

Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education

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Aboriginal communities continue to suffer the effects of colonization and imperialistic policies that erode the base of Indigenous knowledge necessary for the healing and development of Aboriginal peoples. Based on fallacious assumptions about English language superiority and its Eurocentric educational foundations that support linguistic imperialism and Aboriginal oppression, the federal government has entered into agreements with First Nations bands that require them to adopt provincial curricula as a minimum requirement to assume control of their education. In almost all of these provinces, these curricula are developed away from Aboriginal communities, without Aboriginal input, and written in English. In effect, the curricula serve as another colonial instrument to deprive Aboriginal communities of their knowledge, languages, and cultures. Without Aboriginal languages and knowledge, Aboriginal communities can do little to recover their losses or transform their nations using their legitimate knowledge and languages. This article discusses the need for Aboriginal knowledge to be retained through Aboriginal languages supported in curricula. It also challenges the Eurocentric assumptions that have pushed Aboriginal knowledge and languages to the margins and raises current Aboriginal educational concerns regarding a transformed curriculum that embraces the rich diversity of knowledge and provides the necessary consciousness to enable Aboriginal humanity to be respected and protected.

Shifting Paradigms

In the relentless cycles of renewal and reform, Aboriginal peoples are living in an extraordinary time. Aboriginal peoples throughout the world have survived five centuries of the horrors and harsh lessons of colonization. They are emerging with new consciousness and vision. In Canada the old colonial order and its preoccupation with assimilation of Aboriginal peoples to British ways has been replaced by a new constitutional order that respects Aboriginal rights. The Supreme Court of Canada is refusing to protect the historical idiosyncrasies of Canadian colonialism and its injustices and is actively seeking to achieve the noble constitutional goal of preserving the integral and defining features of distinctive Aboriginal societies (*Queen v. Côté*, 1996, p. 48).

The Supreme Court has affirmed that the teaching of Aboriginal rights is an constitutional right in the new order. Chief Justice Lamer has declared:

In the aboriginal tradition, societal practices and customs are passed from one generation to the next by means of oral description and actual demonstration. As such, to ensure the continuity of aboriginal customs and traditions, a substantive aboriginal right will normally include the incidental right to teach such a practice, custom and tradition to a younger generation. (p. 49)

It is beyond dispute that the most integral of all Aboriginal traditions, societal practices, and customs are the various Aboriginal languages and knowledge that contain those traditions and customs.

Despite the constitutional reform in Canadian society, Aboriginal languages and knowledge are not yet flourishing in the education systems. Canadian education systems have not empowered the enormous creativity of Aboriginal languages, and First Nations schools have not used them widely. Aboriginal languages and knowledge are still excluded in most Canadian educational systems. The provincial curricula continue to disinherit Aboriginal languages and knowledge by ignoring their value. Underlying this neglect is the belief that Aboriginal languages and knowledge do not belong in the education systems.

Aboriginal parents and children have to permanently defend their linguistic and cultural integrity. However, this struggle has awakened them to the fact that none of the familiar political, social, and educational constructs is adequate to describe or evaluate their vision of cultural restoration. Aboriginal efforts have not merged into a single, coordinated initiative, but there is hope. Aboriginal scholars and educators are beginning to think about how to decolonize Canadian education. They have begun to make the seemingly impossible dream of the equality of Aboriginal languages and knowledge a nourishing educational reality and a hallmark of the next century.

In this article I seek to explore the existing obstacles to this vision and look at some of current context and manifestations of decolonization. I begin with the nature of Indigenous language and knowledge and its endangered state. I then examine the role of cognitive imperialism in the education of Aboriginal children, the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and Eurocentrism in public schools, and the required process of decolonization and transforming knowledge in Canadian education.

Indigenous Languages and Knowledge

Aboriginal languages are sacred to Aboriginal people. They are a central source of survival for the people, as well as a critical link to knowledge given to us by our Creator who blessed us with our languages and in them gave instructions for our development and survival. Allow me to share with you this story as I have come to know it.

In the beginning when the Mikmaq people awoke in the world lost and naked, the Mikmaq asked our Creator how we should live. Our Creator taught us how to hunt and fish, how to cure what we took, how to clothe ourselves with the skins, and how to heal our bodies with the plants of the earth. Our Creator taught us about the constellations and the stars and how to make our way through the darkest of nights. Our Creator showed us the path of the milky way, *Skite'kmujeouti*, which is the path of our ancestors as they moved on to the next world. Our Creator taught us all that was wise and good and, then, gave us a language that we could pass on this knowledge to our children so that they might be able to survive and flourish. Finally, the Creator told us about the two worlds, separated by a cloud-like substance that would open and fall at different intervals. The strong and believing at heart would be able to pass through those worlds unscathed, but the weak and unbelieving would be crushed. (Battiste, 1986)

Languages are the means of communication for the full range of human experiences and critical to the survival of the culture and political integrity of any people. Aboriginal languages provide a direct and powerful means of understanding the legacy of tribal knowledge. They provide the deep and lasting cognitive bonds that affect all aspects of Aboriginal life. Through sharing a language Aboriginal people create a shared belief of how the world works and what constitutes proper action. The sharing of these common ideals creates a collective cognitive experience for tribal societies that is understood as tribal epistemology. Aboriginal languages are the repository of vital instructions, lessons, and guidance given to our elders in visions, dreams, and life experience. Eli Taylor, an elder from the Sioux Valley First Nations, eloquently explains the importance of maintaining Aboriginal languages and knowledge:

Our Native language embodies a value system about how we ought to live and relate to each other.... It gives a name to relations among kin, to roles and responsibilities among family members, to ties with the broader clan group.... There are no English words for these relationships.... Now, if you destroy our languages you not only break down these relationships, but you also destroy other aspects of our Indian way of life and culture, especially those that describes man's connection with nature, the Great Spirit, and the order of things. Without our languages, we will cease to exist as a separate people. (AFN, 1992, p. 14)

Fundamental to Aboriginal knowledge is the awareness that beyond the immediate sensible world of perception, memory, imagination, and feelings lies another world from which knowledge, power, or medicine is derived from which the Aboriginal peoples will survive and flourish. The complementary modes of knowing in the tribal world form the essence of tribal epistemology and have been continually transmitted through the oral tradition. Without Aboriginal languages, the lessons and knowledge would be lost to the people and their way of life gravely affected.

Anguished at this prospect, Aboriginal peoples and elders have testified repeatedly to the importance of their languages (AFN, 1988a, 1988b, 1990; House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990). In the last decade their voices have urged action be taken to arrest the erosion of Aboriginal languages and curb the increasing number threatened with extinction (Fredeen, 1988). Although 52 Aboriginal languages survive in Canada, not all share the same vitality because of continuing colonial attempts to eradicate them. In a 1990 survey of 151 First Nations communities, the Assembly of First Nations found:

- only slightly over one third percent had languages that could be classified as flourishing (over 80% of all ages groups are fluent in their native language) or enduring (over 60% of all age groups are fluent);
- one quarter of communities had declining languages, where the number of speakers declined in each age group;
- over three-quarters of the older age groups were fluent in their Aboriginal language, although this proportion was rapidly dropping to less than 10% among the young children. The remaining communities had languages that were endangered or critical;
- thirty percent were endangered (only the older adult population are fluent with few or no speakers in younger age groups), and just over 10 percent were in critical condition (less than 10 speakers remain in the community). (AFN, 1992, p. 3)

The right to speak a language and belong to a language family has been considered an inherent right of all peoples as explicated by United Nations appeals that recognize and respect them (Daes, 1993; Phillipson, 1992; Skuttnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995). Although constitutional reforms in Canada since 1982 protect existing Aboriginal rights, cultural and linguistic imperialistic policies and colonial education in Canada continue to affect Aboriginal languages and knowledge in Canada negatively, despite treaties and constitutional guarantees that protect them (Henderson, 1995). The right to speak an Aboriginal language is the most integral of Aboriginal rights and yet the most ignored. Although treaties agreed that the Crown could maintain schools, these delegations were to enable the nations to be enriched by new knowledge that supplemented Aboriginal knowledge, not to destroy all of their collective knowledge enfolded in their own language. However, through the authority of the Indian Act, the federal government breached its obligations to Aboriginal peoples when it sought not to educate, but to assimilate them under an ideology that they presumed had superior knowledge (Henderson, 1995).

Education has not been benign or beneficial for Aboriginal peoples. Rather, through ill-conceived federal government policies Aboriginal peoples have been subjected to a combination of unquestionably powerful but profoundly debilitating forces of assimilation and colonization. Through various systems of boarding schools and educational institutions, the Aboriginal world views and the people who held them were attacked. Although instructed by Catholic and Protestant clerics in almost all of the boarding schools, Aboriginal children were subjected to persistent violence, powerlessness, exploitation, and cultural imperialism, only to become impoverished and devastated in the cognitive and physical aftermath of schooling. In short, the educational tragedy has been to Aboriginal world views, knowledge, languages, cultures, and the creation of widespread social and psychological upheaval in Aboriginal communities (Barman, Hébert, & McCaskill, 1986).

Yet, although current educational literature speaks to the need for schools to encourage the full academic and human achievements of all students, the provincial governments in Canada that have been responsible for education in their provinces have not revamped their curricula in the interests of the diverse groups they teach. Although over half of the Aboriginal students in Canada are in provincial schools, little has been done to develop a transformed curriculum. Their major efforts have been toward adding thematic content to their curriculum and examining access issues regarding the multicultural groups they have in their provinces. The federal government, which has had the jurisdiction for schooling through treaties, has historically done worse, as witness its past policies of boarding and federal schools that for nearly 100 years mandated English curricula and assimilationist objectives. Many Canadians are only now becoming aware of this boarding school abomination, but many assume that the situation has changed significantly with the current trend of encouraging First Nations bands to take control of their schools. They believe that because the federal government accepted a policy of Indian control of Indian education in 1972, this colonial siege has ended. However, this has not been the case.

Recent federal negotiations with First Nations governments to encourage them to assume control of their education have ushered in yet another era of cognitive imperialism with the requirement in the funding contribution agreements that require First Nations to accept provincial curricula (Pauls, 1996). Despite the awareness among First Nations educators that the provincial curriculum is culturally biased and inadequate to meet their needs, little has been done to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal people to use, practice, and develop Aboriginal languages and knowledge in Canada through education. Part of the problem has been created by the lack of structures to make this possible, as First Nations people see their relationship strictly through treaties with the federal government and not with provinces. Further, the federal government has not offered First Nations the resources to make adaptations as necessary, nor given guidance as to "how a First Nation, which wishes to modify curriculum to suit local needs, can proceed to do so under the authority of the province" (Pauls, 1996, p. 166). An effort still underway is in Saskatchewan where the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations is revamping the provincial curricula in consultation with the provincial Department of Education.

The Mi'kmaq Kina'masuti (Education) of the eastern province of Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaq education authority, has recently entered into a final agreement with respect to Mi'kmaq education in Nova Scotia between Canada and the Mi'kmaq bands in Nova Scotia. As the first of the First Nation educational authorities to assume jurisdiction over their education, their agreement outlines federal legislation delegating to each participating community the right to make its own laws regarding education. As part of that negotiation, the federal government, however, required that the provincial curricula remain the foundation curricula for the schools, although the curricula were developed in English outside the Mi'kmaq context. Although Mi'kmaq curricula can be supplemented or adapted to the provincial base, this becomes an add-on that will assuredly not be the source of educational development for Aboriginal knowledge and humanity. The practice of requiring provincial curricula as the basis for First Nations schools has also been applied to other schools throughout Canada, and more specifically in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta (Pauls, 1996). The required adoption of provincial guidelines and curricula, school standards, and teacher certification by Aboriginal educators is the newest manifestation of the grip of cognitive imperialism that needs to be understood in the context of Aboriginal education.

Cognitive Imperialism in the Education of Aboriginal Students

Cognitive imperialism is a form of cognitive manipulation used to discredit other knowledge bases and values and seeks to validate one source of knowledge and empower it through public education (Battiste, 1986). It has been the means by which the rich diversity of peoples have been denied inclusion in public education while only a privileged group have defined themselves as inclusive, normative, and ideal. Cognitive imperialism denies many groups of people their language and cultural integrity and maintains legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference. This has been singularly achieved through education. Minnick (1990) notes, "It is in and through education that a culture and polity, not

only tries to perpetuate but enacts the kinds of thinking it welcomes, discards and/or discredits the kind it fears" (pp. 11-12).

As a result, disconnected from their own knowledge, voices, and historical experiences, cultural minorities in Canada have been led to believe that their poverty and powerlessness are the result of their cultural and racial status and origins. In effect, their difference is the cause of their impoverished state. As Memmi (1969) explains, "Racism is the generalized and final assigning of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at his victim's expense, in order to justify the former's own privileges or aggression" (p. 185). Memmi has identified four related racist strategies used to maintain colonial power over Indigenous people: (a) stressing real or imaginary differences between the racist and the victim; (b) assigning values to these differences to the advantage of the racist and the detriment of the victim; (c) trying to make these values absolutes by generalizing from them and claiming that they are final; and (d) using these values to justify any present or possible aggression or privileges (p. 186). All these strategies have been the staple of Eurocentric research of Indigenous peoples that frames much of the discourse on Aboriginal peoples in school texts. Through these strategies Eurocentric research has manufactured the physical and cultural inferiority of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous knowledge, embraced in Aboriginal languages, is thus being supplanted in First Nations schools with Eurocentric knowledge supported by federal policies that mandate provincial curriculum. Instead of an education that draws from the ecological context of the people, their social and cultural frames of reference, embodying their philosophical foundations of spiritual interconnected realities, and building on the enriched experiences and gifts of their people and their current needs for economic development and change, education has been framed as a secular experience with fragmented knowledge imported from other societies and cultures. This fragmented accumulation of knowledge builds on Eurocentric strategies that maintain their knowledge is universal, that it derives from standards of good that are universally appropriate, that the ideas and ideals are so familiar they need not be questioned, and that all questions can be posed and resolved from within it (Minnick, 1990). In effect, Eurocentric knowledge, drawn from a limited patriarchal sample remains as distant today to women, Indigenous peoples, and cultural minorities as did the assimilationist curricula of the boarding school days. For Indigenous peoples, our invisibility continues, while Eurocentric education perpetuates our psychic disequilibrium.

Public schooling has not wholly ignored Aboriginal content in the schools, as many, if not most, have taken on the task of seeking to find the means to make their curricula inclusive. But mainstream knowledge has not been questioned or reconsidered; rather, the *Other* is acknowledged as *a* knowledge, not *the* knowledge, as in the case of academia's special case studies such as Women's Studies, Native Studies, or Black Studies. The "add-and-stir" model of education, however, does not help disempowered students to reconcile their position in society or find the awareness or means to overcome the root problems of their oppression (Cummins, 1989). As Minnick (1990) offers, education is liberating "only when the works and lives of the few are regularly discussed in the curricular canon within their own

contexts, such that the meanings that emerge from analyses of intertextuality are coherent and illuminating" (p. 43).

As Aboriginal people approach the 21st century, the need is great for a transformed education that enriches our character and dignity, that emerges from one's own roots and cultural experience, from which a voice once powerless can be raised, and where diversity is seen as an asset, not a source for prejudice. This has not been achieved in provincial curricula, and to force First Nations schools to accept them as the foundational base of knowledge can lead only to continued fragmentation of their conceptional lenses and destruction of Aboriginal knowledge and languages.

Indigenous Knowledge and Eurocentrism

Few academic contexts exist in which to talk about Indigenous knowledge, as most literature dealing with Aboriginal knowledge would like to categorize it as being peculiarly local and not connected to the normative knowledge. The fact that public schools do not offer any real examination of knowledge bases or ways of knowing is a reflection of what the universities offer as well. As a result, most teachers in public schools have neither taken courses about and from Indigenous peoples nor developed awareness of cross-cultural realities. To put before them the issue of inclusion in the curriculum takes inclusion to the lowest common denominator. As such, they do not think of Aboriginal peoples as having anything more than anthropological "culture" in its limited sense of concrete objects like beads, buffalo, and bannock. The negative innuendoes in the identification of the peculiarities of Indigenous knowledge are the result of European ethnocentrism based on the theory of diffusionism (Blaut, 1993) in which knowledge is thought to be diffused from a European center to its periphery. This theory postulates the superiority of Europeans and their descendants over non-Europeans, founded on a false polarity between "civilized" and "savage," and "center" and "marginalized" peoples. This theory is currently labeled as Eurocentrism or Eurocentric thought (Amin, 1988).

An understanding of this theory and its negative caricature of Indigenous people and their knowledge is vital to the current reconceptualization of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge, as well as understanding the limitations of law and policy built on this false polarity. Eurocentricism is not like a prejudice from which informed peoples can elevate themselves. In schools and universities, traditional academic studies support and reinforce the Eurocentric contexts and consequences, ignoring Indigenous world views, knowledge, and thought, while claiming to have superior grounding in Eurocentric history, literature, and philosophy.

The universality of Eurocentrism creates a strategy of difference that leads to racism, which allows Europeans and colonialists to assert their privileges while exploiting Indigenous people and their knowledge. Eurocentrism must be analyzed and challenged at every instance it appears, just as Indigenous peoples must come to understand the sociohistorical context that was created by Eurocentrism and how it continues to affect our daily lives and our negotiated, often manufactured, identities.

Historian Noël (1994) has dramatically captured the consequences of this cognitive reality of Eurocentrism:

Alienation is to the oppressed what self-righteousness is to the oppressor. Each really believes that their unequal relationship is part of the natural order of things or desires by some higher power. The dominator does not feel that he is exercising unjust power, and the dominated do not feel the need to withdraw from his tutelage. The dominator will even believe, in all good faith, that he is looking out for the good of the dominated, while the latter will insist that they want an authority more enlightened than their own to determine their fate. (p. 79)

A strong critique of Eurocentrism is underway in all fields of social thought. These critiques, such as postcolonial and postmodern thought, reveal that the assumptions and beliefs that constructed and maintained Eurocentrism are not universal. These givens are derived from local and socially constructed knowledge. Under postcolonial and postmodern thought, many beliefs and assumptions of Eurocentrism are being exposed as false (Rosaldo, 1989; Said, 1992; Blaut, 1993; Noël, 1994). These critiques raise anguished discourse about knowledge and truth. As questions are raised about alternative ways of knowing and diversity, the discussion quickly slips into paradigm maintenance by supporters of the Eurocentric canon. Thus Eurocentrism resists change while it continues to retain a persuasive intellectual power in academic and political realms.

The modern intolerance in Eurocentric consciousness has had profound implications for schooling, curriculum, and in particular for Aboriginal people who are seeking through education to liberate themselves. In terms of knowledge and research, where are Indigenous people to find experts who can rise above the value contamination of their own education, much less find those who speak their language? Where are they being trained? By what faculty are they being taught? Because of the persuasiveness of colonial Eurocentric knowledge, Indigenous peoples do not have at our disposal today any valid, undistorted search for truth. Almost all constative structures of university research or performative discourse in university disciplines have a political and institutional stake in Eurocentric diffusion and knowledge, that is, perpetuating colonization. Almost all universities have preserved Eurocentric knowledge and interpretive monopolies and generated gatekeepers of Eurocentric knowledge in the name of universal truth. Drawing on this limiting knowledge base, schools and curriculum texts have maintained the legacy of cultural and linguistic imperialism. Federal government policy that restricts First Nations schools to this curriculum bias exacerbates the problems of engaging Aboriginal students in this conspiracy.

Decolonization and Transforming Knowledge

Much of the dialogue and discourse among educated Aboriginal educators and scholars in the last 25 years has focused attention on colonialization and oppression of peoples worldwide. It has been both a systemic and personalized process through education. We have been seeking an uncensored history that enables us to have a clear sense of the sociohistoric reality from which we can enter the process to heal (Duran & Duran, 1995). Our journeys have led us to multiple ways to express ourselves and to give voice and imagery to our pain and anguish, our hopes and dreams, our strategies and alternatives, and our resistance and

resilience. Many of us have come to realize that we do not have to be put under a Western lens to be legitimized. Yet we are aware that what is defined as knowledge in schools and curricula is not congruent with our conceptualization, and so we must find ways to schools and texts. We must be actively part of the transformation of knowledge. As Minnick (1990) writes, it is not just knowledge and thought that needs to be changed but also "preconscious cultural assumptions and habits that are fraught with emotion and reflect not only the ignorance but the systemically created and reinforced prejudices of the dominant culture" (p. 93).

As we unravel these prejudices, we can begin to see that our own traditions offer a store from which we can rebuild, heal, recover, and restore healthy relationships. We must acknowledge the colonial shadow through a thorough awareness of the sociohistoric reality that has created the current context, accepting that a great collective "soul-wound" has damaged our nations as a whole (Duran & Duran, 1995). Only then can we move beyond the personal dimension of blaming ourselves and seek to heal the nation with each of our own small but significant determined steps.

It is becoming clear to Aboriginal educators that any attempt to decolonialize ourselves and actively resist colonial paradigms is a complex and daunting task. We cannot continue to allow Aboriginal students to be given a fragmented existence in a curriculum that does not mirror them, nor should they be denied understanding the historical context that has created that fragmentation. A postcolonial framework cannot be constructed without Indigenous people's renewing and reconstructing the principles underlying their own world view, environment, languages, and how these construct our humanity.

As state governments and institutions continue to frame our Indigenous identity based on their socioeconomic motives, taking lands and resources along the way, the call for self-determination among Indigenous peoples grows stronger. Nevertheless, self-determination brings many ambiguities that Indigenous leaders feel more confident with than do members of the wider community, many of whom know all too well that power and control can also be used to exclude and repress. The course of self-determination is a call for an acknowledgment of the illegitimacy of Eurocentric thought in defining Aboriginal knowledge and people, and the recovery of Aboriginality in local ecologies and languages.

Linguistic competence is a requisite for the renewal and respect of Aboriginal knowledge and humanity. Aboriginal people cannot rely on colonial languages and thought defined in provincial curricula to shape our reality. If we continue to think of our reality in the terms and constructs drawn from Eurocentric diffusionism and languages, we continue the pillage of our own selves. The reconstruction of knowledge builds from within the spirit of the lands and in Indigenous languages. Indigenous languages offer not just a communication tool for unlocking knowledge; they offer a process of orientation that removes us from rigid noun-centered reality and offers an unfolding paradigmatic process for restoration and healing. It reflects a reality of transformation and change in its holistic representations and processes that stress interaction, reciprocity, respect, and non-interference.

Recognizing the great linguistic losses worldwide, Indigenous peoples who have lost languages due to government genocidal and assimilationists policies are presented with a great challenge. How can they reconstruct their knowledge without their languages in their communities? In my own search I have wondered how this can be achieved. I am encouraged by some second-language research that has confirmed that language loss is not purely linguistic; it involves more than just the sounds, but involves the socialization of language and knowledge, ways of knowing, nonverbal and verbal communication, and these processes are not easily dissolved. For me this means that the spirit of languages is resilient, and in many of the communities who have in the last generation or two merged to the colonial languages, the spirit and socialization of Aboriginal languages are still embedded in the succeeding generations. Aboriginal languages have a spirit or a soul that can be known through the people themselves, and renewing and rebuilding from within the peoples is itself the process of coming to know. Hampton (1995) speaks eloquently of this resilience:

The Europeans took our land, our lives, and our children like the winter snow takes the grass. The loss is painful but the seed lives in spite of the snow. In the fall of the year, the grass dies and drops its seed to lie hidden under the snow. Perhaps the snow thinks the seed has vanished, but it lives on hidden, or blowing in the wind, or clinging to the plant's leg of progress. How does the acorn unfold into an oak? Deep inside itself it knows—and we are not different. We know deep inside ourselves the pattern of life. (pp. 31-32)

For Indigenous researchers much is gained by seeking the soul in the languages and in the knowledge bases of their peoples. Non-Indigenous researchers will be required to learn the Indigenous languages and world views rather than trying to be an oracle. As outsiders, Eurocentric scholars may be useful in helping Indigenous people articulate their concerns, but to speak for them is to deny them the self-determination so essential to human progress.

Discrimination is defined both internationally and nationally as any unfair treatment or denial of normal privileges to persons because of their race, age, sex, nationality, or religion. When effected through the machinery of the state, it can have a devastating impact on people, ranging from deep psychological wounds to racial and cultural genocide, as the history of Aboriginal people has demonstrated. For victims of discrimination it matters little whether these influences result from state action, or whether they are inflicted by less obvious applications of facile neutral rules. In addition, states must identify some protection, whether locally derived or nationally defined. While communities are developing these priorities for themselves, institutions of higher learning should not impose standards that are not inclusive of Indigenous communities who want and should control their own knowledge. Further, it may not be clear what equal education means for all peoples, but it is clear, as Minnick (1990) affirms:

What we do know is that, whatever it means, an equal education for all women of all groups, as for the men of unprivileged groups, cannot be the same as the education that has been developed in a culture that is based on our exclusion. Only as we particularize what has been falsely universalized will we begin to be able to make judgments about what is and what is not appropriate to all of us in any given situation. (p. 109)

Canadian and other nation states have a chance to comprehend another view of humanity as they never have before. They should understand Indigenous humanity and its manifestations without paternalism and without condescension. In practical terms this means that Indigenous peoples must be involved at all stages and in all phases of our planning as articulated in the United Nations Working Group's (1993) *Guidelines and Principles in Protection of Indigenous Populations*. They can offer each nation state an opportunity to rededicate themselves to protecting humanity, redressing the damage and losses of Indigenous peoples of their language, culture, and properties, and enabling Indigenous communities to sustain their knowledge in their future.

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