

Pan-Indigenous Anthropology: Differing Needs

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Much as Oscar Kawagley (Yupiaq) once wrote, this article is written from the perspective of an urban Cree-Métis-British-Franco researcher who feels that there are generalizations that can be found within many cultures. These generalizations (based on a pan-Aboriginal essentialism) do not characterize all and everything, but simply offer a means of further exploration, a window into differing worlds (Cook-Lynn 2007). At the same time, I recognize that many cultures share many of the same characteristics, but also have many differing features (Kawagley 1995:3).

I am an Indigenous scholar who has just recently come into contact with anthropology. This recent contact has caused a shift in the negative manner in which I initially viewed anthropologists, allowing recognition that many anthropological techniques and investigative tools hold attractive qualities when doing research with Aboriginals. There are, however, many philosophical traits within Western science and anthropology I find to be incompatible with the ongoing political struggle for decolonization, reaffirmation and neo-construction of a holistic Aboriginal identity, philosophy and political body.

For myself, the anthropologist generally seeks to answer four questions about the study of humans: what is presented; who

presents it; who learns it; and what is learned (Nicholson 1968:3). To that I would like to add: what can this information be used for and who uses it? With Indigenous populations and their *sui generis* Indigenous knowledge I am not convinced that anthropology has always done justice, nor adequately understood the Aboriginal populations of Turtle Island¹ and their specific world vision. I would like to offer a shortened assessment of anthropology and its foundation in the Western worldview by presenting: 1) my Aboriginal holistic philosophical framework by which I conduct my research; 2) criticisms of Western science; and 3) some criticisms of traditional anthropology.

Indigenous Knowledge as a Basis for Indigenous Research

My research within anthropology has attempted to exist within a pan-Indigenous holistic worldview² using the voices of Aboriginal scholars. This idea of a specific pan-Indigenous worldview is very important for many Aboriginal scholars' research. For Oscar Kawagley (who is an excellent representation of many other Aboriginal scholars such as Vine Deloria, Gregory Cajete, Marie Battiste, Eber Hampton etc.), world view is closely related to definitions of culture and a cognitive map. Oscar Kawagley gives what I see as being the most complete definition of Indigenous worldview, by an Indigenous scholar to date.

A worldview consists of the principals (principles?) we acquire to make sense of the world around us. Young people learn these values, traditions and customs from myths, legends, stories, family, community and examples set by community leaders. The worldview (cognitive map) is a summation of coping devices that have worked in the past [but may not work in the now or future]... The worldview [allows a people who self-identity] to make sense of the world around them, make artefacts to fit their world, generate behaviour and interpret their experiences (Kawagley 1995:8).

The Aboriginal matrix is made up of the ideas of constant flux and motion, existence consisting of energy waves,

¹ Continental North America

² There have been questions as to what terms to use cosmology, worldview and world vision. Apparently the usage in French consist of cosmology and not vision du monde. I myself prefer using worldview which I see as being world vision as well. A vision has spiritual connotations which in English at least translate better and convey a meaning which is consistent with Indigenous Knowledge and also allows better translation into the political realms.

interrelationships, all things being animate, space/place³, renewal and all elements being imbued with spirit. “The Great Spirit or Great Mystery, or Good Power is everywhere and in everything-mountains, plains, winds, waters, trees, birds and animals. Whether animals have mind and the reasoning faculty admits of no doubt for the Blackfeet. For they believe that all animals receive their endowment of the power of the Sun, differing in degree, but the same kind as that received by man and all things animate and inanimate” (McClintock 1968). All matter and all being have a dualistic nature of the static and the active. Gary Witherspoon writes: “The assumption that underlies this dualistic aspect of all being and existence is that the world is in motion, that things are constantly undergoing processes of transformation, deformation and restoration and that the essence of life and being is movement” (Kawagley 1977:48).

For John and Virginia Lyons Friesen (2002), the philosophical foundations of a traditional (and modern) Aboriginal lifestyle are wholly spiritual. To understand Aboriginals, one must have an appreciation of the holistic-inclusive world-view. It is a philosophy of free will and personal moral choice and an understanding that the past, present, and future are one. The objective must be, and, is, continual well-being, balance and synchronicity. The Saulteaux elder Manitopeyes says: “It is not enough for us to merely walk on the earth” (Akan 1992), but we must be mindful about how we walk. This is a practical guide asking for balance between the social, civil and natural environments, applied on an individual basis and extended to include the family, local community and world community. The result is not an elusive, mystical concept, but survival with moral living in or through acceptance, learning and knowledge juxtaposed to a Western vision of immortality or paradise (Akan 1992).

Traditionally, Aboriginals perceived spirits in everything both animate and inanimate, in plants as well as in creatures of the sky, ocean and earth. These spirits were respected and held in great reverence. It was a world in which everything was interconnected, with everyone and everything depending on everyone else for survival. A good hunter, when killing an animal, would thank the animal for his sacrifice, for providing sustenance to him and his family. For John and Virginia Lyons Friesen (2002), this interconnectedness would require that the warrior understood the

³ Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat (2001) sees place as those relationships which we maintain with the universe (between individual, the environment and the metaphysical).

role he has to play in the larger scheme and any future sacrifice he might be required to make for the greater good.

Holistic knowledge is about the interconnectedness of all of creation. Holism is the idea that all is connected, that all living organisms, inanimate objects, living animals (humans), plants, the soil, the air, the community, nations and the metaphysical have a spirit and are connected into relationships of interaction creating a matrix offering a (dynamic) sense of order or (dynamic) equilibrium (Canadian Council of Learning 2007). It is the 360 degree vision (Dumont 1976) that is very important within the Aboriginal philosophy. Within my own tradition (Cree), the medicine wheel is often used as both a metaphor and as a literal symbol. It represents the circle of life, containing all experience, both collective and individual; it contains all of creation (Fenelon and Lebeau 2006:39-41). There are two lines that mark the quadrants of the circle. The center is the balancing point where these lines interact. The medicine wheel is part of the tradition of the plains tribes such as the Dakota, Siksika and Cree. It is used to explain the stages of life from child, to youth, to adult, to elder. For instance, Castellano (2000) has written of her own need to obtain balance within life as represented in a medicine wheel. She finds herself heavily weighted to Western learning and the medicine wheel represents equilibrium wherein the person must seek out different gifts in order to be fulfilled within life. The sharing of individual gifts and the greater balance in life benefits the individual as well as the society (*ibid.*:30).

Perhaps one of the widely used ideas among Aboriginals is that of the circle. It should be noted that not all Aboriginal peoples use the circle, but there are many Aboriginals today who use this idea as a pan-Aboriginal one. George Sioui (1999) (Wendat) rejects the idea that a linear concept is applicable to Aboriginals. He sees the linear concept as being rigid and creating an exclusive (alien) nationalism. It has been the circle conception of the universe that has allowed Aboriginal societies to survive. They have been able to regroup literally and spiritually each time they suffered catastrophic events because they have seen life as a “great whole in which human constitute, but one element” (*ibid.*:113).

Criticisms and Problems of Translation

The combination of the Indigenous worldview and Western science and the conventions governing both, presents challenges to an Indigenous scholar. As an Indigenous scholar studying the Aboriginal condition on Turtle Island, I face major ethical problems concerning the analysis of Indigenous knowledge using traditional techniques of anthropology or any other Western-based thought process. I am

not alone with my problem, I am almost certain that other Aboriginal scholars face the same questions (Ranco 2006). Within Western scientific circles, analysis and criticism are commonplace, but often they will serve the established order (Latour 1997). Within many Aboriginal circles, Indigenous knowledge is seen as something that just exists, that should not be analysed, because this would lead to a defamation of the spiritual (interview with Chief Gilbert Whiteduck (Ojibwe), 15 January 2010). This premise of non-analysis, though, poses a problem for many Western scientists (Widdowson and Howard 2008). Aboriginal scholars have not yet been very concerned with analysing our societies according to most Western theories; often we will state what our beliefs are, our position and our point of view using analyses of knowledge concerning power, survival and decolonization. This Indigenous method of research often has greater concordance with Indigenous knowledge. It is a means to protect that Indigenous knowledge, to protect ourselves, our communities and our identities.

For myself, Aboriginal research must use an Aboriginal vision of science and spirituality as espoused by Gregory Cajete (1994:42) (Santa Clara Pueblo) and Vine Deloria Jr (1990, 2001, 2006) and be juxtaposed with the Occidental world-vision of science. Western science is too often seen to be an objective and a secular undertaking, devoid of God, spirituality and the areas of metaphysics, that which cannot be “proven or seen.” For instance, the French scientist Étienne Klein (2008) sees science as an objective knowledge and makes a case for science and the true spirit of science. Science does not “work very well but as scientific questions” and plays “the role of an acid, dissolving progressively various beliefs taught by natural authorities” but “does not have any values. At the same time, Klein acknowledges that science is not devoid of sense. There exists a need to “join the love of the world to its comprehension” (Moreault 2009:A8) and to arrive at this we must have “urgent collaboration between philosophy and science” (*ibid.*). Science has been traditionally understood as a search for knowledge, the desire to obtain a greater understanding of the world surrounding the individual and of the greater community. As Claude Lévi-Strauss argues:

History is therefore never truly impartial: There is always some underlying objective. It is partial, despite protests to the contrary, and remains inevitably so – which is yet another form of partiality (1962).

While the above quote is mentioning only history, I see much of Western science as being based on the premises of objectivity and distance from the material. I see this as being true within many of

disciplines of Western science. While there may be pockets in Western sciences, such as anthropology, that present differing points of view and other considerations, these differences do not often constitute the mainstream. There is a cultural mismatch between the values and philosophy of Western science and the values and philosophy held by many Aboriginal people and communities, making the issue of increasing Aboriginal participation in education and the Western industrial politic(s) a difficult one. These cultural differences, as explained by Niel Haggan (2002) state that native peoples see people, landscape and living resources as a spiritual whole. In contrast, the Western science approach seeks greater understanding through breaking apart the whole and analyzing it in its smallest parts (Cajete 1994:75-8; Deloria 1992:64; Haggan, Brignall, Peacock and Daniel 2002).

Bruno Latour (1995) also offers a criticism of Western science and its supposed objectivity. Science has a reputation of being detached from value and judgement statements, though when a new discovery is made we don't only look at the facts, but who discovered that new property, where is he from, where does he work, what language does he work in, what is his background. These elements will often have an effect on the degree of acceptance towards the scientist's findings (*ibid.*:13-4). The scientist does not exist in a vacuum, but within society and, as such, has value judgements. For Latour (*ibid.*), the scientist is not above society, but within. The value of the science done by a scientist has a multitude of other factors that come into play. The ability of the scientist to obtain a grant, get equipment, do research, present arguments, publish and obtain recognition all point to a scientist who must push the boundaries, but not too far, not getting too far ahead (*ibid.*:34-5). For Latour (*ibid.*), science functions much as capitalism. A scientist frequently pursues research with ideals that may be noble but often the research brings something personally to the scientist such as recognition and grants (*ibid.*:37). When a capitalist-scientist abandons his research or hypotheses it is not because they are no longer worthwhile, but because the idea will not bring anything further to the researcher in the long term as scientific-capital (*ibid.*:38). Finally, for Latour (*ibid.*) the scientist often has a lack of respect for the political. They fail to realize that they are doing much the same work as politicians. Each speaks for interests, forces, power, people and players with very little differences (*ibid.*:56). Scientists make value judgements based upon their society, up-bringing, education, etc., value judgements that are based in a distinct cosmology and morality. Latour wrote that "la science sans conscience n'est que ruine de l'âme" (*ibid.*:71).

Within the large universal domain of science there are differences in the approaches that must be recognized. The Western scientific approach of breaking apart or looking to the miniscule is a method that is very tempting to use. It is felt by many Aboriginal thinkers despite it being the antithesis to Aboriginal thought (Cajete 1994:12-13, Hampton 1993; Little Bear 2000). There must be a holistic approach; the larger picture based both on the rational mind, as well as the metaphysical. The Aboriginals contend that their philosophy is of the holistic, whereby the people, the landscape, and the living resources are constituted into a spiritual whole (Canadian Council of Learning 2007).

Us versus Them

I would like to note that it has been brought to my attention that often when writers, especially Aboriginal writers, are dealing with issues that are colonial in nature, there is a tendency to separate Western and Indigenous cultures into two groups: the preverbal “us verses them” mentality. Raymond Sioui (Wendat) of the First Nation Education Council felt I should focus more on the Indigenous aspect and not waste time juxtaposing the two world views (discussion, 15 April 2007). I have been grateful for this advice, and it has helped direct some of the constructive-criticism that I offer. At the same time, it is almost impossible to not place the world-views side-by-side, because they have been living together for the past 500 years. Each world-vision has received information and influence from the other. As Hall says, in South and North America this mutual philosophical pressure has led to the creation of Creole societies, which in turn has influenced the rest of the Western politic and especially Indigenous populations (2003:21). I don't believe I need to say that Aboriginal culture has been affected by the Western world-vision, it is fairly obvious. While I also realize that the west is not monolithic nor is Aboriginal culture monolithic, I sense that there are shared philosophical elements within the west and within Aboriginal cultures that cannot be ignored. These two influences have existed side-by-side for so long that it is desirable for Aboriginals in their struggles for decolonization to separate the two visions.

Within my research I can never claim total objectivity⁴. I believe that the objective ideal so looked for in Western science can never

⁴ Lévi-Strauss, as quoted by Poirier, writes that there exists “limitations of a system of thought dominant among Western cultures, based...on a dubious but no less absolute notion of ‘objectivity’ the certitude of a world-in-itself underlying this notion, and the correlated view of world devoid of spirit and subjectivity” (Poirier 2004). Multiple types of “experience and sensory perception

truly exist. Thought and understanding are wholly based in the accumulated cultural context of any writer. My research is an attempt to further Indigenous knowledge as used in Aboriginal education and, as such, should be seen as an attempt to promote the de-colonization and the affirmation of Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island within the ensuing political struggle (Hall 2003:21-55). While I do not pretend to be objective I still hope that I offer a rigorous approach that will allow for a deeper understanding of Aboriginal knowledge and its relation to its world-vision.

Both Western science and Indigenous knowledge are based on empirical observations. It is their selection and use of those observations that are different. The Western scientist selects their data in relation to the verifying of theoretical models, while the Indigenous scientist often selects data in relation to a survival strategy. "There is no model to falsify; knowledge is not true or false, only more or less effective" (Kalland 2000: 325). Indigenous knowledge is based on the practical and is concerned with verifying how data can be "found, harvested and used" (*ibid.*:325) or observed, understood and used (Goulet 1998).

Problems of Anthropology

Anthropology in the past number of years has had a rough time with many Aboriginals (Deloria 1969, Ranco 2006). I know of many scientists who have had difficulty in obtaining access to their fields of research within Aboriginal communities (anonymous discussion: 14 July 2010). Many subjects (Aboriginals) don't see the point to it all and question who is gaining from this research. Researchers do their work and then send reports back, but unfortunately these reports are often undecipherable, except by a few Aboriginals. Nelson, Leffler and Hansen (2009) conducted a study to determine the use by decisional making bodies of research-based evidence. It was found that the majority of decision making bodies used not scientific research to make decisions, but used information sources such as media, vulgarized scientific magazines, personal experience, public opinion and intuition. This calls into question what we are doing and for whom we are doing it.

I could surely go on, but I cannot review all the criticisms of anthropology,. I will simply state that anthropology cannot nor should not be rejected outright by Aboriginals. There are a number

received as true on the basis of our respective cultural objectivity and value laden ontologies." Also the writer Overing as quoted by Poirier says "one truth does not go against the truth of another" (*ibid.*: 60) as both will increase the diversity and depth of knowledge and experience in the universe.

of anthropologists who have gone beyond traditional ethnographies to look at the essentials of human culture and natures. The works of Latour, Descola and Levi-Strauss as of yet have not been appropriated by Aboriginal scholars in the development of an Aboriginal anthropology. These anthropologists have developed tools that at first view do not seem to easily lend themselves to Aboriginal scholarship, or the underlining goals of decolonization. It would be wrong though to dismiss out of hand these theories concerning the organization of relationships within human culture and nature. It is still very difficult to consider how to go about using many of these techniques and theories when you are not convinced of their compatibility for translation. Perhaps it is easier for a non-Aboriginal when conducting research and theorizing about Aboriginal nations, communities and societies, but for myself it is very difficult. It is my personal feeling that non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal scholars each have different problematics which they must resolve. In informal discussions I have had with non-Aboriginal scholars I get a sense that they feel a certain lack of legitimacy. These non-Aboriginal scholars, because of the vacuum created by the University regulations and the deficiency of “educated” Aboriginals, allow them to conduct their research, but for whom? In a scathing self-critique, Thomas Biolsi and Larry Zimmerman write that anthropology is a “Western project” in which they “ask about themselves and their encounters with peoples they have colonized and liquidated” (1997:14).

There is a continuing debate within Aboriginal areas of research concerning non-Aboriginal researchers. Laurent Jerome received a letter from an Atikamekw who opposes his research in Atikamekw communities: “I do not want my culture written by a white, I do not want a white to appropriate for himself something that I am trying to appropriate, that which come back to me at a cultural level. If it must be written, it must be written by an Atikamekw because they would not do a bad interpretation” (Jerome 2008:182-183). If there are no Aboriginal researchers, that void will invariably be filled by non-Aboriginal scholars.

Here is a story that I read in a book written by Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) (Opaskwayak Cree), but was originally created by Heather Harris (2002) (Cree-Métis) another Indigenous scholar. This modern metaphor story still corresponds to the philosophical teachings that we are able to learn from traditional stories. The story highlights how the dominant academic system has been in guiding Indigenous researcher and the teachings of Indigenous knowledge.

Coyote Goes to School

Coyote was once again fed up with running around all day in the hot sun for a few scrawny gophers and rabbits. Dirt up his nose, dirt in his eyes, and what for? Barely a mouthful. Coyote had tried getting food at the supermarket one time like the Human People do but he got the shit kicked out of him for that. So, once again, he went to his brother, Raven, to ask him for advice.

Coyote said, "Raven, there's got to be an easier way to get fed. I tried the supermarket-got beaten up. Tried to get money from welfare but came up against the Devil's Spawn in a K-Mart dress. Nothing's worked so far. You got any other ideas?"

"Well," Raven said thoughtfully, "the White Humans seem pretty well fed and they say that the key to success is a good education. Maybe you could go to school."

"Hmmm," Coyote mused, "maybe I'll try it. Couldn't hurt."

Well, Coyote went off to the city to the university because that's where Raven said adults go to school.

In a few days Coyote was back.

"Well my brother," Raven inquired, "did you get your education?"

"Not exactly," Coyote replied, "education is as hard to get as a welfare cheque. To get an education like the teachers at the university takes at least 10 years-that's a Coyote's entire lifetime-and, in the end, you don't get paid much anyways."

"When I got to the university they asked me what program I was in. I didn't know so they sent me to this guy who told me about the programs. I kinda liked the idea of biology-if I learned more about gophers maybe they'd be easier to catch. I liked the idea of engineering-maybe I could invent a great rabbit trap. But in the end I settled on Native Studies. Now that's something I can understand-I've known those guys for thousands of years, even been one when it suited me."

"So I went to my Introduction to Native Studies course and, can you believe it, the teacher was a white guy? Now how much sense does that make? I saw native people around town-any one of 'em has got to know more about native people than some white guy."

“When I asked this guy what Indian told him the stuff he was saying. He said none-he read it in a book. Then I asked who the Indian was who wrote the book. And he said, it wasn't an Indian, it was a white guy. Then I asked him what Indian the guy who wrote the book learned from and the teacher got mad and told me to sit down.”

The next day I went to my Indians of North America class. I was really looking forward to meeting all those Indians. And you know what? There was another white guy standing up there and not an Indian in sight. I asked the teacher, “Are we going to visit all the Indians?” He said, “No”. So I asked him, “How are we going to learn about Indians then?” And he said, just like the other guy, from a book written by a white guy. So I asked him if I could talk to this guy who wrote the book and the teacher said, “No, he's dead.”

“By then, I was getting pretty confused about this education stuff but I went to my next class-Indian Religions. And guess what? When I went in, there wasn't another white guy standing up at the front of the room-there was a white woman!”

“I sat down and I asked her, “Are we going to the sweatlodge?” “No.” “Sundance?” “No.” “Yuwipi?” “No.” Then how are we going to learn-no wait, I know-from a book written by a dead white guy! I'm starting to get the hang of this education business.”

“So then I go to my Research Methods class thinking I've got it figured out. In this class the teacher (you've got it-another white guy) said that our research must be ethical, that we must follow the guidelines set out by the university for research on human subjects. The rules are there, my teacher said, to protect the Indians from unscrupulous researchers. Who made these rules I asked-you guessed it-a bunch of white guys. They decided we need protecting and that they were the ones to decide how best to protect us from them. So I told my teacher that I wanted to interview my father. The teacher said, you've got to ask the ethics review committee for permission. What?! I've got to ask a bunch of white guys for permission to talk to my own dad? That can't be right. I was confused all over again.”

“So I sat down and thought about all this for a long time. Finally I figured it out. If white guys teach all the courses about Indians and they teach in the way white people think,

then to find Indians teaching the way Indians think, all I had to do was give up Native Studies and join the White Studies program!" (Harris 2002: 187).

What Are We To Do

Philippe Descola writes that science must "metamorphose" to include objects which are not just anthropologic, but also the collective "existants" [elements or holistic] which are connected to humans in relationship (2005:15). Descola (*ibid.*:176-180) has conceived of four ontologies that may be used to categorize man and his environment across all continents: totemism, which highlights the material and the continuity of material and morality between humans and non-humans; analogism, which holds that between the elements of the world, a matrix of discontinuity exists, structured by corresponding relations; animism, which gives non-humans the interior of humans, but are only differentiated by their bodies; and naturalism which attaches humans and non-humans by a continuing material, but still separates us with cultural specificity.

In the "daily bread and butter⁵" of Aboriginal politics and life, I am not sure about how these theories may be applied to Aboriginal situations with "useful results" (I am employing a term used by Raymond Sioui in a personal discussion, 23 February 2007). Anthropology (Western science) and Aboriginals have always seemed to exist in parallel; today there is still a chasm separating the two. Mills, Dracklé and Edgar point out that anthropology must "be lived at the same time it is learned" otherwise it becomes too over-structured and formalized (2004:5). For many Aboriginal scholars the works of Bruno Latour (1995, 1997) and Paul Farmer (2004) present a greater means of providing the "bread and butter" to decolonisation. It is not that other theories are not useful, but that Aboriginal scholars have so little time (because they are so few) that they must concentrate on their essential and continuing programme of decolonization. I often find within the major works of anthropology the Indigenous person still is the subject and the object. Their personal power resides in that accorded to them, by the writer. There are many anthropologists, however, who have attempted to go past this criticism rather successfully by using an interview technique with major sections of uninterrupted information printed in their research. One difficulty is

⁵ A criticism which can be made is the "bread and butter" ignores the metaphysical. For myself this is farther from the truth. The metaphysical must provide nourishment to life for we exist in the past present and future. Life must be seen holistically. For instance when we talk of decolonizing social services, what we need to consider is the spiritual and material together. The administration of a program is not the only consideration, but also how we administer and here administer is the wrong word, but how we live.

that it becomes very complicated for the anthropologist to criticize the information and informant and remain politically correct. Just because Aboriginals are attempting to decolonize should not mean that criticism is unidirectional. The future well-being of Indigenous peoples requires active constructive criticism, but by whom?

Feit (2001) noted that often Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals often have difficulty in inter-communication. They must seek new means to effectively communicate their realities and world-views⁶, and often attempts at communication are one way. Nonetheless, these Indigenous world-views are reduced to types of gross simplification that reduce Aboriginal life understanding (*ibid.*: 413, 419).

Indigenous knowledge (IK) I feel has also been difficult for anthropology to assimilate into current theories. Anthropology has been attempting to reinvent itself since the 1960s and 1970s. It had been challenged by many of the subjects it was studying. In response, anthropology took on new forms of theoretical analysis, "Marxism, world-systems, dependence theory, feminism, post-colonial theory" that, with great success, anchored anthropology in the world and all its problems (Goodale 2009:121). There are many who still criticise the techniques of anthropologists and Western science. For instance even though Aboriginals are said to be teachers of an "important" Indigenous knowledge (IK), too often after publication they become merely another object of study (Tedlock and Tedlock 1992: xiii). This objectification does not allow a full understanding of the unity of the Aboriginal *Weltanschauung*.

The 1980s saw further realignment or catching-up of anthropology with the idea of IK and human rights (Goodale 2009: 124). IK has been categorized by anthropology as being wholly specific to a locale or local science, local knowledge (Semali and Kincheloe 1999:3, Sillitone 2006:1-22). This still ignores the complexity of IK, for though it is often specific to a locale, frequently there is a holistic ideal, a global vision, where IK is the ways Indigenous peoples view the world. This is not to say that anthropology has no role to play in Aboriginal issues, for it is far better equipped than political science, education science, economics, philosophy, theology, cultural studies to conduct constructive research with Aboriginals (Benthall 2002:52) for these other sciences fail to see the underlying currents of society and their final consequences. Descola (2005) has been able to recognize this idea of holism or the monolithic and its repercussions in the world, yet I feel he has

⁶ Harvey Feit (2001) specifically addresses the case of the Cree of Quebec during the 1980s and 90s in their negotiations with the Quebec government and the Bay James Hydro-electric agreements.

still failed to recognize the metaphysical. These other sciences too often ignore a holistic global research disregarding all the variables effecting Aboriginals, their lives and their world-vision.

Further, anthropology and Indigenous populations have seen a debate between nature and culture (Brightman 2007:31-3). In the late nineteenth century Indigenous populations were seen as being unable to distinguish between nature and culture, or a monolithic world-view. French structuralism of the middle twentieth-century eventually concluded that this premise was false and that Indigenous societies could differentiate between nature and culture (Lévi-Strauss 1963 taken from Brightman 2007). Of late the pendulum has swung the other direction with the nature/cultural dualism being contested and, once again, Indigenous populations no longer see the difference between nature and culture (Descola 2001 taken from Brightman 2007). As with many elements of life, the truth lies in the middle. Many Indigenous cultures today are attempting to recreate the past. There are also varying levels of understanding and recognition of nature and culture. Modern Aboriginals of Canada do not all see nature as being separate from culture, while there are many who do. We live modern lives, yet we speak of the monolithic/holistic as if it were still true. There is a difference with those who live off the land and those who work in an office.

Descola (2005 or 2001?) writes that the world vision of a society is an organic construction. He finds that the Western duality of nature and culture is being rebuilt or at least contested by a “primitive” monolithic idea of nature and culture. The “mission” of anthropology is to contribute “with anthropological methods to illuminate the manner in which a specific organism exists within the world, is represented, and anthropology should contribute in the modification of the relationships between the organism and others the infinitely diverse relationships both permanent and occasional” (Descola 2005:11-2). Anthropology must become monolithic, not in “semi-religious terms,” but in order to show that the “moderns⁷” philosophy is not universally accepted and that even Western philosophy is a recent development (*ibid.*:12-3).

I disagree with Descola on a number of points. How can you have a holistic philosophy yet not consider the metaphysical? In this matter he has failed to understand Indigenous thought, that even if lives are modern there is still an interconnectedness that exists throughout the universe, both physically and metaphysically (Goulet 2007:169). He ironically perpetuates this separation of the

⁷ Western man and his philosophy.

Western Cartesian “spirit and the material” that he is attempting to unify (Descola 2005:247).

Jack Forbes (2001) (Powhatan-Renápe, Delaware-Lenápe) attempts a definition of nature and culture. For Forbes nature and nation are derived from the same latin root of *nasci*, or to be born (*ibid.*:103). Culture is descended from the Latin root of *colore* meaning to “till, cultivate, dwell, inhabit and worship” (*ibid.*:103). Eventually it came to represent caring for land and eventually in French cultivating of humans as well as soil (*ibid.*:114). This provides an indication that Europeans, because they cultivated the land to such a great extent, eventually had a schism between nature and culture and with it the creation of a duality in their world-view. In many Aboriginal societies while the earth was tilled, it was never to such a great extent as the West and this separation between nature and culture has just started to take place.

Our Native American culture has been striped-mined by the European’s Judeo-Christian ethic. It is clear to indigenous peoples that we are dealing with a desperate society trapped inside a crumbling mythology...Indians know how to play games with nature. Europeans – Whites – have been at odds with nature for many centuries. The Man vs. Nature argument is a contrived dichotomy with ancient roots in Christianity, Descartes and Francis Bacon. What you end up with is a race of people trapped by myth, striving to claw its way back to Eden against ever growing odds. The project of nature is ongoing, we are part of it, yet the European continues to set himself outside of it...Non-Indians will never have Western eyes so long as they cling to the Man versus Nature dichotomy. Raymond Cross, Mandan tribal attorney, quoted in Gonzales and Nelson 2001:495.

Pan-Aboriginal Essentialism

My work is, as has already been mentioned, based on a pan-Aboriginal essentialism, which brings forward one final criticism of Western science that I would like to make. There are many scholars who criticize essentialist theories of identity that are seen to treat identity/race as a stable and homogenous construct (McCarthy and Crichlow 1993: xviii). Essentialism is seen by many Western scientists as a terrible under-theorization of identity (?), its complexities and contradictions. There is a rejection that membership within a specific group can be reduced to an inventory of characteristics, criticizing this at best, as being inaccurate and at the worst, discriminatory. (Cook-Lynn 2007).

Science does not exist in a vacuum. There is a political aspect which holds great sway (Latour 1997:11, 1995:56). There are many critics of essentialism who promote a discourse of democracy, power, social justice and historical memory (McLaren and Giroux 1997:17). Within these ideas is a failure to acknowledge the need for decolonization. It is a case of the cart before the ox. There have been consecutive (Canadian) governments who impose a definition of what it is to be Aboriginal and Indian through laws that remove agency and identity from vast numbers of peoples. This has forced Aboriginals into a black and white paradigm of “us and them” (Grande 2004:93). Many Aboriginals do not truly want an “us vs. them” mentality, but simply the agency to live the lives that best represent their values for their families, communities and nations. Aboriginal do not just want understanding, but also agency on Aboriginal terms.

Michele Taina Audette (Innu) spoke at a meeting of the organization Rights and Democracy about some Aboriginal women’s work to remove the federal government from decisions about identity of who is Aboriginal and who is not. This effort eventually led to the BC Supreme Court ruling (2009) that sections of the Indian Act governing race are unconstitutional. On May 4th 2010 there was a protest march (March Amun) from Quebec City to Ottawa to protest the federal government’s non-response to the ruling. Audette said to the Chief Ghislan Picard (Innu) (who was also speaking at this conference) “that once this battle is over, Aboriginal women across Canada will be able to unite forces with the AFN to fight other battles which are just as important” (Audette, 2010).

For myself, non-essentialist theories blur the lines of what constitutes race and identity. The contradiction in this discourse is that while it says we are all different, we are also all identical with the same Human Rights. This theory serves for many Aboriginal scholars as a continuing colonization of Aboriginal identity and Aboriginals by the Western politic and science. Until there is a certain “coming together”, (I am employing a term used by William Wuttunee in a personal discussion⁸, September 13, 2009) it will be

⁸ I would like to just give a quick history of this pan-Aboriginalism that has existed since the 1960s. In 1968 the dream of William Wuttunee (the First Nations lawyer to be admitted to the bar in Western Canada) and the National Indian Council ended. The National Indian Council was founded in 1961 in Regina by William Wuttunee (Cree) and a group of mostly young Aboriginal students. The goal was to “promote unity among Indian peoples, the betterment of people of Indian ancestry in Canada, and to create a better understanding of the Indian and non-Indian relationship.” It is not known what effect the Federal government had on the breakup of the National Indian Council, but in-fighting among Indian groups over new federal financing certainly helped (Adams 1999). Wuttunee certainly felt that the federal government was threatened by a pan-Aboriginal organization

very difficult if not impossible to decolonize the lives of Aboriginals. It should be remembered that the vast majority of Aboriginals live in urban areas such as Winnipeg. These Aboriginals make up large classes of people who may have minimal contact with a specific tribal area. Often they see themselves in a global manner, being specific to a tribe, but also as part of an Aboriginal mass that share many of the same issues of identity.

I see my work to be “pan-Aboriginal” as using what I consider to be an emerging area of anthropology; that of Indigenous anthropology based principally on the work of considerable Aboriginal scholars. It promotes a definition of long held views by numerous Aboriginals from both within and out of academia. It should be remembered that most Aboriginals do not participate within academia, but as subjects in many studies and reports made by non-Aboriginals and who are generally very sympathetic and understanding of the desire for Indigenous agency. Aboriginal scholars are for the moment very attracted to ideas of survival, structural violence and other similar theories that help create conditions for decolonization. Indigenous scholars also have a duty to enable the agency of Indigenous populations.

It should be noted this inclusive-essentialism might not be shared by all elements of the basic main Aboriginal population (Cook-Lynn 2007). There are most certainly many who ignore the positions of Aboriginal intellectuals and most certainly do not feel concerned by it. As an example, in the supposed importance of spirituality in the pan-Aboriginal worldview there are some real- life Aboriginals who have a secular, or even a totally materialistic (non-metaphysical) world-visions and even those who question the idea of the creator as it is often used in popular media (William Wuttunee, personal discussion, 17 June 2006). It is still believed that pan-Indigenism is a potentially strong foundation for unified efforts by the majority of the Indigenous population in our efforts for de-colonization.

representing all Aboriginals (discussion, April 12, 2009). By breaking them into smaller groups through grants and federal financing they ensured that the federal government could play them off each other (Adams 1999:42). The Council eventually split into two groups in 1968. There was the renamed National Indian Brotherhood (Status Indians) in 1968, which became known as the Assembly of First Nations in 1982, and the Canadian Métis Society (Non-status and Métis). Much later the Métis society split again when another group was called the Congress of Aboriginal peoples representing non-status/urban Indians was formed. The government often plays these groups off one another when conducting policy changes, especially after the White Paper of 1969. The White Paper was a final attempt to overtly assert federal will in Indian matters. Create a vacuum and then fill that vacuum with your ideas and philosophy.

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Résumé/Abstract

Plusieurs académiques aborigènes étudiant les Autochtones voient l'anthropologie comme un outil d'enquête efficace comportant de nombreuses techniques de recherche. Il y a, par contre, plusieurs aspects de l'anthropologie et de la science occidentale qui sont incompatibles avec le combat incessant pour la décolonisation, la réaffirmation et la néo-construction de l'identité, de la philosophie et de la politique du plan holistique pan Aborigène.

L'anthropologie aborigène est encore au stade émergent. Les études sur les Premières Nations sont en plein développement et cette nouvelle sphère de l'anthropologie est principalement basée sur les études des académiques autochtones. Plusieurs Aborigènes, qu'ils soient des académiques ou non, voient en cette facette de l'anthropologie un outil de promotion des valeurs autochtones. Ces mêmes académiques sont, pour le moment, très attirés par les idées entourant les connaissances aborigènes. Elles leur donnent en effet un certain pouvoir et l'obligation de créer les conditions pour continuer le combat de la décolonisation.

Mots clés : Autochtones, Anthropologie, Identité, Méthodologie de recherche

Anthropology has many techniques and investigative tools that hold attractive qualities for Indigenous scholars in their Aboriginal research. There are, however, many philosophical traits within Western science and anthropology that are incompatible with the ongoing political struggle for decolonization, reaffirmation and neo-construction of a holistic pan-Aboriginal identity, philosophy and political body.

Indigenous anthropology is still an emerging field. It is based principally on the work of notable Aboriginal scholars in area of Native Studies. It promotes long held views of numerous Aboriginals from both within and out of academia. Aboriginal scholars are, for the moment, very attracted to ideas of Indigenous Knowledge and empowerment which are being used to help create conditions of decolonization. Indigenous scholars also have a primary duty to enable the agency of Indigenous populations in this ongoing struggle for decolonization.

Key words: Indigenous, Anthropology, Identity, Research methodology

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