

THE
MEDICINE
OF
PEACE

Indigenous Youth Decolonizing
Healing and Resisting Violence

JEFFREY PAUL ANSLOOS

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*This book is dedicated to Lisa Dawn,
with dreams that feel like prayers.*

EXCERPT

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PREFACE

All that we are is story. From the moment we are born to the time we continue on our spirit journey, we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. It is what we arrive with. It is all we leave behind. We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship — we change the world, one story at a time. (Wagamese 2012)

I come to this work with a story. And it is the story of my people that gives this work spirit. So I begin my story by saying *tansi*, *wahkohtowin* and *peace be with you*. “Tansi” is a Cree greeting that means “hello.” The word “wahkohtowin” refers to all of my relations. “Peace be with you” is a historic Christian greeting meant to convey the love of the Creator. Together these words form the basis of the work ahead. We must encounter one another, recognize our kinship and bestow on one another the dignity of kinship, the medicine of peace.

My name is Jeffrey Paul Ansloos. I am the son of Sherry Lynne Marie Thompson, or by her birth name, Lisa Dawn Stevenson, who is the daughter of both *nôhkom* (Cree for my grandmother) Selena and my German grandmother Shirley Thompson. My grandmother Shirley is a wonderfully kind woman raised by my great grandparents, German immigrants who settled in southern Manitoba, Canada, in the early 1900s. This part of Canada was largely settled by an ethno-religious group called the Mennonites, who had for generations been persecuted in Europe for their commitment to a life of peace demonstrated through nonviolence. This religious group created a strong sense of community life in southern Manitoba through the sharing of resources, providing a strong sense of identity as pacifists,

and by promoting a community that was concerned with issues of social justice around the world. That said, the Mennonites also struggled significantly in their relations with Indigenous peoples. Their settlement displaced many Indigenous nations, especially Métis people. This religious community profoundly shaped the values of my family. When my grandmother was in her mid-twenties during the late 1960s, she and my grandfather Ross pursued the adoption of an 18-month-old Cree girl, my mother.

Nôhkom Selena was originally from a reserve in central Manitoba called Fisher River Cree Nation. Selena's mother died when she was very young. Her father was a fisherman. When nôhkom was in her early teens she was sent to a residential school in Brandon, Manitoba, that was a six-hour drive from Fisher River to be given primary and secondary schooling by the Ministry of Indian Affairs. Like hundreds of residential schools across North America, there have been legal actions that have demonstrated that there was pervasive abuse of Indigenous children in the Brandon residential school. Abuse that took place in these schools happened on a variety of levels. This is a sad and painful part of our history that I will discuss as best as I can in this book. Needless to say, it is part of the reason why, for many years, my mother and I were disconnected from our identity as Cree people.

In her late teens, Selena became pregnant and, as a young woman, felt compelled to let my mother be raised by another family with more resources and opportunities. My mother was put into the Manitoba adoption agency that primarily provided adoption for Indigenous children throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Neither my mother nor I met Selena until 1998 when we were repatriated with her and our other family members. The day I met nôhkom was difficult, yet beautiful. It is always hard to face pain and understand the implications of people's sacrifice. Facing pain is always a risk too. The outcome is never certain. However, healing rarely comes without risking.

It was powerful hearing how, on the day Selena gave my mother up for adoption, she walked miles down Portage Avenue in Winnipeg holding my mother to her chest, wondering if she was making the right decision. Doubt is often a companion to sacrificial love. It was healing to hear of how every year on my mother's birthday Selena would toast her daughter Lisa Dawn with her other children and spouse. It was confusing and painful to hear the mixed regret felt throughout the years by nôhkom for giving my mother up for adoption. It was interesting to watch Selena as she listened to Shirley talk about the adoption. We all had so many questions. It was exciting looking at photos of her other family and, for the first time in my life, seeing people who I could say looked like my mom and I. It was beautiful to see nôhkom laugh and smile just like my mother. Who we are is so much more than who we want to be; we are shaped so much by who we come from.

I remember the moment nôhkom first hugged me. It was the kindest experience.

It was like being reconnected to someone you never knew could exist. I saw her cry, smile and stare in wonder. Honestly, I had never allowed myself to feel the loss of not knowing my Cree family. I had, for most of my life, felt the clear absence of cultural identity as a Cree boy, but I did not make that connection to the absence of family. It was as if, when all of us — my mother, my grandmother, *nòhkom* and I — stood in a circle, looking at each other we were given a new type of imagination. For my mother and I, we began to imagine something that had, for most of our lives, been something that was confusing and uncomfortable; that is, who we are as Cree people. We were now Cree people with a Cree family. It was the beginning of understanding how our lives intersected with the lives of a family of Indigenous people who had struggled, yet loved deeply. It was also the beginning of understanding how our lives intersected with the story of the Sixties Scoop and the horrors of the residential schools, and how deeply our family had suffered in these systems.

I tell you this because, for me, it is the frame of my current task. My mother and I have been working hard to understand who we are in light of the history of our people. Selena's story shaped my interest in studying the history of the residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, and it has shaped my desire to work in the area of mental health with Indigenous people. My grandma Shirley and the Mennonites in southern Manitoba taught me that, at its best, spirituality can be a reflective community of peace and justice. Both Selena and Shirley have taught me that love heals a multitude of injuries, and that often the work of peace begins with risking an embrace. In embrace we discover each other, real humans, with real pains and real imagination. I wonder sometimes if it is in this intermingling of suffering and hope where the Creator gives us spirit.

CHAPTER ONE

INDIGENOUS YOUTH

I had just finished my PhD proposal when I first heard then-National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Shawn Atleo, comment to Canadian news reporters that Indigenous youth in Canada were “more likely to end up in jail than to graduate from high school” (Atleo 2011: 3). That was it. That was my wake-up moment. That was the moment when I realized my life had to change. It needed to engage the profound issues of violence facing Indigenous peoples, and especially Indigenous youth. This statement by Chief Atleo awakened me to a deeper understanding of my own privilege. As an Indigenous graduate of secondary and postsecondary education, I had an ethical responsibility to make my education accountable to the many Indigenous youth who were living in contexts of ongoing colonial violence.

For most of my life, the pursuit of education was the ticket that freed my family from the racialized stereotypes that pervade much of settler Canadian consciousness regarding Indigenous peoples.¹ I have lost count of the times that I have heard teachers reify the notion that educated Indigenous persons are somehow the exception to the natural position of an Indigenous person. For them, the “educated Native” is somehow the exception to the so-called natural state of Indigenous affairs: disordered, violent and a problem to be dealt with. For a long time, certainly throughout my own adolescence, the shame of this stereotype drove me to associate myself as little as possible with my Indigenous identity. I so desperately did not want my Indigenous identity to be seen, never questioning how the colonization of my mind had occurred in such a way that stripped my identity of the dignity of Indigenous traditions, imprisoning my culture and disrupting my relations.

Throughout my early twenties, it was through working with Indigenous youth

in schools, prisons and in mental health programs that I began to decolonize my mind and heart. I began to recognize that not only was the story I had been given regarding Indigenous youth wrong, but it was oppressive and violent. The colonial structures at work in Canadian society are rigged in a way that when they are not disproportionately incarcerating the bodies of Indigenous youth, they are actively incarcerating the mind and heart, oppressing the identity of Indigenous peoples through racial stereotyping, shaming and whitewashing.

But why? Why is a free Indigenous young person such a threat to the colonial status quo? The fact is that Indigenous youth are some of the most inspiring, psychologically resilient and socially brilliant gifts of the Creator to all of our relations. As a society, we have failed to recognize their dignity. Indigenous youth make up the bulk of the Indigenous population and represent one of the fastest growing populations within Canada. They have a significant role to play in the future of Turtle Island, especially regarding the relationship between Indigenous and settler people. Yet, these same gifted Indigenous youth are faced with disproportionate odds and socially marginalized in a vacuum of isolating colonial violence that is institutionalized in the juvenile justice system.

The alarmingly high rate of incarceration is one of the many challenges that Indigenous youth have faced, existing as a marginalized people in a colonial setting. More disturbing, however, is that in recent national studies on victims of violence throughout Canada, Indigenous youth represent the most highly assaulted demographic of the Canadian population (Scrim 2011). These demographic circumstances are sobering because they reveal the complexity and ongoing nature of systemic injustice in Canada. In recognition of the potential of Indigenous youth, statistics such as these should elicit a wave of interventions that empower these young people. However, Atleo (2011: 3) also points out that, “we’ve become numb to the statistics.” As a society, Canada continues to fail these young people in providing them the serious attention and dignity that they desperately need and are deserving of. And all of this has been going on for a long time.

For generations, Indigenous peoples have been subjected to incredible violence at the hands of Canadian society. This violence has included racist legislation, treaty violations, the abusive policies and practices of social programming and the subjugation of Indigenous communities to Eurocentric psychosocial interventions that marginalize Indigenous culture and disrupt the formation and continuity of Indigenous identity. The status of Indigenous youth in Canada is reflective of such marginalization. Neocolonialism actively continues the historic marginalization and alienation of Indigenous identity, creating an ever-widening gap between Indigenous youth and the richness of their identity as Indigenous peoples. The result of colonialism is the alienation of many Indigenous people from their cultural traditions and identity, and such discontinuity structures the complexity of violence

in the lived experience of Indigenous youth. High rates of violent victimization among Indigenous youth cannot be detached from the colonial context. The applied disciplines of the social sciences² often perpetuate this hegemonic violence through an espousal of colonial values, and, subsequently, fail to offer a helpful paradigm that can serve the interest of Indigenous youth in the process of revitalizing their cultural identity.

The complexity of violence in the lived experience of Indigenous youth raises some crucial questions: First, in a colonial context inherently structured to be violent and create cultures of violence, how can critical-Indigenous perspectives nonviolently challenge and resist the hegemony of approaches to youth work that are complicit in undermining Indigenous identity? Second, how can evolving nonviolent Indigenous psychosocial traditions uniquely support the revitalization of identity among Indigenous youth?

In regards to the questions raised in this book, I argue that what is needed is a critical movement away from a colonial mentality in the social sciences towards an Indigenous articulation of a psychology, specifically one rooted in the revitalization of cultural identity for marginalized Indigenous youth. In this book, I argue that such revitalization can occur in the following four ways:

First, a critical-Indigenous perspective must critique the colonial violence of Western social science for the ways it disrupts and alienates Indigenous youth from their cultural identity, as well as constructs Indigenous youth identity as violent, delinquent and something to be feared. Second, Indigenous peace traditions must shape the contours of a culturally revitalizing Indigenous psychology. Third, psychosocial interventions for Indigenous youth, especially those who are involved with the justice system, must be methodologically grounded in Indigenous history and tradition. That is to say, in this case, cultural identity revitalization for Indigenous youth will emerge from culturally situated ceremony, informed by Indigenous peace traditions, which in their conception are oriented by a traditional system of holistic relationality. Finally, psychological practice must advocate for Indigenous youth by promoting and aligning its loyalties with a sociocultural Indigenous agenda.

To provide an introductory framework for this theoretical examination, I will begin by exploring how the social sciences have become complicit in undermining the identity of Indigenous youth through the espousal of colonial values. Then, using the lens of critical, postcolonial and Indigenous sociopolitical theory, I will demonstrate how research has come to recognize the impact of colonialism as something that has created a disconnection between Indigenous youth and their ethical formation, and evolving Indigenous traditions and cultures. Finally, the development of an Indigenous psychology of cultural identity revitalization will be framed within a critical-Indigenous nonviolent perspective, reflective of Indigenous traditions and in advocacy for an Indigenous sociopolitical agenda.

INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN THE CROSSHAIRS OF COLONIAL SOCIAL SCIENCES

In the context of Western colonial history, the applied social sciences are traditionally heralded as culturally neutral, objective and operating outside of the sociopolitical interests of settler governments. The ongoing suffering of Indigenous young people in Canada would suggest otherwise, and a variety of emerging studies seem to confirm such claims. A number of critical features are evident that highlight a colonialist and Indigenous contrast including: (1) a retributive vision of justice (the idea that individual punishment is necessary when someone has committed a wrongdoing in order for justice to occur); (2) an individualistic versus systemic vision of psychosocial practice; (3) an emphasis on Western interventions; (4) an individualistic view of psychological development; and (5) racist research.

Retributive versus Restorative Visions of Justice

The Canadian juvenile justice system that is mandated to provide rehabilitation to remanded youth fails to address key psychological factors that hold these youth back after their release. Instead, this system uses a retributive model of justice, which is doing little to address the ever-growing increase in Indigenous youth violence. Totten (2009), in an article on gang violence among Indigenous youth, harshly critiques social policy in Canada for neglecting to develop preventative interventions that empower youth to resist violence. He argues that the policy employed by various branches of social science is to “get tough” on criminal justice involved youth. However, this emphasis on punishment does little to address psychological injuries among the population. These interventions “fail to address psychosocial issues such as child maltreatment, mental health, substance abuse, education, and employment” (Totten 2009: 143). Failure to address these broader sociological and contextual factors heaps colonial blame on Indigenous youth, and effectively eliminates the possibility of restoring their social and cultural health. As it will become clear in this book, addressing the complex issues of violence in the lives of Indigenous youth requires concern with the idea of justice occurring through relational processes that emphasize interpersonal culpability. This approach to justice takes seriously the idea that the pain of violence isn’t healed simply by a punishment, but rather, humans heal and change through relational experiences of empathy and reconciliation. Restorative approaches ask that we understand violence as a relational problem that requires empathy, commitment to the dignity of all people and a socio-ecological approach to understanding responsibility and pathways to change.

Individualistic versus Systemic Psychosocial Practice

The current approaches to rehabilitation perpetuate a colonialist mentality in that they emphasize individualist conceptions of intervention. Totten (2009: 143–144) suggests that the data concerning Indigenous youth rehabilitation illustrate that Western modes of incarceration do little to stem future violent offenses, especially without a long-term communally orchestrated rehabilitation plan. According to Totten, most curriculum-based prevention programs targeting Indigenous youth are ineffective in preventing gang violence. The contextual factors of Indigenous child welfare (including bullying, sexual abuse, physical restraints by staff, criminalization and a lack of permanency in placements) further the assault on these youth, structuring their development in revolving relational attachments which reinforce emotional experiences of rejection and shame. As the following chapters will highlight, in order for psychosocial interventions to be helpful in supporting Indigenous youth, they must become deeply oriented towards promoting the thriving and wellbeing of Indigenous communities. Interventions on the individual level alone do little to promote long-term change, and therefore what is needed are approaches that understand the effects of violence in complex social perspectives, and that are able to offer interventions that move systemically throughout the varied networks of community life.

An Emphasis on Western Interventions

Much of the rehabilitative programming offered in response to the rising prevalence of youth violence is entrenched in Western methods (such as behavioral modification). At best, in the current system, if trauma-focused interventions are a part of the rehabilitation of Indigenous youth, the interventions treat acute trauma (for example, witnessing an armed robbery) as opposed to complex trauma (for example, intergenerational colonial violence). This level of care is simply inadequate in addressing the complex needs of Indigenous youth. Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo (2003), in a study on mental health promotion within the Indigenous population of Canada, demonstrate that through the historic and contemporary impact of colonial violence, Indigenous youth are especially vulnerable in terms of mental health issues. Despite this, they state that few interventions address the cultural source of these pathologies. They suggest that the context “complicate[s] the efforts of First Nations youth to forge their identities and find their ways in the world” (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo 2003: S20).

An Individualistic View of Psychological Development

In contrast to Western models of adolescent identity development, Indigenous youth traditionally had a more prominent role in the life of a community. According to Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo (2003: S20), “the notion of adolescence as a distinct period in the life cycle between childhood and adulthood was not sharply drawn,” rather, youth functioned with “responsibilities for sustenance activities and raising families.” The socialization of traditional Indigenous peoples was rooted in a more egalitarian worldview, and reciprocal communal empowerment. Traditionally, “everyone was important and everyone had a role” but in the colonial context, youth are left “without clearly defined direction” (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo 2003: S20). Further, Indigenous youth have “experienced a profound disjuncture between traditional roles and the limited opportunities available to them in many First Nations communities” (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo 2003: S20).

One might assume the various professional bodies of applied social science would advance interventions that promote youth empowerment and meaningful social roles for Indigenous youth within their communities. However, “today [youth] are largely excluded from community decision-making and are the passive recipients of mental health programs and services designed and delivered through centralized state decision-making processes” (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo 2003: S21). The colonial dynamics, which deny self-determined programming to Indigenous peoples, are evident here. The dominant paradigm of psychological intervention at work in Canada does not consider the complex contextual dynamics that shape the mental health of these youth.

Racist Research

Lip service to cultural sensitivity and historic colonialism is not sufficient for addressing the complex histories intersecting the lives of Indigenous youth. Psychological intervention must be grounded in a critical perspective sensitive to the fundamental racial biases that serve the interest of Canadian neocolonialism. Racial biases permeate psychological treatment models with their emphasis on a biomedical approach to social or individual wellness. Dell et al. (2011: 76–77), in a study on solvent abuse among Indigenous youth, argue that, in addition to the deliberate legislative policies of the government, the biomedical approach of psychology is “at odds” with Indigenous approaches to healing. In their review of psychiatric literature, they point out that in Canada, “mental health research has paid scant attention to the role culture plays.” Coyhis and Simonelli (2008), in a recent study on addictions recovery among Indigenous peoples, argue that the dominant approach to addressing addictions is fundamentally racist towards Indigenous peoples. They point out that despite the dominant stigma in the social

sciences that Indigenous peoples have a predisposition towards alcoholism, there remains no scientific grounding. They clarify that currently “there is no scientific evidence whatsoever to support the notion that the Indigenous people of North America are biologically and racially prone to alcoholism” (Coyhis and Simonelli 2008: 1927).

TOWARDS INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES

These studies highlight the pervasive colonial model at play, and critical reflection on the dominant approach to psychological treatment inevitably leads towards a discussion of the effect of various approaches within particular cultures. In order to address the complexity of the mental health needs of Indigenous youth, Indigenous approaches to mental health (Indigenous psychologies) must be empowered. Hodge, Limb and Cross (2009: 211–212) argue that: “current mental health practices appear to be largely ineffective in terms of meeting the needs of many Native Americans,” however, “the high levels of unmet mental health needs cannot be attributed solely to lack of access to mental health services.” Despite higher utilization of services, Indigenous peoples do not find therapy effective because the “Western therapeutic project is inconsistent with many Native American cultures and often serves as a form of Western colonization.”

Although there is some debate over how effective treatment methods are for Indigenous peoples, for the most part, therapy itself is assumed by psychologists to be an “appropriate means to address mental health needs across cultures and populations” (Hodge, Limb and Cross 2009: 212). The colonial culture of psychology emphasizes that the Indigenous person “adopt a culturally foreign worldview” and recast what might be understood as Indigenous indicators of their own health for a Western model that casts the same markers as signs of illness (Hodge, Limb and Cross 2009: 213). In rejecting the notion that psychology can be redressed in some “culturally competent garb,” the applied social sciences must work to promote Indigenous psychologies in “Native presuppositional foundation[s] rather than the Enlightenment presuppositional foundation[s]” (Hodge, Limb and Cross 2009: 218).

This tension between Western psychology and Indigenous psychology is seen in the conflict between cultural values of individualism and that of a broad-based relational culture. Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips and Williamson (2011: 85) in an article on resilience from Indigenous perspectives, argue that the field of resilience research emerging from public health studies is limited in its ability to speak to Indigenous experiences because it is too often described in “individual traits or process” rather than communal, ecological or contextually situated factors. According to Kirmayer et al. (2011: 85–86), “much recent work has focused on

the importance of social determinants of health ... but there are also social determinants of health specific to Indigenous populations.” However, the determinants of Indigenous health “are not discrete or independent factors, but interact in ways that reflect historical processes.” In this context, a reductive discussion of social determinants of health do little to address the unique concept of wellbeing among Indigenous communities that is shaped by “distinctive concepts of the person, the importance of collective history, the richness of First Nations languages and traditions, and the importance of individual and collective agency and activism.”

Western psychology fails to acknowledge the complexity of identity in a relational worldview. Indigenous approaches extend relationality into complex and dynamic spheres that go beyond the confines of an enlightenment notion of individualistic identity. Dell et al. (2011: 78–79) similarly argue that a “significant gap in understanding and practice between psychiatric diagnosis-based and First Nations culture-based approaches” exists in part to three fundamental differences in methodological orientations: connection to community, connection to self and connection to the political context.

In terms of connection to community, Dell et al. (2011: 78–79) suggest that “Western orientations toward health outcomes concentrate on the absence of disease” and “a system of classification ... [emphasizing] an individual’s healthy mind.” For Indigenous peoples, conceptions of health are not defined in terms of cognition and mental wellbeing. Rather, they are situated within a “holistic approach that accounts for cultural context and considers the person and the community, and their past, present, and future intersections.” Western dualism expressed through dichotomies between mind and body are not transcultural. In Western approaches to social sciences, often there has been dual (two) primary ways of understanding the self: physical (the body) and cognitive (the mind or mental). This is where the idea of mental health emerges in Western social science, because a strictly biological account of health could not account for people’s suffering. The term mental health however still is bound by the ideas of the biological model, which is why “the term mental wellness is more appropriate, as it incorporates physical, mental, cultural, and spiritual elements of health.”

Approaches to psychological health that fail to address the dynamic conception of identity in an Indigenous cultural context are likely to not simply be ineffective, but also risk being culturally violent. McCabe (2007: 148) suggests that some Indigenous peoples feel that Western interventions exacerbate their issues, and are instead turning to traditional healers to wipe away the “residue of the conventional treatment.” The experience of being made unclean by Western psychology suggests that treatment can be unhelpful, as well as potentially violent. McCabe argues that this is because Western models of care do not appreciate the spiritual nature of healing within Indigenous communities. Based on the findings

of his study, “participants identified a belief in the Creator as the most significant therapeutic condition of traditional healing” (McCabe 2007: 155). Further, participants articulated that, “any healing in a person’s life is dependent on belief in and acceptance of spiritual guidance in this world and that this can be manifest in many ways and means” (McCabe 2007: 155). Until psychology takes seriously this Indigenous worldview, it will continue to undercut the healing process for Indigenous communities.

An Indigenous cultural framework reshapes the entire practice of psychological intervention and research because it resists the “one size fits all mentality” and acknowledges that “one size” can be detrimental to the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. However, psychology as a discipline has demonstrated longstanding resistance to engage from an alternate framework. Ocampo (2010: III) argues that:

Research into Indigenous health has been largely focused on non-Indigenous, rather than Indigenous notions of health while at the same time, counseling of Indigenous patients from mainstream perspectives may perpetuate oppression. In other words, our mental health frameworks, when applied among First peoples, may result in further trauma and perpetuate, rather than address their problems.

Therefore, psychology must work to identify practices that promote the Indigenous construction of identity, which is tied to the broader social community and environment.³ Ocampo (2010: IV) critiques the field for its longstanding silence in formally recognizing “historical, intergenerational, and racist incident-based trauma symptoms as legitimate trauma sequelae.” She also cautions that the impulse of the psychological community’s response cannot be overly simplistic but must consider “effective approaches for acculturated, (dispossessed, alienated), and urban” (2010: V). Finally, she argues that the psychological field has a tendency to view Indigenous methodology as “simplistic nostalgia on the primitive,” which is reflective of an imperialist view of Indigenous culture (2010: V). She suggests that to resist such a cultural inclination, and to engage a primary prevention approach, psychology must associate itself with the sociopolitical aims of Indigenous communities. In such a context, she states, “complex and important” psychologies of Indigenous communities must be “nurtured, respected, and allowed to emerge” (2010: V).

DEMYSTIFYING THE RELUCTANCE TO INDIGENIZE PSYCHOLOGY

The field of psychology is slow to get moving on the work of Indigenous psychologies precisely because in doing so the discipline is forced to reflect upon, consciously recognize and repent from its social and historical identity as a culturally violent colonizer. The stability of colonial structures rests upon continued repression. Philip Cushman proposes that the cultural violence wrought by psychology is a product of a lack of a reflective and critical discourse within the field. In his work, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy*, Cushman (1995) suggests that the Western notion of “self” propagated by psychology is an agent of consumerism and individualistic enterprise. In promoting psychological approaches consistent with the values of consumerism — such as individualism and commodification — the Western notion of “self” actually highlights the problems inherent in a consumer-driven society. According to Cushman, Indigenous communities are targets of this American enculturation of psychology. Cushman (1995: 59) suggests that the consciousness of Western identity has been constructed to reflect the value on personal capital, productivity and the promotion of the empirically utilitarian over that of the communal and experiential and, by implication, Indigenous peoples were cast as “the antithesis of bourgeois values.”

Much of the historic advancement of psychology has rested upon the racialization of identity in Western culture. Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), makes similar criticisms. Said argues that colonial ventures were and are propagated through the social construction of an inferior cultural “Other.” Bhatia (2002) describes the culturally imperialist orientation of psychology especially in the values of evolutionary psychology, developmental psychology and cross-cultural psychology. Utilizing Said’s model, she suggests that the discipline of psychology gained a footing through the propagation of the racial construction of the Other. In the construct of race, psychology has advanced an assimilationist model that views Western society and culture as the apex of evolutionary, developmental and cultural form. Bhatia (2002: 389) also argues that the use of Western experience as the comparative norm in psychological research is indicative of “cultural imperialism.” Bhatia concludes that, despite the clear evidence of the illegitimacy of Western psychological interventions within Indigenous communities, Western psychological research, practice and policy has been reluctant to change. Sundararajan, Misra and Marsella (2012: 2) argue this reluctance exists because Western social science tends to assume the universality of its approach. The authors point out “this peculiarly Western mode of thinking is fabricated, projected, and institutionalized through representation technologies and scientific rituals and transported on a large scale to the non-Western societies

under political-economic domination” (Sundararajan, Misra and Marsella 2012: 2).

Sundararajan et al. (2012: 15, 20) also highlight the difference that the “biomedically oriented Western health system [that] is rooted in a fundamental separation of body and mind as advanced by René Descartes” is not assumed or, for the most part, seen as helpful by many Indigenous psychologies. Further, “the detached, objective technician of the scientist-practitioner model” of Western psychology is not how most Indigenous psychologies understand the role of helping. In contrast, “Indigenous healers of the majority world are engaged participants in a co-created reality known as healing.” These differences are not incidental, rather they reveal that, “mainstream health psychology is ill-equipped to serve the needs of individuals who operate on very different notions of self and wellbeing.”

Sundararajan et al. (2012) suggest Western psychology delegitimizes ritual space. They argue that, for many Indigenous communities, reality is interpreted through a fundamentally different worldview, where the spiritual, sacred and mysterious are fundamental to understanding being in the world. The Western positivist model asserts that all things can be tested because the natural world is within the grasps of scientific inquiry. An alternative, Indigenous model would assert that: “In sharp contrast to the objective, homogenous space-time of the secular worldview, the ritual space is governed by the ontology that perceives being as unevenly distributed, with the highest concentration of quality located at the center” (Sundararajan et al. 2012: 6). In Western social science, there is an unquestioned commitment to the idea that the only things that are true are those things that can be objectively studied and proven through positivist methods. There is an assumption that all human experiences are fundamentally universal and that we are embedded in a material or physical context that is governed by universal laws. Any claims about the nature of experience that differ are subjected to scrutiny on the basis of scientific merit, that is, the proof. But this perspective presupposes that there is no way of *being* human beyond these scientific notions. An Indigenous way of knowing isn’t necessarily concerned with the question of proving the existence of spirit or ceremonial power, or proving the metaphysics of ancestral relationships. If you begin with a different set of assumptions, that these ways of understanding life are valuable, then the notion of spiritual identity, or spiritual wholeness, comes to be of critical importance. That said, this isn’t a call to be intellectually unquestioning. Rather, it is an opportunity to see the ways that scientific positivism has come to function so powerfully in the West that the social sciences all too frequently reduce spiritual aspects of Indigenous identity to symbolic, performative or even pathological terms.

This is a fundamental difference in worldview, and unless taken seriously or given merit by Western psychology, healing will be misconstrued and the spiritual identity of Indigenous youth will continue to be undermined.

CRITICAL-INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES OF NONVIOLENCE: PATHWAYS TO IDENTITY REVITALIZATION

In consideration of the colonial challenges faced by Indigenous youth and the contextual significance of the violent and anti-Indigenous approach of Western psychology, Indigenous peoples must articulate a psychology that promotes cultural revitalization and deep spiritual healing. Henderson and Wakeham (2009: 16–17), in their prolific article on the psychological ethics of reconciliation for Indigenous peoples in Canada, challenge the commonly employed tropes of healing. They suggest that healing is presumed by the social sciences to be understood in terms of “an affirmation of Indigenous lifeways to a potential remedy for Indigenous anti-colonial resistance understood in a psychopathological terms as anger to be overcome, to a process of confession and redemption” (2009: 16). The first trope they critique is the use of the language of cultural healing, which, within the Canadian context, has embedded meaning that fails to recognize semantics of resistance associated with healing. They argue that this may “impose a model of individualized, therapeutic subjectivity that denies the systemic illness of colonization” (2009: 16). The second trope they critique is the language of resilience, which assumes an “individualizing emphasis and [the] normality of behaviorist and developmental” (2009: 17) theory. According to Henderson and Wakeham these theories affirm only the positive elements of Indigenous experience, which demonstrate qualities associated with the “neoliberal norms of the functional self” (2009: 17) and therefore assume the universality of experiences of healing.

Critical Anti-Hegemonic Psychology

The alternative is clear. Rather than the continued dominance of colonial mentalities in psychology that perpetuate myths like universality in healing, what is needed is a response that resists the status quo. Through the emancipation of particular Indigenous psychologies from colonial oppression, healing in the lives of Indigenous youth is possible, but emancipation is necessary. Henderson and Wakeham (2009) call for a “counter-hegemonic” psychological discourse that goes further to situate itself within Indigenous methods, that is, one concerned with the cultural and communal emancipation and revitalization of Indigenous peoples. Their proposal provides the scaffolding of a powerful model of Indigenous psychology that, with some adaptation and augmentation, sets the stage for the following theoretical exploration.

First, the “counter-hegemonic” approach that they call for propels the method of critical psychology towards a commitment to actively resisting colonialism *with* Indigenous youth. Postcolonialist reflection is simply no longer acceptable; rather,

a resolute anti-colonial criticism is needed. Indigenous political theorist, Turner (2006), offers a similar line of reasoning in stating that a critical method must engage European ideas as both a philosophical exercise and a political activity. It is not enough to simply engage European thought on its own terms; Indigenous intellectuals need to critically engage European ideas, methodologies and theories to show how they have marginalized, distorted and ignored Indigenous voices.

I go further than Turner and suggest that we must go beyond demonstrating colonial marginalization, distortion and denial, and must actively deconstruct and delegitimize it. Practically speaking, it is no longer sufficient for Indigenous scholars to critically situate the challenges of Indigenous youth within colonial history without an active anti-colonialist method of resistance that coherently engages, deconstructs and counters the hegemony of colonization. I engage this type of critical psychology, examining, delegitimizing and resisting the colonial structures and processes that oppress Indigenous youth.

Psychology Reflective of Indigenous Culture

Second, Henderson and Wakeman (2009) call for the promotion of an Indigenous method, including cultural and communal revitalization. Turner (2006) similarly proposes that Indigenous theory needs to be situated from within Indigenous conceptions of rights, sovereignty and nationhood, and that ultimately such a philosophy requires an intuitive sense of tradition and a sensitivity to the importance of advancing Indigenous tradition. Indigenous social workers, Sinclair, Hart and Bruyere (2009: 35), describe from their perspective what should characterize the culture of an Indigenous approach:

Indigenism is grounded in place and time. It is based locally but supports global connections between Indigenous peoples. It focuses on establishing our own frame of reference and knowing history from Indigenous perspectives. It recognizes and supports kinship roles between the earth, people and other life and emphasizes that humankind cannot dominate nature.

While supporting the variety of Indigenous methods, the qualitative uniqueness of the psychology developed in the following chapters is the way in which it promotes the revitalization of Indigenous spirituality through Indigenous peace traditions and peacemaking. In a context where colonialism has alienated Indigenous youth from their own ethical traditions and promoted a settler-colonial culture of violence, a traditional Indigenous worldview stands in contrast, demonstrating the holistic relationality and dignity of creation. The interventions posited in the following chapters affirm this perspective through the promotion of consistent

methodological embodiment. That is to say, through peace teachings and peace-making ceremonies for Indigenous youth, this Indigenous psychology will affirm identity rooted in a conception of holistic relationality and the dignity of creation.

Deviating slightly from Henderson and Wakeman's (2009) method, I add that an additional pathway to the revitalization of identity for Indigenous youth is in part related to the advocacy of a sociopolitical Indigenous agenda. Sinclair, Hart and Bruyere (2009: 35) suggest that the Indigenous agenda "holds Indigenous rights as the highest priority for Indigenous peoples and relies on Indigenous knowledge for the basis of daily life. As such, it is a way of life."⁴ Without active sociopolitical advocacy, this way of life perishes.

Indigenous political theorist Taiaiake Alfred (2005: 11) argues that it is only "following an awakening among the people and a cultural redefinition, after social agitation, after engaging in a politics of contention, after creative confrontation, we will be free to determine our own existences." For Alfred, Indigenous spiritual strength begins through the critical engagement of power, and the reengagement of Indigenous cultural practice. Ultimately, however, for Alfred this must move towards sociopolitical agitation, contention and confrontation if freedom and self-determinism is to be realized. The traditional conception of "Indigenous warriors" is key for the development of his approach. He argues (2005: 11):

Wasáse, struggle in all of its forms, truly defines an authentic existence. This is the clearest statement of what I seek to cause with the ideas I am putting forward in this book. This is why I speak of warriors. To be Onkwehonwe, to be fully human, is to be living the ethic of courage and to be involved in a struggle for personal transformation and freedom from the dominance of imperial ideas of power — especially facing the challenges in our lives today. Any other path or posture is surrender or complicity. And though I am speaking nonviolently of a creative interpretation of what it is to be a warrior, I am doing so in full reverence and honour of the essence of the ancient warrior spirit, because a warrior makes a stand facing danger with courage and integrity. The warrior spirit is the strong medicine we need to create something new for ourselves and think through the reality of the present to design an appropriate strategy, use fresh tactics, and acquire new skills.

Despite having serious reservations about the rhetoric of warfare for its immediate affiliation to violence, I appreciate Alfred's conviction that to be "Indigenously Indigenous" one must live by ethics of courage, transformation, freedom and resistance. I honor the traditional values of Indigenous warriors, but suggest that in a context where violence among Indigenous youth is so closely tied to the rhetoric

of warfare, the advocacy of sociopolitical Indigenous agenda must be cautious with language. To illustrate my point, at the Canadian Psychological Association annual conference in 2012, an Indigenous Elder approached me and told me about his concerns that young men and women misappropriate the language of Indigenous warriors in justifying their violent criminal actions within gangs. This Elder had been present in the Oka crisis and was an active participant in the Native Warriors movement, and lamented that media coverage of the crisis did not include images or stories of the peace tents where Elders prayed and performed ceremonies. At the same conference, a member of the Canadian Armed Forces congratulated me on my discussion of warrior psychology and informed me that the armed forces had been using the rhetoric as part of recruitment strategies for Indigenous youth. When I suggested that this appropriation could be viewed as violent propaganda and that it might be unethical, the response was simply to state, "Well, this type of thing happens because we know it works. These kids want to fight. If we don't get them, the U.S. forces will." The point is, language shapes the way we see the world. The Indigenous worldview advocated in this theory demands that our rhetoric transcends the degradation of violence.

Peace theorist, John Paul Lederach (2005: 5), frames such an ethical commitment in the terms of a moral imagination:

Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build the moral imagination ... the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence.

Similarly, when we immerse Indigenous advocacy within the dynamic Indigenous imagination, which is reflected through our diverse traditions, we can empower the peacemakers, who, throughout the generations, have courageously offered a medicine equal to that of Indigenous warriors. I believe this is the medicine our youth need now more than ever, a medicine that will give them back their spirit.

SUMMARY

In this introduction, I argue that the experience of Indigenous youth in Canada is shaped by the colonialist culture of the social sciences. The emerging violence and rates of Indigenous youth violence are related to colonial history. A critical

movement away from an imperialist mentality in the social sciences, as well as the need for an Indigenous psychology rooted in the revitalization of identity for marginalized Indigenous youth, is imperative. The following chapters will further develop such a psychology, committed to critical-Indigenous discourse and oriented by Indigenous peace traditions. Psychological practice must be re-envisioned by such an Indigenous psychology in the domains of intervention and advocacy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why are Canadians by and large unaware of the social and historical issues facing Indigenous communities? What structures and/or systems perpetuate this disconnect between Indigenous peoples' lived experience and public perception?
2. What do you know or what have you heard about colonialism in Canada? How have Indigenous youth been particularly impacted by colonialism in Canada?
3. How does the historical and contemporary experience of colonialism of Indigenous peoples' affect your life and/or your community? In what ways are your life experiences connected to this history?
4. What are the differences between Western social sciences and Indigenous cultural approaches?

Notes

1. Indigenous is a broad label that, in terms of a definition, lacks coherence across the literature. In this book I have tried to use the terms "Indigenous" and "First Nations" somewhat interchangeably to refer to the demographic group that comprises the population native to Turtle Island (or, as it is now called, the Dominion of Canada and the United States of America). I have intentionally tried to move away from the use of the terms "Indian" or "Native" because of their respective roots in Canadian colonial history. That said, I recognize that the use of First Nations and Indigenous have rhetorical limitations and colonial implications. Whenever possible, I attempt to identify particular nations when cultural paradigms are more specifically and historically located. On the other hand, there are times when I describe diverse Indigenous experiences in terms of their resonance with each other. I hope to avoid a type of pan-Indigenism or tokenism, however, and I recognize that diverse Indigenous nations share in the experiences of colonial history and contemporary marginalization. At times, without sacrificing our uniqueness, speaking from our shared experience may also legitimize our common causes within broader social discourse. Further, I also use the words "Indigenist," "critical-Indigenist" and "Indigenous" in reference to philosophical paradigm and method. Finally, the term "Indigenism" is also used to refer to Indigenous sociopolitical and cultural agenda.

2. In the use of the phrase, “applied disciplines of the social sciences,” I wish to implicate applied psychosocial professions that are united by their similar historical emergence, including but not limited to: clinical psychology, social work, educational psychology, counseling psychology and forensic/correctional/criminal rehabilitative psychology. Further, the term is used to communicate a critique throughout the various psychosocial professions, which are predominant within the Canadian context.
3. In the article, Ocampo highlights that this inevitably pushes the discipline into a broader sociopolitical dilemma, as the full promotion of Indigenous identity would make necessary advocacy for Indigenous sovereignty. Although this conclusion is radical and simplistic, Ocampo is accurate in her affirmation of the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and autonomous identity formulation.
4. It is important to note that the discussion of Indigenous rights has, in the last five years, undergone tremendous evolution, as Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States have become international signatories of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. It is my belief that the language of rights as it emerges in the U.N. discourse is not particularly Indigenous, but flows from the language of Western Enlightenment. That said, when discussing Indigenous rights within the context of Indigenous philosophy and Indigenist sociopolitical agenda, this thin discourse is helpful in the promotion of values of self-determinism, autonomy and relational reciprocity. This distinction is crucial, however, because the language of rights does not fully capture the type of holistic relationality many Indigenous peoples are seeking on the sociopolitical front. In a recent presentation I gave at the Indigenous Psychology section of the Canadian Psychological Association, a number of legal and ethical charters were discussed among Indigenous scholars, and the remaining consensus was that although they may have some utility in promoting sociopolitical alliances, ultimately, they pale in comparison to the spiritual traditions and values which should ultimately guide the sociopolitical posture of Indigenous people. For a more detailed analysis, please see the abstract *The U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: New Directions for the Canadian and American Psychological Associations* (Ansloos 2012).