Decolonization Through Harmonization

Catherine F. Sewell
University of Alberta

> There are perceptions about Native people. Perceptions are neither right nor wrong. But we have the responsibility—with dignity, with character, and with pride—to address perceptions on our terms. (Olympic Gold Medalist Billy Mills, 1997)

Part of my terms for addressing the discussion of stereotypes of Native people in an academic milieu is to make a concerted effort to write in the first person.[1] This is following the path broken by Native academics such as LaRocque (Perreault & Vance, 1990), who writes:

> Long-standing conventions hold that objectivity must necessarily entail the separation of the "word" from the "self." As a scholar, I am expected to remain aloof from my words; I am expected to not speak in my own voice. But I am a Native woman writer/scholar engaged in this exciting evolution/revolution of Native thought and action ... So, as an integrated person, I choose to use my own voice whether I am writing history or whether I am writing poetry. I may not always speak in my own voice, but when I do I experience no disconnection between my "self" and my footnotes.

As a member of the Aboriginal women's vocal ensemble *Asani,* I frequently engage in conversations with audience members, event organizers, media personnel, and members of the general public. Although the comments I receive are extremely favorable and complimentary in general, specific comments have been made to me and our group members that indicate that stereotypical perceptions about Aboriginal people pervade the consciousness of non-Native people both at home and abroad. Some of these statements are humorous, some of them heartbreaking. Embedded in each of these statements is a perception about Native peoples. The members of *Asani* address these stereotypes "on our terms" through our songs, our words, and our individual and collective actions.

"Aborigines? You're too tall to be Aborigines!"

We were having dinner at Ellen's Stardust Diner in downtown Manhattan, New York, the evening before we were to perform at Carnegie Hall in the "Celebration of Canadian Choral Music" on Canada Day, 1997. In the course of the animated conversation we had struck up with our server ("You must be tourists, you're so outgoing," he surmised), we told him we were members of *Asani,* an Aboriginal women's vocal ensemble. "Aborigines? You're too tall to be Aborigines!" he exclaimed. "No," I said. "'A-bor-ig-in-AL,' not 'A-bor-ig-in-EE.'" I then explained to him that the term *Aboriginal* is a term unique to Canada, entrenched in our Constitution, and encompasses those peoples[2] of First Nations,[3] Inuit, and Metis ancestry.[4] The look in his eyes told me that these three terms were also not a part of his vernacular, which led to a protracted discussion thereof.

At the end of the discussion, I felt a mixture of satisfaction and frustration; satisfaction because one person had learned a little bit about the rich cultures of Indigenous peoples, frustration because of the phenomenal amount of ignorance about these cultures 500 years since contact.[5] It's frustrating to be continually "faced with the weary task of having to educate our audiences before we could even begin dialoguing with them (LaRocque in Perreault and Vance, 1990, p. xxii).

Lack of knowledge is just as evident in Canada.[6]

> Native people, after all, make up less than four percent of Canada's population, and many of them live a world apart from most Canadians ... Only a tiny fraction of native people have melted in the Canadian mainstream. Most of them, therefore, are invisible to the majority of Canadians. (Maracle, 1993, p. 7)

Deconstructing the Stereotype

Our work as performers makes us part of the "tiny fraction of Native people" who are visible in mainstream Canada. "The women in *Asani* know they have stories to tell, and Aboriginal issues underlie their music" (Ciccocioppo, 1998). Regarding the issue of multiplicity of heritage, our repertoire reflects the Aboriginal nations from which our members come: Cree, Ojibway, Mi'gmaq, and Metis. We sing songs in our heritage languages of Cree ("Muskowseewin," "Otinigan") and Ojibway ("Maanda E Zhinandowendamaa").[7] We also sing a song composed entirely of vocables ("Rattle Dance"). Our arrangements incorporate traditional First Nations instruments such as hand drums and rattles and the Metis fiddle.

Our musical heritages stem from our cultural heritages that have been in existence for over hundreds of thousands of years. Contrary to popular belief, Indigenous peoples were not "discovered" 500 years ago. The chorus of Murray Porter's (1992) song "1492" asks the musical question, "In 1492, who found who?" We premiered this piece at the 1997 show "Northern Harmony." Show producer Jessika Diamond (1998) told me, "You could hear the reaction as you guys zinged 350 people between the eyes with a message" (January 5, personal conversation). Ultimately, the mostly non-Aboriginal audience smiled and laughed along with us. Their applause was as generous for this song as any of the others we performed.

As part of the "Celebration of Canadian Choral Music" in New York, we had the opportunity to perform a song from our repertoire at the United Nations to promote the concert that evening. Several of our group members indicated that they would really like to perform "Mahk Jchi," but we were concerned that the event organizers might veto it because it wasn't a "Canadian" song. I said that because the border between the United States and Canada doesn't exist for us as First Nations peoples politically,[8] then neither should it musically. I said that as far as I was concerned, all the songs in our repertoire were "Turtle Island songs," and therefore it didn't matter whether they were "Canadian." Ulali (1994) themselves state that "Our blood and people are older than America will ever be and we don't recognize the borders. Our brothers and sisters run from North to South and into and under the waters from miles and years back." I doubted that anyone would recognize the song anyway, and that if they did question why were singing an

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Cathy submitted this manuscript to *CJNE* for publication last year. She passed to the spirit world while the article was in review. She would have been pleased to know that it was accepted for publication.

Ulali song, we could state that it is traditional for us to honor the people on whose territory we are visitors. (As it turned out, the only comments people had about the song were about how wonderful it was.)

We have incorporated various musical styles from different Indigenous cultures such as the Australian Aborigine digeridoo and Inuit throat singing into our song arrangements.

> There has long been contact and cultural exchange among the nations of Turtle Island. Songs, dances, fashions, and spiritual movements were traded alongside shells, copper, horses, corn, and chili peppers. What is new is a process or methodology to create music, movement or theatre by intentionally melding the performance principles of different Native cultures. (Majoica, 1997, p. 22).

"Are you an Indian Squaw?"

One of our members was asked the above question in South Africa at the 23rd International Society of Music Educators' conference. This comment shows the worldwide pervasiveness of the Hollywood image and terminology regarding First Nations peoples.

> Native American women's representation in Hollywood can range from the invisible to negative stereotypes, and more recently to the kitschy Disney creation, Pocahontas. It is this "Barbie-doll bimbo" caricature of Pocahontas where Native women in moviedom still find themselves; as an animated cartoon character with a "Cinderella" persona that romanticizes but does not negate our "squawness" in the non-Indian world. (Jaimes, 1996, p. 9)

If there is lack of knowledge about Aboriginal people in general, there is even more ignorance about Native women. "Outside their own communities, almost nothing has been heard until now about the life of Indian women. What little most Canadians have been able to read about Indian life concerns an earlier period and is focused on the activities of men in the buffalo hut, in intertribal warfare and the like" (Ahenekew & Wolfart, 1998, pp. 17-18).

Deconstructing the Stereotype

Most Canadians or world citizens also do not know that "in the last 15 years it has been native women and native women's organizations that have accomplished most in pursuit of the rights of people" (Wagamese, 1996, p. 54). In our music we honor those women who have sacrificed to create a better place for future generations. "Rattle Dance" is accompanied by rattles (hence the name), the traditional instrumentation of the women in co-founding member Sherryl Sewepagaham's (Cree) culture. I wrote "Heart of a Nation" at a time in my life when I was feeling particularly downhearted and wanted to quit. I thought of all those women who have gone before me and drew strength from them, knowing that my struggles were nothing compared with what they went through. "In the process of writing we come to some knowledge of our past, of our place in creation. Often when we are writing, it's not our words that are coming. The grandmothers, the grandfathers come and write through us" (Cuthand, 1985, p. 53).

Following in the footsteps of singers such as Buffy Saint-Marie, we use our music to speak of issues affecting our nation. "We do deal with some very hard-hitting issues such as environmental destruction, child abuse, or colonization and we hope that it's helping to bring these issues to the forefront. That's part of our healing process and the educational process as well" (Sewell in Levesque, 1998).

Two songs in our repertoire deal with issues that affect not only the Aboriginal community, but every sector of society: spousal abuse ("War Bride") and child abuse ("Little Angel"). Singing about these issues is a prelude to talking about them. "We are not afraid to bring 'family secrets' into the open air of this new day. The 'secrets' belong to all of us" (Brant, 1994, p. 39). The emotions aroused by these songs "belong to all of us" as well, and for this reason we are asked to perform at events that seek to heighten awareness of these issues. The event organizers of the 1997 "National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women" asked us to provide music at the conclusion of their event. In their thank-you correspondence, they stated, "Your music was the perfect way to close our ceremonies" (Sexual Assault Centre, 1997). This year we were invited back not only to close the ceremonies as we did last year with "Poison Blood," but to open them with "War Bride."

As Aboriginal women we recognize and honor our ties to the Earth. The microcosmic abuse of women is reflected in the macrocosmic violence toward Mother Earth. Two songs in our repertoire ("Wasted Time" and "Mother Earth") speak about environmental degradation. We premiered "Mother Earth" at the 1998 International Women's Day ceremony in Edmonton.

Because we're women and we're vocal (literally and figuratively), many people assume that we're feminists. I often respond by paraphrasing a quote by Shirley Hardman, whom I interviewed for a documentary on CBC radio. She states, "As a First Nations woman I don't adopt western feminism because I refuse to be colonized one more time."

Stereotypes about Aboriginal women abound in the Aboriginal community as well. "Sadly, there are insidious notions within our own communities that we as Native women should be 'unobtrusive, soft-spoken and quiet' ... The 'traditional Indian woman' is still often expected to act and dress like an ornamental Pocahontas/'Indian Princess'" (LaRocque in Miller & Chychryk, 1996, p. 14). One of the most controversial issues we have had to deal with comes under the category of *tradition* in Cree country. When our group first started singing together, we realized that our use of the drum might be considered sacrilegious by some. Because I'm the main drum player in the group, I had to give this due consideration. Overall, we decided that because we were using the drum for musical, not ceremonial, purposes and because we had observed proper protocol[9] with respect to playing it, we wouldn't take any criticism to heart. Furthermore, not all cultures prohibit women from playing the drum.[10] Although I do not believe in challenging conventions for the sake of challenging alone, if it promotes change for the sake of healing our community, I'll be one of the first to lead the way.

> My theory is, if I don't like it, whether it's tradition or not, I'm not going to do it. So I want for a young girl to realize, it's okay if you don't agree with what's going on in your community and it is our responsibility to bring a healthy awareness to that dysfunction. (Borst in Washinawatok, 1997, p. 29)

The negative reactions I've received from some are more than balanced by the positive reactions.

"You Don't Look Native."

So entrenched in the Canadian psyche is the Hollywood image of what a Native person looks like that comments about how various members of our group "don't look Native" are de rigeur at every performance. Although I do not deny that all of us have multiple heritages (which is hardly surpising considering the 200 years of prolonged European-Native contact in Western Canada and the over 1,000 years of European-Native contact in Eastern Canada), I do decry the notion that the influx of European blood negates our Aboriginal heritage.

> For those of us who do not conform to a stereotype of what Native people "look like," claiming our identities as Native people becomes an exercise in racism: "Gee you don't look like an Indian." "Gee, I didn't know Indians had blue eyes." "My great-great-grandmother was a Cherokee princess, does that make me an Indian too?" After a while it almost becomes humorous, even as it's tiresome.... Colourism is another face of racism. (Brant, 1994, pp. 20-21)

Our own community members are not exempt from this "face of racism." Several Native people have made comments about how some of our group members "don't look Native." As part of a larger process of internalized colonization, several Native people have (consciously or unconsciously) accepted the stereotypical image of Native people as the authentic one. "With a colour-line, indicators such as skin pigmentation and body structure are established to become the basis for determining superiority and inferiority. Interaction then goes on only among members of the same group" (Frideres, 1993, p. 7).

Deconstructing the Stereotype

All our group members' backgrounds are different—some of us grew up in Native communities, some didn't; some of us have strong knowledge of our culture, others are reconnecting with it—yet all these experiences are representative of the myriad of Native experiences. Our bio sheet is written to reflect our diverse heritages:

> Sherryl Sewepagaham is from the Little Red River Cree Nation in John D'or Prairie in Northern Alberta.... Cathy Sewell is of Mi'gmaq/Anishnabe/Polish ancestry and is a member of the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Nation in Quebec.... Julie Golosky-Olmsted is of Metis ancestry and hails from Ft. McMurray.... Karen Donaldson was born in Saskatoon, adopted into a non-Aboriginal family, and raised in Dauphin, Manitoba.

We have also started to preempt the question post-concert by asking it on stage in concert as part of our patter.

> Karen (to Julie): "Excuse me, you don't look Aboriginal."
> Julie (in mock horror): "Karen, you said you wouldn't tell!"
> Karen (to audience): "Our group deals with comments like this all the time. This next song by Murray Porter, a Mohawk from Six Nations, tells of some other things Native people have had to deal with since 1492."

"Do you have anything more ethnic-looking?"

Not only do people have a physical cultural image that they want Natives to uphold, they have a material culture image they want us to adhere to. "They want us to look like we never moved past 1890. This is almost always the cut-off year for Real Indians. As we approach the year 2000, America still won't let Indians in the 20th Century" (Elliot, 1991). I found this to be true in Canada when a certain office at the University of Alberta asked for a picture of our group to be included in a document it was putting together to illustrate the wide range of groups with which they worked. I unhesitatingly agreed to provide a picture of our group. The picture (we were attired in jeans, black shirts and Native jewelry) was vetoed because it wasn't "ethnic-looking" enough.

Deconstructing the Stereotype

When I was asked if we had anything more ethnic-looking, I responded that our group is trying to deconstruct the stereotype that Natives wear feathers and beads and that the picture reflects who we are: contemporary Aboriginal women living in an urban setting in the late 20th century, who perform traditional and contemporary Aboriginal music.[11]

There is little difference between my everyday wardrobe and my on-stage wardrobe, for several practical reasons. First of all, we don't have the disposable income to buy buckskin dresses that cost upward of $1,000.[12] Second, singing a cappella is physically exhausting.[13] The last thing I want to do is add to this discomfort by wearing heavy clothing (especially under bright lights for extended periods). Third, I like to travel light. I'm proud that I was able to pack all the clothing I needed for a one-week trip to South Africa—including performances—in one suitcase. Travelling light comes in handy on the folk festival circuit: especially at North County Fair where all performers camp out for the three-day festival. For our more dressy events such as Carnegie Hall, we will blend elements of traditional attire such as moccasins and jewelry with our concert-hall black dresses. Again, all these items come from my closet and are also worn for nonperformance situations.

"You don't drink?"

At gala receptions, pre-show cocktail mixers, and post-show parties, I'm besieged by well-meaning organizers and audience members who want to buy me a drink. I try to decline gracefully by just saying "No thank you" and hope that this will be accepted equally gracefully. However, sometimes the issue is pushed and at that point I will state that I'm a nondrinker. The response to that statement is the above question, which underlies the pervasive stereotype that non-Native people have about Natives: we all supposedly drink. However,

> Over the last two generations more and more of our Indian people have begun to heal themselves and in effect, their families, communities and nations. These Indian people are educated, sober, and working toward the preservation o their culture, language, and traditions. (Vendiola, 1997, p. 8)

One of the requirements for membership in *Asani* is that members must be free of drug and alcohol addictions.[14] All our members understand that developing a reliance on these substances is cause for immediate dismissal from the group.

As trained singers we are cognizant of the effects that alcohol has on our vocal apparatus. "The singer who imbibes the evening before a performance day will almost certainly pay for it with less than optimal vocal condition. To put alcohol into the system on a performance day is unthinkable" (Miller, 1996, p. 221). This is not to say that we do not partake in alcoholic beverages in moderation when we're not performing. I'm the only group member who completely abstains from drinking. My choice to do so is cultural, not vocational. A growing number of Aboriginal people abstain from alcohol consumption to "honor the Elders and traditional activities … and to recognize the devastation of alcohol in our communities and to respect the spirit of healing that has begun'" (Aboriginal Arts Program, 1998).

Deconstructing the Stereotype

We have been contracted to perform at events in the Aboriginal community specifically because our group's hard-line stance on alcohol and addictions is well known. Event organizers for this year's National Addictions Awareness Week asked us to perform the theme song "Keep the Circle Strong" to kick off the sober walk from City Hall to the Sacred Heart Church of First Peoples. (In addition, we performed "Muskowseewin" and "Maanda E Zhinandowendamaa" and linked these songs to the event theme in our introductory comments). We were also asked to be the headline entertainers at the Nunuee Health 4th Annual Healing Conference in Fort Chipewyan, in addition to presenters of a workshop "Healing through Music," which we developed specifically for this conference.[15]

"You're so articulate!"

I am not saying that to be called articulate is an insult; but neither is it a compliment when said in a tone of voice that indicates surprise at my verbal facility. Implicit in this comment about articulateness is the perception that "real" Natives are uneducated.

> The most distressing thing I have observed is the assumed estrangement between Native intellectuals from "the real people." … But the following is a typical, if bizarre, scenario: when white journalists "discover" an "articulate'" or "bright" Native, they proceed to judge her as an intellectual then bypass her in the liberal search for the grassroots. (LaRocque in Perreault & Vance, 1990, p. xxiii)

I have even been told too many times in my life that I was "too smart to be Native," so when the interviewer made this comment she hit a nerve. I told her I didn't think it was remarkable that I was articulate; after all, I have been speaking English all my life, I have an undergraduate university degree, and am currently pursuing a master's degree in education, and have further honed my English language skills through my work as a writer, journalist, and instructor.

Deconstructing the Stereotype

Aboriginal communities value education highly. Every treaty since the Robinson Treaties of 1850 has included provision for:

> Successful negotiation of a universal access to education for all Indigenous peoples without discrimination by age or sex. A school house was to be built in each community for all children. The Chiefs and Elders wanted their young people to be able to cope with the newcomers, and believed that the most successful way would be for the children to understand their ways. (Venne, 1997, p. 194)

All our members have postsecondary education. The Aboriginal community takes pride in our educational accomplishments, and we receive many requests to perform at educational events. At each of these events, we highlight our educational credentials and tell the youth in attendance that they can achieve their educational dreams as we have. Two of our songs deal with the theme of education: "Otinigan" (through its lyrics) and "Maanda E Zhinandowendamaa" (due to it being contracted as the theme for an educational video).

"How can I meet a Native shaman?"

I have lost count of the people who want to engage me in conversations about Native spirituality and who are seeking to connect with a Native spiritualist. Sometimes I feel like screaming, "I'm a singer, not a spiritual broker!" However, I'll usually say something to the effect that in my culture, we believe if something is meant to be, then it will happen. People seem to be satisfied with that response. Maybe it sounds "mystical."

However, because I am aware of the plethora of "Native 'plastic shamans' who do sweats, who give workshops, who sell tapes to hungry white souls in need" (Brant, 1994, p. 29), I also make a point of saying that one cannot look under *S* in the phone book for a shaman, and in no uncertain terms that our spirituality is not for sale.

Deconstructing the Stereotype

Sometimes the best way to address the issues in song is not to sing at all. We have turned down performing at events where we feel our presence is tokenistic and we feel the event organizers want to inject a bit of "spiritualism" into their event. For example, the non-Native organizer of a women's event (which shall remain nameless) asked if I would play the drum at the front of their march through downtown Edmonton and for their "circle dance" afterward. I told them we would have to decline on the basis that participating in this event would be exploiting our culture in the first place (for some reason the print media loves pictures of "Indians" playing drums, and the broadcast media loves to use a drum song as a soundtrack to any story that has a Native element to it),[16] and would be appropriating it in the second instance (we don't have "circle dances," we have Round Dances, and there is a whole protocol involved in hosting and performing them that would not have been observed at this event). As noted above, I am all for challenging conventions, but only when there is a benefit to doing so. I could see none in this instance.

"I didn't know that was an Aboriginal song."[17]

After we performed Buffy Saint-Marie's Academy Award-winning song "Up Where We Belong" at Carnegie Hall, the Canadian Consul-General told us he did not know it was an Aboriginal song and that as a result of our performance of it, he would never think of it merely as a theme song to a romantic movie. "We include traditional native music [in our performances] because people want to hear that and we love singing it, but we've also broadened our singing styles considerably. I want people to know that native music is more than flutes and powwow drums" (Sewell in Levesque, 1998). For this reason we sing a variety of songs by various Aboriginal composers in a variety of styles.

"There are many musical styles. They vary from culture to culture, from epoch to epoch within the same culture, and even within the same epoch and culture" (Meyer, 1967, p. 5). All our members have formal training in a variety of musical styles such as jazz, classical, chamber music, and musical theatre. It therefore makes musical sense to draw on the strengths of each member and incorporate songs in these styles into our repertoire. However,

> Until the 1980's academic analyses tended to view these [contemporary music styles] as products of acculturation or assimilation, as if borrowing musical styles somehow lessened the validity of the native musical experience ... From my understanding, these musical styles have been "borrowed," yes, but they reflect cultural synthesis rather than culture loss. Either through musical structure, performance technique or context, they are distinctly "Indian." (Cronk in Woodland Cutlural Centre, 1990, p. 10)

We have several songs in our repertoire that demonstrate the syncretous blend of Native and non-Native musical genres. For example, the song "Rebirth" blends Celtic style and 6/8 time signature with vocables and traditional instrumentation of drums, rattles, and obsidian chimes. "Broken Arrow" is given a "Motown" treatment in my arrangement. "No Limits" draws heavily on my interest in funk, and incorporates an a cappella technique called vocal percussion in the arrangement. In the song "Killing Me Softly (With His Food)" we poke fun at ourselves through the lyrics and through our choreography—especially the powwow breakdown. Drew Hayden Taylor calls this piece "an hilarious Aboriginal version of Roberta Flack's 'Killing Me Softly With His Song'" (1998), and Tammy Heinsohn of the Contemporary A Cappella Society of America wrote that "the group showed they can use culturally-oriented music to make people laugh by singing a humorous parody of the tune 'Killing Me Softly' about a traditional fried bread called Bannock" (Heinsohn, 1998). "Amongst the character traits which are most highly valued in Cree society is the ability to laugh at one's own misadventures or to tell a joke about oneself" (Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1988, p. 386). However, as the next comment indicates, not everyone gets the joke.

"I really enjoyed your show but felt serious material was compromised by your humorous rendition of 'Killing Me Softly.'"

Given the positive reaction this song has generated, I was quite shocked to read this comment from an Alberta festival producer forwarded to us after we performed at Alberta Showcase in the fall of 1998.[18] One of the benchmarks for judging excellence in musical performance is the demonstration of versatility and competence in a number of styles and genres.[19] I believe that this person's reaction was based not on musical preferences, but on personal perceptions. A humorous song cannot "compromise" serious songs: they all stand on their own merits.

> What was compromised by our presentation of several styles of music (including a humorous one) was the underlying perception that Native people have to "either/or"—"Noble" or "drunk"; "Princess" or "squaw"; "Mystic" or "bum"; "Serious" or "comical."
>
> There is no thought to the fact that we work, we play, we worry, we make love. There is no thought that our Elders like gossip or Bingo. There is no thought that we rush off to catch planes, write poetry, wash clothes, walk picket lines, put cars together. [Non-Natives do] not see us in our human spectrum. It is easier and less complicated for them to view us as artifacts or symbols that are waiting to be scooped up, inspected, used as they see fit. (Brant, 1994, p. 33)

Deconstructing the Stereotype

We are human beings, not one-dimensional caricatures. We can be both serious and funny. Like all human beings, we like to laugh. "This Indian world fills the empty spaces with laughter, with humor. Laughing is one way Indians, like all people, get around the tragedy, the trouble, the one way street they stumble into" (Green, 1984, p. 11). Again, sometimes the best way to deconstruct a stereotype is to refuse the opportunity to perpetuate it. We would not perform at an event where organizers wouldn't want to hear both serious and humorous material.

Conclusion

I would be naïve to think that we, *Asani*, can single-handedly eradicate all the stereotypes of Native people through the performance of our music. However, I look at our work as just a small part of an overall collective effort of Native people "to rejuvenate our people, to make ourselves whole once again, to heal our pain, to create social justice and to strengthen our language, culture and traditions" (Maracle, 1993, p. 4).

In a short year and a half, we have made an impact. This is because music affects people on all four levels: intellectual (lyrics), emotional (melody), physical (rhythm), and spiritual (linking the overall sonic package to personal knowledge and experience). "You can say some things in conversation, but when you sing them in a song and people are bopping and grooving to that, it also makes them think" (Sewell in Levesque, 1998).

Notes

[1] Furthermore, although the subject of this article is the group *Asani*, and my colleagues know that I am writing academically about that group, I can only speak as one member of that group. The perceptions herein are my own and may or may not be representative of other members' perceptions.

[2] I use the term *peoples* because many nations inhabited this land before European contact.

[3] Again, although the term *Indian* is the one entrenched in the Constitution, I use the term *First Nations* because I believe it most accurately describes my ancestors and their political structure.

[4] Nowhere in the Constitution are these terms defined, which results in considerable legal confusion (Elliot, 1993; Woodward, 1990).

[5] Although Indigenous peoples had contact with Europeans before 1492, this contact was not of a continuing type and did not have the devastating impact that was brought to the "New World" with the arrival of Columbus.

[6] Recently I received a call from a professor emeritus of the University of Alberta Anthropology Department. He told me he was calling because he had been told that I was "an eastern Aborigine" (I'm not kidding!) and wanted some information about the variety of spellings of the word *Mi'gmaq* in the news media. I told him he should speak to a Mi'gmaq linguist such as Marie Battiste or to one of the many leaders of the Mi'gmaq nations in Quebec, Nova Scotia, or New Brunswick.

[7] I'm working on songs in the Mi'gmaq language. The process is complicated by the fact that I only know of one person who speaks the language and would be able to translate for me. He lives 3,000 miles and a three-hour time difference away.

[8] Per provisions of the Jay Treaty of 1794.

[9] Due to its culturally sensitive nature I won't elaborate on it further.

[10] For example, all three women in Ulali play a drum. I have met several Ojibway women who tell me they drum because it is part of the culture (although to be fair, I've also heard from others that it isn't).

[11] Our current promo picture is only slightly more "ethnic-looking" in that we are wearing buckskin vests and moccasins in addition to our jeans, black shirts, and jewelry.

[12] This is not to say that when I do have the money to invest in wardrobe that I won't indulge.

[13] I've lost over 20 pounds since joining the group—just from singing.

[14] By addictions, I mean to drugs and alcohol. Julie's self admitted addiction to chocolate and my self-admitted addiction to caffeine are exempt from this requirement as they do not affect our ability to meet our performance obligations.

[15] This workshop is not a music therapy workshop: none of our members has training in this discipline, but an it is an interactive discussion of how music affects us intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

[16] When I was working at CBC radio, I made a point of telling the producer of the morning show that I felt the use of drum songs in nonmusical or nonceremonial stories was inappropriate and requesting the discontinuation of its gratuitous use.

[17] I'd be remiss if I didn't include stereotypes of Aboriginal music in an article about deconstructing Aboriginal stereotypes through music.

[18] Ironically, this particular festival organizer also expressed interest in booking our group in the future.

[19] In fact, all acts in a program are encouraged to present a program that showcases the diversity of repertoire.

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Qallunology: A Pedagogy for the Oppressor

Derek Rasmussen
Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

> In Inuit culture our elders are our source of wisdom. They have a long-term view of things and a deep understanding of the cycles and changes of life.... So it was natural for us to respect the newcomers who seemed to know how to survive and how to make their organizations work. Their power looked like wisdom ... We now know that it [was] a mistake....
>
> Our people did not have any institutional immunity, just as we had no immunity to measles or alcohol. When these institutions came into our lives we had no way to deal with their poisonous side effects, their tendency to undermine wisdom, and our spirits slowly began to die. In our weakened condition we attracted even more services and more rescuers, and the cycle got worse. (Nunavik Educational Task Force [NETF], 1992, pp. 11-13)

Nunavik is home to a long-lived Inuit culture that occupies much of Arctic Quebec. Further North and West is Nunavut, homeland to another established Inuit civilization. Modern Euro-Americans tend to refer to established civilizations like these in social Darwinist terms like *primitive* or *undeveloped* (Kuper, 1988). But if we looked at cultures the way we view ecosystems, we would see that some are like climax forests—ecologically-balanced, long-lived, mature—whereas others, Euro-America for example, are young, immature, reckless, and unbalanced (Snyder, 1980). Today in relations with the Euro-Canadian government, Inuit tend to spend most of their energy negotiating for rights to things that they never had to ask for before and resisting Trojan-Horse-style offerings from government "Rescuers." These Rescuers are almost always drawn from the ranks of the young Euro-American civilization, the affluent 20% of the world's population who consume 80% of the world's resources. Inuit, like most of those being "rescued," belong to "the remaining 4.7 billion people—80% of the population—[those who] survive on less than a quarter of world output" (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996, p. 102).

Kloppenburg (1991) argues that, "Indigenous people have in effect been engaged in a massive program of foreign aid to the urban populations of the industrialized North" for most of the past 400 years (p. 16). One present-day South American Indian leader refers to this as the "Marshalltezuma Plan," and has written to European governments asking that they repay the gold and silver "borrowed" between 1503-1660, a sum that today would amount to trillions of dollars (Cuautemoc, 1998). But these resources that Euro-America gobbles up are to mature cultures the interwoven necessities of land and life. Euro-American culture disembeds "resources" like land, minerals, water, mythology, and wildlife from the interwoven fabric of other cultures so that the pieces can be bought and sold.

> The diversity of knowledge held by local people has been devalued, pulverized and supplanted by a handful of disciplines—Western science, economics and management—controlled by outsiders.... Cultural characteristics like family loyalty,