies solutions in other areas, including health, incarceration, and training. However, the creation and perpetuation of such disparities are not linked to colonialism. From this point of view, neo-liberal governance constructs a public domain in which power and oppression do not exist and where the market democratizes opportunities that individuals need to seize.

Because some of the strategies to change universities, such as Indigenous content and mentoring, are now "instructors' responsibilities, they are facing increasing workloads" (Mills & McCreary, 2013, p. 2). Moreover, although universities are concerned with Indigenization, classrooms are

often made up of a majority of white, middle class students and an increasing number of international students who may not be motivated to learn about Indigenous peoples' history and knowledge. Moreover, widely disseminated discourses about multiculturalism and internationalization constitute powerful narratives that tend to erase Indigenous peoples and flatten difference. Such narratives strive to maintain some form of neutrality and equality, by which each individual is supposed to have the same opportunities and resources to succeed.

Teaching in these diverse classrooms represents a number of challenges. As an Indigenous scholar, I see a range of tensions that complicates the Indigenization of classrooms. These tensions have to do with the legitimacy of hegemonic knowledge and an environment conducive of political disengagement. Questions regarding colonialism and oppression as collective, systemic processes are not always being heard because such experiences are now individualized. Under neo-liberalism, issues of "social oppression and justice have been privatized by removing their social significance from the public sphere" (Mohanty, 2013, p. 971).

If we think of universities as social spaces actively participating in the process of knowledge production (Lefebvre, 2000), they have been implicated in the reproduction of hegemonic narratives that have erased and silenced the existence of Indigenous peoples and epistemologies. Universities are also a representation of the society at large. The political disengagement promoted under the restructuring of universities means the perpetuation of the social order, indeed. This situation reveals how *indigenizing academia* has become a benign form of representation of difference that is delinked from corresponding structural transformation. In the same way that neo-liberal governance produces generic universities, these are also producing generic subjects by dismantling the anchors of radical knowledge as constitutive of possibilities for other practices and politics. It is the flattening of difference and history that should be of interest to all of us who wonder how we can envision a type of pedagogy that includes the classroom and considers social transformation. I think these are some of the questions that we seriously need to consider.

Imagining an Indigenous Higher Education that Challenges Neo-Liberalism?

Critical Indigenous scholars have argued that the decolonization of education requires a fundamental shift in state institutions to eliminate systemic racism, re-centre Indigenous thought, and reaffirm Indigenous citizenship (Battiste, 2002; Kuokkanen, 2007; Parent, 2014). How this can be accomplished, however, continues to be greatly debated. While some

First Nations leaders have adopted gradual reforms with the aim of attaining larger changes over time, others have criticized this approach. Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2010), for example, maintains that "First Nations often recreate colonial power relations and reinforce the authority of the colonizing government when they orient their political struggles around obtaining greater recognition from state institutions" (p. 83). This situation is particularly clear under neo-liberalism. As noted earlier, the type of difference that is recognized under this form of governance is grounded on meanings that are mediated by the market, creating clear limits to what constitutes *acceptable* difference. While under the restructuring of the university Indigenization has produced certain changes, these essentially are about helping Indigenous students adapt to the academic environment as would be for any other student. Moving beyond this flattening of difference and the inevitability of neo-liberal governance involves making visible how discourses naturalize certain solutions and ideas about what is (im)possible.

According to Kuokkanen (2008), as an institution the academy has supported and reproduced systems of knowledge that rarely include Indigenous worldviews. From her point of view, a shift is needed to frame education and knowledge as a "gift," rather than as service or a form of capital that is conducive of capital accumulation (Kuokkanen, 2008). Moreover, Kuokkanen (2008) continues, the notion of the *gift* foregrounds a new relationship that is characterized by reciprocity and hospitality in which giving unfolds, not only between human beings, but also between the human and the natural worlds. As it is, the academy operates as if there is no other *epistemes* or lenses through which we can perceive the world. The "concept of episteme focuses not only on the nature of knowledge, but also includes ontology, methodologies, worldviews, and ethics" (Kuokkanen, 2008, p. 65). By undermining other alternatives, universities limit what counts as knowledge. From Kuokkanen's (2008) perspective, the logic of the gift could be used to model a different type of reciprocal knowledge exchange that moves away from *epistemic ignorance*. However, she acknowledges that universities are not ready to receive the gift of Indigenous knowledge.

Building on Kuokkanen's (2008) understanding of gift paradigm, I attempt to focus on our responsibility as educators. A central component of Indigenous reciprocal relationships is responsibility, which drives us to fulfill our obligations. Reciprocity is not possible without responsibility. As educators, I believe we have a responsibility, although I acknowledge it may not be the same for everyone. As a Binizá or Zapotec scholar, a visitor from the Global South teaching at a Canadian university, I have a respon-

sibility not to perpetuate the status quo and to provide students with a critical understanding of history and politics—an understanding that excavates what the discipline of political science has buried under metanarratives of Canada as a country that sprung from nowhere. As a discipline instrumental to colonialism, political science has, until relatively recently, remained silent about the Indigenous peoples of these lands, their laws, and unique histories. Indigenous peoples have seldom been considered political subjects and, when they have been taken into account, it has been to the extent that these peoples are able to speak the language intelligible to power. As an activist in the classroom, I insist on teaching politics not as a subject that started with Confederation, and colonialism not as an event, but as an ongoing process. In this sense, I see activism in the classroom as an active choice to disrupt colonial knowledge production and neo-liberal assumptions. This is not only about adding Indigenous content into my course outlines.

If neo-liberalism has had the effect of creating linear, naturalized ideas of global processes and flattening the specificity of subjects, as instructors we require what Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2011) calls "insurgent education" which entails three strategies: (1) centring Indigenous struggles against colonialism not as a phenomenon that occurs in a faraway place but right here; (2) centring Indigenous peoples' relationships to land and territory both in formal and informal settings; and (3) centring accountability and action to counter colonialism. In my view, these strategies are grounded in responsibility. Fulfilling this responsibility is never easy.

As someone who teaches both in political science and Native studies, I am aware of students' backgrounds and the knowledge they bring into the classroom. Students' assumptions and concerns are shaped by experiences of inequalities based on race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, and so forth. Racism, misinformation, privileges, and oppression influence students' constellation of experiences. I believe that the three insurgent education strategies should not be confined to Indigenous studies. These are perhaps more necessary among non-Indigenous students who are seldom exposed to different histories, knowledge, and ways of inhabiting the world. As centres of hegemonic knowledge production, universities perpetuate settler denial and the depolitization of colonialism under the banner of accommodating certain Indigenous cultural practices and content. If Indigenous knowledge, methodologies, and histories are not rooted in decolonization, then they can be co-opted into the broader structures of the settler academy. Choosing to do this is a personal commitment with a transformative project.

Transformation can only occur when we question the accepted wisdom that prevails among some scholars and students that are part of Canadian universities. Challenging hegemonic knowledge and the status quo is not new. It has been part of the human experience. What is new in the current environment is that universities are moving towards the transformation of the Arts and Humanities as motors that can foster social and political changes that can contribute to reimagine both local and global communities. When we structure our courses and choose our pedagogies we make not only academic but also political choices. Responsibility as action assumes that life experiences are pedagogical. Radical education assumes that knowledge is constructed both within and outside the classroom and that students can think about other views in a less resolved way.

Centring Indigenous histories and politics, however, is not about authenticating or separating the Indigenous (Grande, 2011) by appealing to notions of "intellectual sovereignty" and resistance to the Western (Rigney, 2001). As Maldonado-Torres (2012) contends, for "a consistent decolonization of human reality ... [o]ne must build new concepts and be willing to revise critically all received theories and ideas" (p. 4). Knowledge needs to be historicized and the legacy of colonialism both in Canada and around the world centred. By telling other narratives, Indigenous intellectuals and activists can contribute to build awareness of diverse places, histories, and perspectives. Moreover, we can contribute to unsettle settled understandings of the history of Canada and Turtle Island.

To be clear, decolonization is not about addressing a past harm. It is about envisioning social transformation. It is about reclaiming Indigenous peoples' places, histories, memories, dislocations, and gendered meanings of dispossession to create self-determined jurisdictions. Centring Indigenous self-determination disrupts complacent narratives that focus on the "we are luckier here than elsewhere" or "we are more Indigenous than others." In recognizing my location as an Indigenous academic, I emphasize land and put decolonization struggles into perspective. As colonialism unfolded unevenly in different places, some communities have been removed from their lands and others have lost their languages. And yet, others live in cities far away from and yet at home. By emphasizing this diversity, Indigeneity becomes not only about those living in "proper" places, but also about those who travel the land and those who have been displaced from places (Appadurai, 1988, p. 39). Interconnectedness across difference and space, between the human and the non-human world, tell stories of Indigenous peoples travelling the land and navigating waters as a continuum instead of as an ontological separation. These interconnec-

tions are central to Indigenous knowledge systems and methodologies that can distort hegemonic knowledge. The diversity of Indigenous traditions of knowledge invites interconnections among Indigenous peoples and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the struggle to disrupt colonialism (Morgensen, 2012, p. 806).

While an improved context for Indigenous people within universities is certainly welcome, it is also important to provide a range of politically, intellectually, and practical courses meant to serve the needs of Indigenous people and their communities. By engaging with self-determination and different experiences, a critical education can deepen students' consciousness and question hegemonic knowledge and assumptions that deny the lack of alternatives (Canaan, 2012). Sites of contradiction can trigger distortions that neoliberal fatalisms seem to resolve by closing other possibilities and providing an entry point for understanding other ways of being and knowing the world. As expressed by de Sousa Santos, Ariscado-Nunes, and Meneses (2008), social transformation cannot be achieved without cognitive justice. From this perspective, indigenizing the academy means that we work to transform universities into places that are open to the diversity of knowledge systems and that "we decolonize knowledge" itself (de Sousa Santos, Arriscado-Nunes, & Meneses, 2008, p. xxi).

Note

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