Decolonizing the Agenda: A Preliminary Critique of Non-Native Indigenous Research

By David A. HOUGH*

Why should we continue to be the private zoos for anthropologists? Why should tribes have to compete with scholars for funds when the scholarly productions are so useless and irrelevant to real life? ...The implications of the anthropologist, if not all America, should be clear for the Indian. Compilation of useless knowledge for “knowledge’s sake” should be utterly rejected by the Indian people. We should not be objects of observations for those who do nothing to help us.


From an Indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relationships persists inside institutional centres. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, most noticeably through [Western-based policies and practices that govern research, and less explicitly through the cultural capital necessary to survive there. The result has been, and continues to be, that Indigenous communities are being examined by non-Indigenous academics who pursue [Western research on [Western terms. ...Regardless of whether research emerges from a positivist, constructivist, or transformative paradigm, it is still ‘researching’ Indigenous people, and it is still deeply political.

— Margaret Kovach, Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux (2010:28-29)

[If we are going to talk about how we choose the topics of our research from an Indigenous paradigm, the first thing that comes to mind for me is the whole concept of doing research with Indigenous people and communities rather than on them or even just based in them.[boldface added]

— Shawn Wilson, Opaskwayak Cree (2008:108)

Abstract:

Based on more than 35 years of community work with Indigenous peoples, but as a non-Indigenous linguistic and educational researcher myself, I ask in this paper what I believe to be some very crucial questions about the ethical and moral responsibilities of non-Indigenous researchers and experts doing fieldwork with Indigenous peoples. These are deeply heartfelt and soul-searching questions which come from much reflection and at times even trauma over what we can and should do when working with Indigenous peoples – or even whether outsiders from first world countries have the right to embark on such endeavors.

My own background is that of a working class white American who grew up in New York during the 1950s and 1960s – a period of great activism which questioned the very foundations of a society we had been taught to believe in, and sought to transform the racist and genocidal history that we were part of. My work with indigenous peoples comes out of this history but is additionally informed by a

*コンピュータ応用学科 教授

1 In keeping with many Indigenous scholars and activists – and in critique of most non-Indigenous academics who do the opposite – I have chosen to write the following words in lower case: western, eurocentric, euro-american, white, first-world. At the same time, I have chosen to write Indigenous, Native, Indian and Tribal in upper case.

2 I use the term “moral” here in the general and largely universalized western Judeo-Christian sense of the meaning. From an Indigenous perspective, however, a more appropriate term might be "relational accountability" (see Shawn Wilson, an Oposkwayak Cree scholar, 2008, for an elaboration of this).
moral conviction in the right of self determination for Indigenous peoples. As a non-Indigenous person, I can only lend support. I cannot lead. But I also have the responsibility to be honest about my beliefs.

I begin the paper with an introduction of the sociohistorical conditions of 19th century colonialism and how this shaped academic research on Indigenous peoples. During this period, anthropologists and linguists began to document the “primitive Other” as part of a project which became known as the science of race. While anthropological research supported colonization through ethnographic description, which portrayed Indigenous peoples through the lens of eurocentric “civilization,” linguists were largely responsible for documenting Indigenous languages, often for the purpose of translating the bible in support of the Christianizing mission. Later they became occupied with cataloguing these same languages and cultures – now mysteriously “dying” – for the sake of academic and intellectual posterity.

Following this sociohistorical critique, I look at how the legacy of researching the “Other” has continued in academia and why Indigenous ways of knowing have been either ignored or denigrated through the use of the western “scientific” paradigm. Here, I argue that as outside researchers we must begin to seriously explore how Indigenous science and ways of knowing can be privileged without being co-opted. Next, I comment briefly on some key ways in which we might begin to decolonize the agenda. I conclude the paper with a discussion of what all of this might mean in terms of working toward a code of ethics for non-Native researchers, which truly privileges Indigenous voices.

**Key words:**

Indigenous science, Indigenous knowledge, fieldwork ethics, academic imperialism, co-opting, white privilege, colonization, decolonization.

**Introduction: Some historical background**

In the late 19th Century – at the height of euro-American colonisation expansion where genocide and plunder were euphemized as “The White Man’s Burden,” it was prevailing canon that whites – by virtue of their self-proclaimed racial and cultural superiority – had the right to go anywhere, investigate anything and take from anyone. Part of this right was attributed to what was seen as the white man’s innate sense of curiosity. Racial superiority, combined with curiosity and ambition were thought to be the cornerstones of the “civilizing” mandate. In the US, this was often termed “Manifest Destiny”. Today it goes by the name “American exceptionalism” and is alternatively known worldwide as “globalization,” “development,” “the free market economy,” and “the rule of law.”

Science was also seen as the possession of an enlightened white population. Its roots are still attributed to such late 16th and early 17th century scholars as Francis Bacon – the reputed father of scientific method. Occasionally, references about scientific investigation and discovery go back to Ancient Greece and Egypt. Rarely, however, is credit given to non-European contributions to science – ranging from India and China to Indigenous knowledge systems worldwide. This eurocentric worldview reduces all knowledge to a limited set of anthropomorphic research methods based on empiricism. It also denies that Indigenous science exists (or, at least, that it is real science).

David Peat (2004), a British physicist who is critical of the narrowness of empirical method – and

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3 A very close tie continues to exist between linguists and missionaries today (See Tinker, 1993, among others, for elaboration).
4 Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, among others, refers to this as linguistic genocide (See Dunbar and Skutnabb-Kangas 2004, *ibid*).
5 Although Egypt is on the African continent, many US and European school textbooks to this day brightly color Egypt on maps which highlight trade links to Europe across the Mediterranean, while separating it from the rest of Africa, which is colored gray.
who himself is concerned with the role of outsiders—describes how according to this eurocentric perspective, Indigenous peoples “don’t have science in the real sense of the word. They don’t have an ordered system of investigation or rational theories of the universe as we do. Science is a specific and disciplined approach that was developed in the West.”

And yet, as Jared Diamond (1999) has pointed out in Guns, Germs and Steel, the vast majority of European scientific knowledge was stolen from non-Western societies. The combination of stolen knowledge with the genocidal spread of Western diseases, is what enabled colonial domination (a.k.a., globalization). Sandy Grande, (2004, pp. 26–27) a Quechua scholar, adds that on Turtle Island, the relationship between the US government and American Indians can best be described “as one of exploitation—that is, the imposed extraction of labor and natural resources for capital gain.”

Peat says that this process of exploitation by a dominant economic and political power produced a worldview which has forced all other cultures into a single, uniform way of seeing. This, among other things, results in the destruction of cultural diversity:

When [western] science claims to be speaking the truth, then, by implication, other peoples’ truths become legends, superstitions, and fairy stories. A dominant society denies the authenticity of other peoples’ systems of knowledge and in this way strikes at the very heart of their cultures. P. 42.

Wallerstein (2004) notes that this eurocentric worldview carried over into the development of the social sciences, which grew out of a late 18th century divorce of the “pure sciences” from philosophy. Philosophy then divided into various sub-disciplines known under the general rubric of the Humanities or Arts and Letters. A further split occurred when some within the Humanities identified their scholarship more with empirical methodologies.

The first was history. Although historical enquiry goes back thousands of years, beginning in the 19th century a new approach known as historiography attempted to make the discipline “scientific” by limiting its scope to the study of written documents from the past that documented contemporaneous events and could then be archived. Thus, written accounts by Europeans regarding their “discovery” of the “New World” could be included in the historical record, but oral accounts from Native peoples about their past could not. Native peoples, in other words, had no history. This greatly reduced the scope of history to the documentation of evolving European nation states—all of which were Christian, had writing systems and claimed cultural links to the “high civilizations” of ancient Greece and Rome.

One result of this narrow compartmentalization of history was the proliferation of other disciplines—also based on empirical method—which have come to be known as the social sciences. The first of these were economics, sociology and political science. Anthropology was the fourth. As 19th century European nations imposed their domination over the rest of the world, scientific interest shifted toward more ethnographic endeavors (Sorenson 1992). This allowed for the creation of what Willinsky (1998) describes as a “science of race,” which was used to justify domination, theft of land, slavery and genocide. Anthropology thus became a new way to study Indigenous peoples under colonial control for the purpose of both further exploiting them and at the same time rationalizing that exploitation. Once their primitiveness and racial inferiority had been

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6 Turtle Island is the term many Indigenous people use to refer to The Americas.
7 About the only remnant of the medieval European tradition linking science with philosophy is in the granting of doctor of philosophy degrees in a wide range of disciplines.
8 Non-Christian peoples with literate traditions from such places as China, India, Persia and the Arab world were seen as ancient “high civilizations” which were frozen in time and thus also largely excluded from the scientific progress of history. Studying these cultures required special philological skills acquired by western specialists known as Orientalists.
"scientifically proven"", the issue of their "real" history had to be addressed. Since Indigenous peoples had no history, anthropology expanded its area of study into archeology so that researchers could literally dig up the Native past. More often than not, one of the aims of this type of archeological research was to delegitimize Indigenous narratives of their own past, including land tenure claims – and thus further expropriate land and natural resources10.

The legacy of academic imperialism today

This racist legacy still haunts us today. As linguists, anthropologists and other outside experts, we continue to view Native peoples as objects of study and/or dependency rather than as locations of struggle and survivance, where non-Native scholars can support Indigenous efforts to overcome over 500 years of domination and exploitation.

Vine Deloria, Jr., probably the leading Native American intellectual of the 20th century, notes that in 1954, when under the administration of President Eisenhower the US senate was preparing to terminate all Native American rights, there was not a single scholar, anthropologist, sociologist, historian or economist who came forward to support the tribes (Deloria, 1988). He asks, "How much had scholars learned about Indians from 1492 to 1954 that would have placed termination in a more rational light? Why didn’t the academic community march to the side of the tribes?" (p. 94)

On the other hand, when it comes to "knowledge for knowledge’s sake" or “knowledge for the sake of science,” as non-Native researchers, we have felt no moral or ethical compunctions about embarking on Indiana Jones-like adventures anywhere across the globe to investigate Native peoples, document their customs and languages, and to collect their tools, artifacts and even their bones11. More recently, blood samples for DNA testing have become a popular collector’s item.

These documents, test samples and artifacts continue to be carted back to institutions of higher learning, museums, libraries and research centers which are almost always managed by non-Native specialists charged with categorizing and cataloging them. Rarely are Native peoples part of the process beyond the most rudimentary, non-managerial roles12.

As linguists, we often claim that our interest in Indigenous languages is to document them for posterity sake before they die of natural causes. According to this scenario, people willingly give up their heritage language in order to help themselves and their children succeed in a globalized job market dominated by colonizer languages. Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley (1998), for example, claim "The fundamental cause for the disappearance of human language is well known. Speakers abandon their native language where use of that language is no longer advantageous to them." (p. 36).

However, as I and others have written (Hough, Thapa-Magar and Yonjan-Tamang 2009), "Problems caused by the devaluation of one’s mother tongue are endemic to Indigenous communities worldwide. They are not voluntary but are brought about by

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9 19th century American anthropological studies actually listed Blacks at the bottom, with American Indians slightly above Mexicans but below Chinese and Japanese.

10 Based on this paradigm archeologists still announce that bones found at a particular site really belonged to some long extinct prehistoric tribe and that they are unrelated to the current Native inhabitants, whom these "experts" claim migrated much later (in some cases after the beginning of colonization). This combined misuse of archeology and exclusion of Native accounts of their own past to tell official history allows for further exploitation of Indigenous land and resources.

11 Skeletal remains have long been a major issue of contention. Although many remains have been repatriated, many more have not – and in some cases, they continue to be taken.

12 Managerial control of museums, libraries and archives has been an ongoing Indigenous struggle. In response to this, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian opened in 2004 under Native American directorship. Nevertheless, it continues to come under criticism for the way in which curators collaborate with Indigenous communities.
the domination of one language over another.” Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1999), an internationally renowned linguistic human rights scholar, writes:

...if people are forced to shift their languages in order to gain economic benefits of the kind which are in fact bare necessities for basic survival, this is a violation of not only their economic human rights but also their linguistic human rights. P. 214.

The results in terms of human psychology range from feelings of inferiority, humiliation and self-hate to outright denial of one’s culture and heritage. Here, it could be argued that denying children the right to learn in their mother tongue is a form of linguistic genocide. (See Dunbar and Skutnabb-Kangas 2008 UNPDII expert paper for a thorough discussion of this issue).

As linguists, we also often claim our documentation can help to preserve endangered languages but the results of our research rarely gets back to the communities they are supposedly intended to serve – or, at least not in any usable form. One possible exception to might be an initiative being carried out in the Department of Linguistics at MIT, under work started by the late Kenneth Hale (See Meyer and Alvarado, 2010; pp. 48–49 for a discussion of this by Noam Chomsky). Probably the most famous MIT project came out of work done by Jessie Baird13.

Beyond that, however, the most frequent type of material that gets back to local communities is in support of the ongoing Christianizing mission – another legacy of colonization. Here, groups such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics and related organizations like the Wycliffe Bible Translation Foundation, combine linguistic documentation with missionary work.

It should be of no surprise, then, to find that linguists, anthropologists – and increasingly social workers, health specialists and development aid experts – are not high on many Native peoples’ respect lists. In fact, we are occasionally even asked to quit our projects and leave. Deloria (1988, p. 95) gives an account of one such incident where the Chairman of the Red Lake Chippewa tribe in Minnesota had anthropologists escorted from his reservation.

All of this suggests that, at the bare minimum, linguists, anthropologists and other non-Native researchers need to do some deep soul searching before even thinking about embarking on research and other projects in Indigenous communities. We need, among other things, to consider whose interests our research privileges, what gets studied and whose work gets published (Martin, 1994), where our funding comes from, how our grants may compete with funding for Indigenous initiatives, and how we can begin to repair the damage we have helped create.

One way to help repair some of the damage is to prioritize working with Indigenous peoples in bottom-up community-based initiatives, which support their agendas. Deloria makes the following proposal:

I would advocate a policy to be adopted by Indian tribes which would soon clarify the respective roles of anthropologists and tribes. Each anthro desiring to study a tribe should be made to apply to the tribal council for permission to do his study. He would be given such permission only if he raised as a contribution to the tribal budget an amount of money equal to the amount he proposed to spend in his study. Anthropologists would thus become productive members of Indian society instead of ideological vultures. P. 95.

Another way might be for all projects to come directly from Indigenous communities with funding controlled by them. Rather than outside experts

13 The Wópanáak Language Reclamation Project began in 1993 under the direction of Jessie ‘little doc’ Baird who earned a Masters Degree in Algonquian Linguistics from MIT in 2000. The project aims to return fluency to the Wampanoag Nation as a principal means of expression. It is the first American Indian language to reclaim a language with no living speakers.
getting to pick our own topics of research. I believe we should only become involved when asked – and then, only as advisors. In no cases should we be making a profit from such work. All decisions about project funding, the appropriate methodology, and how the results are to be used, must be in the hands of the Indigenous communities. Unfortunately, however, this is almost never the case. Instead, it seems that the right of non-Native scholars and experts to go anywhere, investigate anything, and take from anyone continues unabated.

Whose science and knowledge?

Assuming that as outside researchers, we have it in our hearts to do right, it may be useful to begin with a closer examination of the professional knowledge we have received. This goes back to the eurocentric view of what science is. We have probably all been taught to believe that science is neutral and objective. These two beliefs form the basis of much of our professional training. But how true is it? This view ignores things like the selection of what to study, reductionist instruments of measurement and methodology, and taxonomy (scientific naming).

As noted in the previous section, issues of what to study, who gets funded, for what purposes, and whose interests these research privileges are, are major areas of contestation among Indigenous peoples. Major multinational corporations under the rubric of scientific investigation, for example, easily fund projects in support of globalization, while alternative ecological assessments by Indigenous communities are frequently misinterpreted, misused and denied funding. Even in cases where Indigenous initiatives receive funding, they are invariably required to reconcile their data with mainstream findings that have extremely reduced or limited the scope of admissible evidence.

This relates to reductionist instruments of measurement and methodology. Western scientific investigation is generally linear, and based on cause and effect relationships where the number of variables is reduced. Here, Deloria (2004) argues that academia has often been a hotbed of racism because scholars are taught to pretend that they can observe phenomena objectively:

In fact they observe data through culturally prescribed categories that restrict the possible answers and understandings to a predetermined few selections. With Western thought primarily binary, yes/no method of determining truth, so much data is excluded, and so limited are the possible answers that Western knowledge might be regarded as a mere classification system devoid of valid conclusions. Pp. 18–19.

The next problem is taxonomy, or the scientific names we use to classify things – also supposedly neutral and objective. Consider, for example, what images the following words bring to mind: mental illness, abnormality, disorder, and syndrome. The terms at first may appear to be neutral and objective but for those so diagnosed, the results of such labeling may involve stigmatization, feelings of inferiority and exclusion from larger society.

Take schizophrenia as one example. In most western industrial societies, schizophrenia is considered a serious mental illness – something which may be a threat to others in society and thus require intervention or even institutionalization. In many indigenous societies, however, those which western society would label as schizophrenics may become highly respected and valued members of their

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14 In his 1962 landmark work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn argues that science is not the progress of truth from a lesser truth to a greater truth, but that it is just a belief system, which keeps shifting. In fact, he argues that science as we know it, is nothing more than a western ideology developed over the past 300 years.

15 E. Fuller Torrey, a world-renowned expert on schizophrenia from the National Institute of Mental Health in the US, questions how universal schizophrenia really is. Although tentative, he notes that documented cases of schizophrenia among indigenous peoples appear to be highest in populations with long contact with the west, suggesting that environmental factors such as colonization may play a role. He also speculates that changes to a western diet may be a factor.
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communities. In fact, they often become shamans and lead highly productive lives. Here, labels such as mentally ill or abnormality don’t exist. I might add that during my many years of work in Micronesia, I never found an Indigenous word corresponding to any of these disorders. Instead, on the island of Kosrae, for example, the term used to describe such people is “mwet kuloh,” which translates as a person of respect.

The point I wish to make here is that all descriptions – including those we take for granted to be neutral and based on objective scientific research – are really cultural and value laden. From our understandings of the origins of the universe to medical technology, our words and concepts contain both implicit and explicit cultural biases.

**Overcoming the “scientific” paradigm**

Unlike western knowledge systems which tend to be exclusive, anthropomorphic, linear, reductionist and claim to be value free (although they are not), Indigenous knowledge systems tend to be inclusive, relational, cyclic, holistic and spiritual. Gregory Cajete (2000), a Tewa Indian scholar, defines Native science as follows:

Native science is a metaphor for a wide range of tribal processes of perceiving, thinking, acting, and “coming to know” that have evolved through human experience with the natural world. Native science is born of a lived and storied participation with the natural landscape. To gain a sense of Native science one must participate with the natural world. To understand the foundations of Native science one must become open to the roles of sensation, perception, imagination, emotion, symbols, and spirit as well as that of concept, logic, and rational empiricism. P. 2.

Judy Dow, an Abenaki knowledge holder, expert basketmaker, Native ethno-botanist and educator, notes that Indigenous science is embedded in story. It is cyclic, often beginning and ending with the same story. In between there are many other stories which are teaching points based on many generations of careful observation and knowledge that have been passed down in oral tradition. They are also moral, teaching how to care for all our relations. In contrast, Peat (2005) argues that western science is not integrative and does little to provide the values and meaning that help bind society together (p. 87).

Donald Fixico (2003), an Indigenous scholar who is the Thomas Bowlus Distinguished Professor of American Indian History at the University of Kansas, elaborates on the cyclic and relational nature of Indigenous science:

In circular philosophy, all things are related and involved in the broad scope of Indian life. As part of their life ways, the [I]ndigenous peoples of the Americas have studied the Earth, observed the heavenly bodies and contemplated the stars of the universe. The Mayans recorded a calendar based on the number of new moons in a year. The Lakota completed an astronomy about the heavenly bodies, and the Muscogee Creeks incorporated the stars and galaxies into their ethos of the universe. All such things are in a vast continuum that Albert Einstein referred to as circular in form. P. 42.

Vandand Shiva (1997), a noted physicist and leader of the International Forum on Globalization, argues that Indigenous knowledge systems are by and large ecological, while the dominant model of scientific knowledge, characterized by reductionism and fragmentation, is not equipped to take the complexity of interrelationships in nature fully into account. This inadequacy becomes most significant in the domain of life sciences, which deal with living organisms.

Meanwhile, Winona LaDuke (2002), an Anishinaabe ecologist and internationally acclaimed Native American activist, relates Indigenous science

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15 See Cajete’s landmark works Native Science, and A People’s Ecology for a full treatment of Indigenous science.
to traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). She describes TEK as a culturally and spiritually based way in which Indigenous peoples relate to their ecosystems:

This knowledge is founded on generations of careful observation within an ecosystem of continuous residence [and] represents the clearest empirically based system for resource management and ecosystem protection. ...Native societies’ knowledge surpasses the scientific and social knowledge of the dominant society in its ability to provide information and a management style of environmental planning. P. 78.

Deloria (2001) argues that "The answers that we will receive, when we ask elders and when we read recorded accounts of beliefs and practices, will often seem strange and many times irreconcilable with our scientific knowledge. But we must not use the scientific method to determine the truth or falsity of our comparison." Instead, he says it is necessary to place this difference within the Tribal context. Only here, he claims can conflicting points of view be recognized. He adds that, "As Indians we know some things because we have the cumulative testimony of our people. We think we know other things because we are taught in school that they are true. The proper transition in Indian education should be the creative tension that occurs when we compare and reconcile these two perspectives." (p. 86)

Judy Dow (Frink and Dow 2005), explains that what she looks for when comparing the two perspectives, "is corroboration - not validation - of what my ancestors have passed on to me." (p. 51). Likewise, Waziyatwin Angela Wilson (2005), a Native Dakota historian, says, "While most academic historians examine oral tradition and look for written evidence to validate it, for us, we knew a written story actually had merit if we had heard the same stories from our elders." (p. 36).

**Beginning to decolonize the agenda**

This tension between Indigenous knowledge systems and western worldviews and values continues to play out in a variety of ways both inside and outside of academia. Some of the issues of concern include factors which continue to impede Native peoples from climbing the academic ladder, how indigenous knowledge can be protected, problems relating to co-opting by outside researchers and others, the right of Indigenous naming and what that means, and what "helping" Indigenous peoples really implies. All of these are areas that we as outsiders regularly deal with in our work, and must therefore critically assess.

Two key issues here may be what I call a lack of recognition/acceptance by many outside researchers of white guilt and white privilege. I understand white guilt as a necessary admission of the fact that crimes of the past have yet to be resolved and this calls for a commitment to do something about it. White privilege, on the other hand, requires us to understand that as outside researchers we have unequal access to funding, resources and documentation over Native peoples. Maybe this is why George Tinker (2004), an Indigenous scholar from the Osage Nation, says "The liberation of euro-american peoples must be rooted in confession and repentance with respect to their relationship with Native peoples of this continent." (p. 26).

The following list is a brief compilation of some things Indigenous and minority activists have said that we as outside experts need to do. It is offered here as a working list of concerns that might eventually go into a set of ethical guidelines for outsiders involved with Indigenous peoples. In large part, it is a summary of many of the key points that I have attempted to cover in this paper.

- **Linguistic and professional elitism and the need to “deprofessionalize”:**
  Move away from the western "scientific" paradigm. Critically examine our received academic, professional & educational standards. Give back from a perspective of white guilt (increasing white guilt and first world shame will help change our worldview). Stop doing research; become
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an activist. Understand how the “glass barrier” keeps Indigenous people out of academia and the professions.

- **Stop helping to create or exacerbate dependencies:** Develop a critical understanding of globalization. Stop telling Indigenous and minority peoples how to “fix” problems that the colonizing world has created, and stop demanding that they use western top-down models in doing so. These models kill Indigenous democratic practices. Understand that Indigenous and minority peoples are not passive. Learn to listen and privilege their voices. Understand how minds are colonized and take steps to overcome that. Understand Indigenous tradition as scientific methodology.

- **Stop coopting:** Stop stealing Indigenous knowledge and cultural artifacts. Stop marketing Indigenous art, music, science, spirituality, etc. Critically scrutinize organizations claiming to promote fair trade, ecotourism, the environment, nature, etc. Work to protect Indigenous IPRs (Intellectual Property Rights). Stop DNA and other biological research among Indigenous peoples and their environments.

- **Do not lead but walk with:** All projects should be bottom-up, not top-down. Stop “helping.” Empowerment means community control and ownership based on traditional values, epistemologies, methodologies and metaphysics. Critically understand and use white privilege correctly. When not understanding Indigenous perspectives and teachings, accept them at face value. Properly contextualized, answers will come later. Understand that issues of Indigenous land rights cannot be separated from human rights, or from research initiatives.

Some concluding remarks

The legacy of genocide and colonization is still very much with us. Only the names have changed. Now going under the rubric of globalization, development, education, job creation, ecotourism, environmental sustainability, health care, substance abuse and domestic violence interventions, etc., they serve to do little more than further steal Indigenous lands, culture, language, knowledge and sovereignty. Those who wish to work in Indigenous communities must be willing to come forward – not as leaders – but as allies in the struggle for Indigenous human rights.

A prerequisite for such researchers coming from first–world countries who wish to become involved in these struggles, might be a pre–fieldwork training course which – in addition to a thorough examination of the ethical guidelines outlined above – would require us as participants to study under Indigenous knowledge holders to critically examine our own history and then respond to the following questions (Hough 2009, 107):

1. What kinds of cultural values, belief systems, assumptions and psychologies develop among the social classes in various stages of capitalist development up through the present?
2. How universal are these values and to what extent are they compatible with other cultural systems – such as, for example, the subsistence economies of many Indigenous cultures around the world?
3. How might this knowledge help to reframe [your thinking as] first world professionals sent as technical consultants, aid workers, administrators, etc.?

The discussion is not complete. It is ethnocentric and based on my own experiences and interpretations as an outsider. Hopefully there are others – especially Indigenous peoples – who can further the process. But this may be a good place to both end and begin the discussion.

Native viewpoints are necessary because the “mental means of production” in regards to analyzing Indian cultures have been owned, almost exclusively, by non–Indians. Radical Native viewpoints, voices of difference rather than commonality, are called for to disrupt the
powers of the literary status quo as well as the powers of the state—there is a link between thought and activism, surely.

— Craig S. Womack, Muscogee Creek–Cherokee (1999:5)

Celebrating survival is a particular sort of approach. While non–[I]ndigenous research has been intent on documenting the demise and cultural assimilation of [I]ndigenous peoples, celebrating survival accentuates not so much our demise but the degree to which [I]ndigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity.

— Linda Tuhiwi Smith, Māori (2001:145)

Ultimately, however, indigenous scholars—both men and women—will need to construct their own theoretical systems relevant to their current struggles and conditions.

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