

“Indigenizing the University” and Political Science: Exploring the Implications for the Discipline

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In recent years, the term “indigenization”¹ has been recurring with increasing frequency in the Canadian university system. The Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, Universities Canada and the Deans of Education are all supporting this idea.² As a result, a number of universities across the country have instituted indigenization initiatives. Most recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has weighed in on the issue, arguing that “[t]he education system itself must be transformed into one that rejects the racism embedded in colonial systems of education and treats Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian knowledge systems with equal respect”.³ This view, in part, was drawn from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’ assertion that “Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information”.⁴

Indigenization is also becoming prominent in academic disciplines,⁵ and political science is no exception. Numerous prominent political scientists, including Taiaiake Alfred, Joyce Green,

¹ The term indigenization will not be capitalized and references to “aboriginal”, “native” and “indigenous” will be used interchangeably and will not be capitalized. This is because the terms are being used as an adjective or descriptive term in reference to people who have inhabited a land from the earliest times or before the arrival of colonists. Capitals, however, will be used for terms such as Mohawk, Cree or Dene because these names are derived from proper nouns such as languages, specific regions or tribes. It is not, as Krystyna Sieciechowicz imputes, because I am being “intentionally disrespectful” to aboriginal peoples. “Response”, *Anthropologica*, 52(1), 2010, p. 207.

² See, for example, “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, A Panel organized by the Equity Portfolio, CFHSS, May 31, 2011, <https://vimeo.com/29385438> [accessed April 2016]; “Universities Canada principles on Indigenous Education”, June 29, 2015, <http://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/universities-canada-principles-on-indigenous-education/> [accessed April 2016]; and Association of Canadian Deans of Education, Accord on Indigenous Education, 2010, http://www.cssescee.ca/docs/acde/acde_accord_indigenousesearch_en.pdf [accessed November 2015].

³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future* (http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf), p.239. The TRC notes (in footnote 112) that “Educator and scholar Marie Battiste’s work on decolonizing and transforming the education system has informed the Commission’s thinking on this issue”. According to the Royal Commission, this information was obtained from Battiste’s book, *Decolonizing Education*, pp. 174-191.

⁴ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission cites Article 15:1 of the United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

⁵ See, for example, “Decolonizing/indigenizing social welfare”, Preliminary Conference Programme, Society for Socialist Studies, <http://socialiststudies.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SSS-Panels-Roundtables-January-14-2014.pdf> [accessed April 2016]; Barb Nahwegahbow, “Indigenizing Psychology symposium takes a Native worldview”, *Windspeaker*, <http://www.ammsa.com/publications/windspeaker/indigenizing-psychology-symposium-takes-native-worldview> [accessed April 2016]; “Indigenizing Psychology Symposium: Healing and Education”,

Rauna Kuokkanen, Kiera Ladner, and Malinda Smith, have advocated indigenization. This support culminated in a workshop, held at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, which invited participants to “explore Indigenization as an emancipator process within a colonial institution that has liberatory and educative possibilities”.⁶ The workshop was set up to discuss the views of different political scientists and other academics, which included those of Jasmin Abu-Laban, Larry Chartrand, Jennifer Dalton, Makere Stewart-Harawira, and Maggie Walter and Wendy Aitken.

While the workshop invitation noted that there was no agreed upon definition of what constituted “indigenization”, it tacitly accepted the assumption that universities are “colonial institutions” that can be transformed by the “emancipator process” of indigenization.⁷ This paper will critically examine this assumption, as well as indigenization initiatives more generally, as they pertain to political science. It will outline the different meanings of indigenization and raise questions about how their acceptance will influence the discipline. There will be an explanation of why the modern university is perceived to be a “colonial institution”, and how indigenization is being theorized as “an emancipator process” that can result in aboriginal liberation and educational improvements. The paper will also evaluate the evidence that is used to support arguments for indigenizing political science and raise questions about the validity of alternate viewpoints. It will be argued that advocates for indigenization, through flawed conceptualization and the assumption that rationality is “colonialist”, evade how the initiative has the potential to undermine the development of knowledge in the discipline. This will not only have a negative impact on political science; it also inhibits reconciliation and justifies the further isolation of the indigenous population from modern educational improvements.

What is University Indigenization?

Discussions of university indigenization are complicated by the fact that no one has agreed on a definition. In its invitation to participate in an indigenization workshop, for example, the Canadian Political Science Association’s “Call for Proposals” noted that there are three different meanings of the term: 1) symbolic recognition of indigenous cultures by universities; 2) the inclusion of indigenous peoples and content in existing university structures; and 3) “an anti-

May 26, 2016, http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ien/2016_Indigenizing_Psychology_Symposium/index.html [accessed May 2016]; and Marlene Brant Castellano, “Indigenizing Education”, <http://www.cea-ace.ca/blog/marlene-brant-castellano/2014/06/2/indigenizing-education> [accessed May 2016].

⁶ “Workshop 7 – Race, Ethnicity, Indigenous Peoples and Politics: Indigenizing the University”, *Call for Proposals, 2015 Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association*, https://cpsa-acsp.ca/documents/pdfs/conference/2015_CPSA_Call_for_Proposals.pdf [accessed April 2016]

⁷In fact, I submitted an abstract to this workshop entitled “Indigenizing the University and Critical Thinking: Is Reconciliation Possible?”, which was rejected by the organizers on the grounds that “there were many more proposals than could be accommodated and the committee had to make hard choices among them” (personal communication from Joyce Green, January 8, 2015). Part of the rejected abstract reads as follows: “Although there is no consensus about what ‘Indigenizing the University’ means, all academics would agree that any attempt to pursue this initiative should be consistent with encouraging the development of critical thinking. In any academic environment, the assumptions of all arguments must be evaluated according to the accuracy and validity of the evidence used, including those that inform ideological commitments. The invitation of the Race, Ethnicity, Indigenous Peoples and Politics workshop to ‘explore Indigenization as an emancipator process within a colonial institution that has liberatory and educative possibilities’, therefore, is violating a fundamental tenet of critical thinking. Before making this a condition of an academic discussion, the assumptions behind this assertion must be evaluated...”.

colonial, antiracist reconstruction of education through revision of curriculum and institutional processes”.

The first meaning is the one that is most commonly adopted in universities today. It is linked to the appeal of the ideology of the politics of identity and entitlement to “redress past wrongs”.⁸ With respect to universities, this symbolic recognition consists of renaming infrastructure after noteworthy indigenous people, displaying aboriginal artwork, and publicly recognizing that a particular university sits on the traditional territory of an aboriginal group.⁹ There is also the demand that prayers be held at the beginning of meetings out of “respect” for aboriginal traditions.¹⁰

While often condescendingly downplayed as a harmless way to make aboriginal people feel good, these developments have not always been met with universal acceptance. At a number of universities, indigenous elders presiding over ceremonies have declared that it was in keeping with their traditions that women should wear long skirts, and that menstruating women be

⁸ Terrance Ball, R. Dagger, W. Christian, & C. Campbell, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, 3rd Canadian Edition, (Toronto: Pearson, 2013), p. 223

⁹ The University of Manitoba notes in its “mission”, for example, that “In recent years, the University has adopted the practice, at formal functions, of acknowledging the traditional lands on which it sits. An acknowledgement of these lands, and of the University’s commitment to Indigenous peoples and communities, now form part of the foundational statements that define the University of Manitoba... The University of Manitoba is committed to ensuring that First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge, cultures and traditions are embraced and reflected in the pursuit of its mission”. Office of the President, “Acknowledgement”, <http://umanitoba.ca/admin/president/acknowledgement.html> [accessed April 2016]. Similar views have been expressed by the University of Saskatchewan. Chancellor Blaine C. Favel, for example, notes that indigenization “means making the place more accepting and comfortable for aboriginal people. They see themselves in the university. Their history is respected and recognized”. He notes that indigenization involves “[s]imple things like naming buildings after famous chiefs. Maybe the outside of a building has Cree language on it. There are simple things you can do that don’t cost a lot of money. There are a whole bunch of things that can be done institutionally. For me personally, it means making the university a place where we feel comfortable sending our children”. Jeremy Warren, “We’re failing aboriginal students”, *The Star Phoenix*, November 17, 2015, p. B8.

¹⁰ This is often euphemized as a “blessing”. At Mount Royal University, prayers are held at all events that concern aboriginal peoples. Some of these events include meetings for the development of an Indigenous Studies Program, the consultation sessions over the Aboriginal Strategic Plan, talks for the Indigenous Speakers’ Series, and the renaming of a resource room in the Faculty of Arts. When it was announced that an “Elders’ Prayer and Blessing” would be held at the beginning of the Under Western Skies Conference at Mount Royal University, the question was answered thusly: “...any concerns for secularist education were not at all aroused on the organizing committee when the idea was floated to include the elders. Unlike many strident and doctrinaire claims by many types of thinkers as to the nature of the one right way to live in the world, the Blackfoot greeting is a type of acknowledgment that people come from different places both literally and figuratively (hence its status as a greeting), and is finally and deeply pluralist in spirit. The elders’ involvement in the opening address is not an affirmation of aboriginal spirituality as a superior worldview. And their presence does not signify an endorsement of metaphysical thinking per se on the part of the university or conference any more than the poetry readings we have planned promote aesthetics as the only way to process environmental concerns. The aboriginal presence is a symbolic, ceremonial nod to a way of being in the world that for most of its history has involved a balanced and integrated approach to natural environments.... So, out of respect for the people whose traditional lands we built on (and environmentally trashed until the left woke up on this issue in the early 1960s and the right only somewhat and much later) we want to recognize and respect their protocols and give them an opportunity to welcome our guests coming from other parts of the country and world. Participation in this Blackfoot greeting is by no means mandatory and participation is at the discretion of the individual”. Letter from Robert Boschman and Mario Trono, April 29, 2010 [in the author’s possession].

prohibited from attending.¹¹ This led a number of faculty members to argue that this “traditional practice”¹² was discriminatory and undermined equitable relations between men and women. Political opposition is increasingly likely as efforts at symbolic recognition are being extended from affirmations of identity to specific political positions. Some forms of recognition now make controversial declarations that aboriginal peoples “have sacred connections to their lands”,¹³ or proclaim that treaties were signed as a “gift” to allow settlers to live and work on aboriginal lands, and that many treaty promises have been broken.¹⁴

The second definition of indigenization – “inclusion” - is more substantial, as it goes beyond symbolism to actually change the substance of university knowledge acquisition and dissemination. This version of indigenization is intent on increasing the university presence of aboriginal peoples, both as members of university communities and in the subjects that are taught and researched. It involves targeting efforts to inflate the number of indigenous professors and students, as well as including indigenous content in all university courses.¹⁵ This form of inclusion, because it will enable academic disciplines to expand their scope of inquiry and incorporate a wider body of evidence, “is beneficial to everyone pursuing knowledge and also to the integrity of scholarship in the study of social sciences [sic]”.¹⁶ It is also perceived to be particularly important for aboriginal peoples because it will provide “more accurate presentations of the past” and will “counteract movies, television shows, literature, and cartoons that often portray Natives as savages, buffoons, teary environmentalists, or enthusiastic supporters of colonialism”.¹⁷

While this definition of indigenization is widely supported, and has even been occurring over decades as indigenous content is added to the curriculum and “diversity” is being incorporated into hiring processes, the way in which the numbers of indigenous scholars are increased has the potential to cause conflict. At Laurentian University, for example, criticisms were made of the university’s attempt to increase the number of aboriginal professors on the grounds that this

¹¹ “Indigenous ceremony at University of Winnipeg sparks sexism debate”, June 22, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/indigenous-ceremony-at-university-of-winnipeg-sparks-sexism-debate-1.3123568> [accessed March 2016].

¹² Others have questioned whether such a practice is “traditional”. But this does not get to the heart of the matter, and it implies that practices should be uncritically promoted if they *were* engaged in historically.

¹³ Shanne McCaffrey, “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, Presentation made at the 2011 Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, <https://vimeo.com/29385438> [accessed April 2016].

¹⁴ These are the assertions now made in many introductions to the Indigenous Speakers Series presentations at Mount Royal University. Up until 2015, there was just a recognition that the university sat on the traditional territory of a particular aboriginal group(s).

¹⁵ There is also the recommendation for more indigenous content, including a course for all students regardless of their major. See, for example, Justin Brake, “‘It’s opening up knowledge about our past’: Mi’kmaw chief”, *The Independent*, January 17, 2016, <http://theindependent.ca/2016/01/17/its-opening-up-knowledge-about-our-past-mikmaw-chief/> [accessed April 2016] and Jason Warick, “Concrete steps being taken to “indigenize” U of S: President”, *Star-Phoenix*, October 26, 2015, p. A1.

¹⁶ Joely De la Torre, “In the Trenches: A critical look at the isolation of American Indian political practices in the nonempirical social science of political science”, in Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 190.

¹⁷ Devon Abbott Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study”, in Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p.156.

violated academic freedom. In this case, which involved Laurentian's Geography Department, the decision of the hiring committee was overridden to ensure that an aboriginal candidate was appointed. The aboriginal candidate was not chosen by the hiring committee as they were perceived to be less qualified than other candidates. Because the hiring committee, as the legitimate representative of the department, opposed the university's decision, there were fears that the imposed candidate would not be treated collegially. As a result, departmental members were directed to sign a statement asserting that they would work cooperatively with the candidate hired.¹⁸ One can see, therefore, how such an effort at "inclusion" can obstruct "reconciliation" by increasing resentment within the university and lowering the quality of education.

The third definition of indigenization is more radical than the first two because it is intent on completely transforming the university. Symbolically recognizing aboriginal peoples and increasing the number of aboriginal professors, students and topics, it is argued, leaves university structures and processes intact.¹⁹ In this definition, the university is perceived to be a colonial institution, and therefore it is maintained that efforts must be made to dismantle its oppressive features. Indigenization can do this, according to this perspective, because including "indigenous knowledges", "research ethics", "pedagogies", and other aspects of aboriginal cultures will challenge the perceived Eurocentric underpinnings of the university that are believed to have facilitated colonization. It will enable the recognition that aboriginal peoples are "not just the inheritors of trauma but were also the heirs to vast legacies of knowledge about this continent and the universe that had been ignored in the larger picture of European invasion and education".²⁰

Although all of these meanings are accepted to varying degrees by university indigenization advocates in political science, it is apparent that the first two definitions are viewed as being inadequate. The holding of prayers and publicly recognizing the traditional territories of aboriginal groups have been promoted by Canadian political scientists,²¹ but symbolic recognition is perceived as being limited.²² And while Joyce Green supports the inclusion of

¹⁸Simona Chiose, "Laurentian under fire for professor's hiring", *The Globe and Mail*, March 17, 2016, p. A.6.

¹⁹ Hill, in fact, argues that inclusion can even undermine the goals of decolonization because it enables "colonial institutions to maintain their power" and appear to be "a better kind of university, with knowledge toward a better kind of still colonial Canada". According to Hill, "As more diverse populations seem to ascribe to, or at least accept, the knowledge being employed to run the state, the more tolerant, informed and acceptable the state seems to be. And so the more powerful the state becomes". Elina Hill, "A Critique of the call to "always indigenize!", *Peninsula*, 2(1), 2012.

²⁰Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Who Stole American-Indian Studies*, *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 12 (1), Spring, 1997, pp. 9-28.

²¹ Joyce Green, for example, as the Chair of a the plenary session, entitled "Decolonization Impulses on Turtle Island", began by announcing that one of the presenters would lead a prayer before the session began, and that out of "respect", all CPSA members attending should stand during the supplication. In the prayer, this participant, on behalf of everyone attending the session, gave thanks to a Supreme Being that he maintained was the Creator of the universe. This circumstance would not be accepted in a non-aboriginal context. An editor from UBC Press, upon reading a letter posted on POLCAN protesting this imposition (June 14, 2004, <http://listes.ulaval.ca/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0406&L=polcan&P=R10740&I=-3>, June 14, 2004 [accessed May 2008]), stated that "it is a well composed letter that certainly made me face my own hypocrisy. While reading the first paragraph, I began to puff with outrage [that] a member of the Christian right was bringing Bush-ite prayer breakfast rituals to the CPSA". Personal Communication, June 2004.

²² Chartrand expressed this position in his presentation at the indigenizing workshop at the CPSA conference. See Larry Chartrand, "Indigenizing the Legal Academy from a Decolonizing Perspective", Paper Presented at the

indigenous people and subjects in political science because this “functions to destabilize the preferential knowledge and power relations inherent in elite education...”, creates “a more universal knowledge framework”, and enables universities to “be better positioned to educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and to teach the essential qualities of citizenship and democracy in settler states”, she warns that this “can operate to legitimate the colonial fact, and fail to educate sufficient numbers of students to be transformative”.²³ More specifically, Green opposes attempts at inclusion that pressure indigenous people to comply “with elite western canons and with institutional mechanisms [that] function to erase the radical transformative potential of indigenous thinkers in universities”.²⁴

Instead of inclusion and symbolic recognition, indigenization advocates in political science favour the definition proposing an “anti-colonial, anti-racist reconstruction of education through revision of curriculum and institutional processes”. As Taiaiake Alfred points out, this means that the “values, principles, and modes of organization and behaviour of [aboriginal] peoples” be integrated into university structures and processes.²⁵ Indigenization, according to this understanding, will enable indigenous scholars and students to challenge the colonialist character of political science, and thus be agents in decolonization.

This meaning of indigenization is the most controversial because it has the capacity to undermine the academic standards of universities. Some indigenization initiatives at Mount Royal University, for example, have proposed giving academic credit for bringing food to a feast, as well as eliminating written examinations and enabling students to “self-evaluate” in the determination of their marks. There is also the publicized case of Lorna June McCue, an aboriginal law professor who was denied tenure at the University of British Columbia in spite of years of accommodations. McCue was dismissed because she did not meet the well-known Faculty of Law’s requirement of publishing in peer reviewed journals. McCue was contesting this dismissal on the grounds that this requirement conflicted with her role as an indigenous scholar, and therefore it discriminated against her “race, colour, ancestry, place of origin ... and sex.” According to McCue, the university was forcing her to be someone she was not by demanding that she undertake research in non-oral forms, and therefore “significant compromise” was required for her to achieve tenure at the university.²⁶

Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, University of Ottawa, 2015, p. 17. Similarly, Kiera Ladner, who not only is intent on thanking an aboriginal group for being able to give a presentation on the land where the university sits, but also for being able to drive through their traditional territory, is largely interested in more transformative approaches. Kiera Ladner, “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, Presentation made at the 2011 Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, <https://vimeo.com/29385438> [accessed April 2016].

²³ Joyce Green, “Inclusion or Transformation? Indigenizing the Academy”, <http://www.ideas-ideas.ca/blog/aboriginal-education-matters-status-aboriginal-people-and-scholarship-academy> [accessed April 2016].

²⁴ Joyce Green, “Inclusion or Transformation? Indigenizing the Academy”, [http://www.ideas-ideas-ideas.ca/blog/aboriginal-education-matters-status-aboriginal-people-and-scholarship-academy](http://www.ideas-ideas.ca/blog/aboriginal-education-matters-status-aboriginal-people-and-scholarship-academy) [accessed April 2016].

²⁵ Taiaiake Alfred, “Warrior Scholarship: Seeing the University as a Ground of Contention”, in Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 88.

²⁶ Tristin Hopper, “B.C. aboriginal scholar wins bid for rights hearing after she’s denied tenure in part over lack of research, *National Post*, January 24, 2016.

But how do the traditional academic demands of universities make them “colonial institutions”, and how will the indigenization of disciplines like political science aid “decolonization”? As will be discussed below, universities are believed to be colonial institutions because of the conflation of capitalist forms of exploitation with the development of knowledge. Because universities have emerged within a capitalist context that necessitated colonization, the knowledge developed at the same time is assumed to justify this mode of production. Similarly, indigenization is perceived as aiding decolonization because it is maintained that this will enable aboriginal peoples to control how they are studied, and thus put forward perspectives that promote indigenous self-determination. It is assumed that the increasing prominence of these perspectives will give aboriginal peoples strength and lead to the acceptance of indigenous sovereignty in society more generally. This, it is argued, will be beneficial to all people in Canada because of the romantic view that a revitalization of aboriginal peoples’ traditions will contribute to the capacity to resist the capitalist system. Aboriginal traditions, in fact, are perceived as being superior to those embraced by modernity more generally, and it is assumed that restoring the former will result in a better society for all.

Why is the University a “Colonial Institution”?

Although political scientists like Taiaiake Alfred, Joyce Green, Kiera Ladner, Rauna Kuokkanen and Malinda Smith all promote indigenization of the university, there is skepticism that this can be achieved. This is not an attitude particular to political scientists because, as Elina Hill explains, “there is no doubt that many Indigenous peoples are wary of ‘indigenization’ even as they participate in ‘indigenizing’ efforts”.²⁷ It is asserted that “universities are intolerant of and resistant to any meaningful ‘indigenizing’”²⁸ because they are “a white institution”;²⁹ universities are dominated by “white males” and most things that are studied comes out of “white culture” and therefore constitutes “white studies” and “white male reason”.³⁰ There is a fear that the form of indigenization adopted will just result in the further “whitening” of aboriginal students and scholars, rather than transforming disciplines like political science. Actual indigenization would involve completely integrating indigenous traditional cultural features into the all aspects of the academy. This, however, has to be done with “caution”, so that indigenous “ways of knowing” will not be coopted.³¹ The university is perceived as having a power imbalance in which Whites dominate Aboriginals, and this makes it difficult for the latter to act autonomously to protect themselves from oppressive processes, as well as to demand self-determination.

The “whitening” of aboriginal students and scholars is linked to the perceived assimilationist and homogenizing character of all institutions that are operating within a capitalist context. We are

²⁷ Elina Hill, “A Critique of the call to “always indigenize!””, *Peninsula*, 2(1), 2012.

²⁸ Alfred, “Warrior Scholarship”, p.88.

²⁹ Rauna Kuokkanen, for example, makes numerous references to the “white” character of universities. See, for example, Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift* (Vancouver: UBC Press , 2007), pp. 4, 14, 16, 18.

³⁰ De la Torre, “In the Trenches: A critical look at the isolation of American Indian political practices in the nonempirical social science of political science”, in Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). p. 175. Kuokkanen uses the term “white male reason”. See Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p. 4.

³¹ Ladner, “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, <https://vimeo.com/29385438>

told that educational institutions historically have been involved in “killing the Indian in the child” and “processes of dispossession”, including ripping indigenous people from their traditional territories and building on indigenous lands without consent, and that this has been accepted by universities.³² As Hill explains, “[c]olonizers wanted Indigenous lands, and ultimately found imposing institutions to be a most effective way of stealing that land. Against such imposition, Indigenous Peoples have fought long and hard to maintain their particular... identities and territories against encroaching settlers”.³³ It is also maintained that “Euro-knowledge” is an “assimilationist pressure” and that “universities are the drivers of knowledge capitalism”.³⁴

The assumption of universities being assimilationist and homogenizing institutions is connected to the notion that the social sciences themselves are oppressive. As disciplines like political science see aboriginal peoples as objects of study, not as collaborators constructing arguments in support of their self-determination, it is maintained that they are “a form of violence” that is intent on the “naming and claiming of Indigenous peoples... and their lands and histories for the colonizers”.³⁵ As Stewart-Harawira explains,

since the earliest days of colonialism over five hundred years ago, the colonial endeavor has sought to codify, quantify and tabulate flora, fauna and peoples. Early anthropologists in 19th century Britain, for instance, literally ‘collected’ specimens of Indigenous peoples and displayed them in zoos. Within the last hundred years, the identification and study of Indigenous peoples, including their knowledge, ways of being and cultural practices has been dominated by anthropologists and to a lesser but still important degree by historians.³⁶

Even more significantly, the social sciences are perceived as colonialist because they demand a universal conception of knowledge. Kuokkanen, for example, speaks of the need to recognize “multiple truths”.³⁷ There is a problem with intellectual developments brought by the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, according to Kuokkanen, because they assume that the scientific method can be used to increase understanding for all people regardless of their culture or ancestry.³⁸ It is maintained that “western science is historically and socially constructed”,³⁹ and assertions that its methods can be used to invalidate traditional beliefs constitute “perpetuating intellectual colonization and appropriation” and engaging in “systemic cognitive imperialism”.⁴⁰ Makere Stewart-Harawira maintains that the demand that indigenous knowledge

³² Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p. 14.

³³ Elina Hill, “A Critique of the call to “always indigenize!””, *Peninsula*, 2(1), 2012.

³⁴ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism: Indigenous Research in the 21st Century”, *Socialist Studies* 9(1), Spring 2013, p. 47. See also Larry Chartrand, “Indigenizing the Legal Academy from a Decolonizing Perspective”, Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, University of Ottawa, 2015.

³⁵ Elaine Coburn, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, George Sefa Dei and Makere Stewart-Harawira, “Unspeakable Things: Indigenous Research and Social Science”, *Socio*, 2(2013), p. 10.

³⁶ Makere Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism: Indigenous Research in the 21st Century”, *Socialist Studies* 9(1), Spring 2013, p. 40.

³⁷ Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p. 5.

³⁸ Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, pp. 1 and 13.

³⁹ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p.47.

claims “be evaluated on the basis of evidence” constitutes “epistemological tyranny”, which is intent on “disqualifying and marginalizing Indigenous ways of knowing”.⁴¹ To combat the marginalization of indigenous perspectives, an “anti-colonial process of engagement by Indigenous scholars and researchers with mainstream, western science” is advocated so as to “[transform] western research”.⁴²

Instead of trying to discard erroneous beliefs so as to reach a common understanding of reality, advocates for indigenization argue for “dialogue”, whereby aboriginal and non-aboriginal perspectives will co-exist in a respectful relationship. This approach, according to Kuokkanen, is embedded within indigenous worldviews and philosophies, which are characterized by reciprocity and responsibility.⁴³ As indigenous peoples have their own processes for validating knowledge, respect should be given to these “ways of knowing”⁴⁴ otherwise aboriginal peoples’ “right of self-definition” will be compromised. Aboriginal peoples, according to Stewart-Harawira need to be able to “tell their own histories, recover their own traditional knowledge and culturally grounded pedagogies, epistemologies and ontologies”.⁴⁵ The dominance of “western knowledge” means that aboriginal peoples have been “subjected to invisibilization, misrepresentation and misinterpretation”, and “reclaiming” these perspectives constitutes a “resistance to the homogenising impulse of modernity”.⁴⁶ Terms such as “epistemic imperialism” and “epistemological racism” are used, implying that the rejection of indigenous ideas is a form of oppression.⁴⁷ The political scientist Kiera Ladner even claims that the demand for universal understanding is a form of genocide. This notion has been institutionalized further with the emergence of a new term in indigenization advocacy - “epistemicide”.⁴⁸

The demand that aboriginal “ways of knowing” be allowed to co-exist with the knowledge of “Westerners” is significant because the former are often inconsistent with scientific methods. Many examples of aboriginal “knowledge”, in fact, are spiritual beliefs. There is an attempt to cast us back to the pre-enlightenment period by asserting that “indigenous epistemologies are grounded in an awareness and deep appreciation of the cosmos and how the self/selves, spiritual, known and unknown worlds are interconnected”.⁴⁹ As Stewart-Harawira claims, “[k]nowledge itself is commonly described as sacred, having come from the Creator”. This is often referred to as “interconnectedness” or “relationality”, whereby knowledge “is at once spiritual, emotional, physical and mental”.⁵⁰ Kuokkanen explains that a number of “indigenous worldviews” assume

⁴¹ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p. 46

⁴² Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”.

⁴³ Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, pp.23-6.

⁴⁴ Ladner, “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, <https://vimeo.com/29385438>

⁴⁵ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p. 41.

⁴⁶ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p.43.

⁴⁷ This is the view of Rauna Kuokkanen. See Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, pp. 13 and 67 for examples of this conflation.

⁴⁸ This term has been used repeatedly in forums about indigenization at Mount Royal University. For the most extensive development of this concept see Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁹ Dei, “Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy”.

⁵⁰ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, pp. 43-44. Stewart-Harawira evades this problem by maintaining that “intuition, insight, and dreams” have been “the catalyst for new discoveries and understandings within ‘western’ sciences”, and therefore aboriginal use of these processes should not be criticized as unscientific. “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p. 45. But having a dream that leads one to investigate an area scientifically

“that the land is a physical and spiritual entity of which humans are one part”. These world views are “shamanistic”, in that it is believed that “a skilled individual” is “in contact with the spirit world” and “can assume the form of an animal when necessary”. “Knowledge” involves “an awareness of one’s responsibilities and of norms of behaviour”, including the need to balance the physical world with the spiritual one. Gifts are given “to thank certain spirits for past abundance and also to ensure fishing, hunting, and reindeer luck in the future”. Rocks are perceived as being “alive” and “require regular attention [by being given offerings]”, otherwise there could be “a loss of subsistence luck, illness and even death”.⁵¹

Rejecting these beliefs, indigenization advocates assert, consists of an “amputation” of scholarship.⁵² They must be accepted, we are told, because aboriginal peoples view research differently than non-aboriginal people. Unlike “western” perspectives, which see disputation and the refutation of erroneous ideas as essential for progress in understanding, it is considered to be disrespectful to challenge aboriginal “knowledge holders” or “wisdom keepers”.⁵³ Aboriginal “oral histories”, for example, should be accepted without question because aboriginal peoples think that they are true. To point out that memories are unreliable, and cannot be equated with the accuracy of written records that are frozen in time, is perceived to be indicative of a colonial mentality. As Kuokkanen puts it: “[a]t one time, colonial racial ideology postulated that indigenous peoples were intellectually inferior; now it is indigenous *epistemes* that are considered inferior, not worthy of serious intellectual consideration”.⁵⁴ Designating ideas as being inferior is equated with political oppression.

The equation of colonialism with the questioning of any aboriginal perspective is made possible by the assumption that aboriginal traditions are an essential aspect of their existence.⁵⁵ This assumption, called “culturalism” by the New Zealand political economist Elizabeth Rata, results in aboriginal traditions being abstracted from historical processes of change,⁵⁶ and culture (learned behaviour) being causally connected to the group’s ancestry. It is a belief held by a number of aboriginal scholars, including prominent indigenous educators like Marie Battiste,⁵⁷ that traditional culture, knowledge, and spirituality are tied together, and therefore unchangeable.

does not mean that dreams themselves constitute a valid method for understanding the world. With respect to indigenization, it appears that researchers will be expected to accept dreams as a “way of knowing”.

⁵¹ Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, pp.33-35.

⁵² Riyad Ahmed Shahjahan, “Mapping the Field of Anti-Colonial Discourse to Understand Issues of Indigenous Knowledges: Decolonizing Praxis”, *McGill Journal of Education* 40(2), Spring 2005, p. 214.

⁵³ This point was challenged in a presentation that I gave on May 16, 2016. It was noted that, in the case of aboriginal groups in Alberta, elders show humility and do not claim that their views are definitive. This assertion does not negate the fact that many indigenization advocates argue that it is disrespectful to question elders, or even to violate the “traditional etiquette of respectful listening”. For an examination of this see Widdowson and Howard, *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry*, p. 96. For another discussion of this see David Newhouse, “Ganigonhi:oh: The Good Mind Meets the Academy”, *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 31(1), 2008, pp. 192-193. Newhouse maintains that elders can be questioned, but people must “learn how to question differently”. Questioning, according to Newhouse, should not “[occur] in a climate of disrespect”.

⁵⁴ Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p.3.

⁵⁵ Wazyatawin Angela Wilson, “Introduction: Indigenous Knowledge Recovery is Indigenous Empowerment”, *The American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3&4), 2004, p. 370.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Rata, “Rethinking Biculturalism”, *Anthropological Theory*, 2005, 5, p. 270.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Marie Battiste, “Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education”, *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22(1), 1998, p. 17.

“Indigenous knowledge” is believed to be the “original directions given specifically to our ancestors” and that colonization is resisted “by carrying that knowledge into the present”.⁵⁸ It is argued that the “relationship with Creation and its beings was meant to be maintained and enhanced and the knowledge that would ensure this was passed on for generations over thousands of years”.⁵⁹ These assumptions, in fact, explain the concerns about “whitening” of indigenous scholars and students mentioned earlier.

“Aboriginal knowledge” is also perceived to be subjective⁶⁰ and directed by political considerations, making possible the implication that demands for objectivity are an attempt to marginalize the native population. Indigenization advocates oppose the notion that knowledge should be pursued for its own sake. Unlike “western” scholarship, which values academic freedom and the autonomy of the researcher, indigenization advocates point to the need for aboriginal communities to control what is disseminated about them. They argue for “protocols, relationships, reciprocity, methods, process and ownership of data and findings”, which must be “carefully and thoroughly negotiated with the community”.⁶¹ Because of the imbalance in power that exists between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples, research must be discontinued if it is opposed by aboriginal communities. Kuokkanen, in fact, challenges the idea of academic freedom on the grounds that it has been used to “justify racist remarks and colonial attitudes toward indigenous people”, and “has become a tool for some to plunder indigenous knowledge”. According to Kuokkanen, this has led some indigenous scholars to “[ask] whether academic freedom has gone too far”.⁶²

Disciplines like political science are perceived to be “colonialist”, therefore, because their goal is to increase universal understanding, not to promote the political goals of a particular group.

⁵⁸ Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, “Introduction: Indigenous Knowledge Recovery is Indigenous Empowerment”, *The American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3&4), 2004, p. 361.

⁵⁹ Deborah McGregor, “Coming Full Circle: Indigenous Knowledge, Environment, and Our Future”, *The American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3&4), 2004; See also R. Cruz Begay, “Changes in Childbirth Knowledge”, *The American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3&4), 2004.

⁶⁰ Demands that subjectivity must be accepted without question has prevented the evaluation of the third difference between aboriginal and scientific methods – the reliance on oral, as opposed to written, evidence. While this distinction is exaggerated, as both aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples use written and oral evidence, the difference is that indigenization advocates maintain that oral accounts must be weighted equally with written evidence. As Stewart-Harawira maintains, “the notion that orally held knowledge lacks validity and verifiability is readily challengeable by those who have access to understanding these processes. Stories’ in fact provide a rich source of verifiable data that can be cross-matched and compared from multiple perspectives when viewed through the right lens. The trick is in the knowing. Just as mainstream knowledge systems have their own processes for ‘gate-keeping’, Indigenous communities also have strategies for protecting the integrity of knowledge. These are but some of the critical issues that are shaped and negotiated within particular frameworks and relationships when entering the space of research negotiation with and for Indigenous communities”. Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p. 45. Elina Hill maintains that indigenous people “have oral traditions with methodologies and features that are familiar to those within an Indigenous group. Methods for substantiating content vary from public forums with witnesses, discussions, and other forms of community participation to developed structures of accountability and attention to particular features of the land. Within appropriate Indigenous frameworks, oral traditions are relevant and rich with meaning; outside of these frameworks, meaning can be lost”. Elina Hill, “A Critique of the call to ‘always indigenize!’”, *Peninsula*, 2(1), 2012. After studying “oral histories” for ten years, I have been unable to pin down these “strategies for protecting the integrity of knowledge” or “appropriate Indigenous frameworks”.

⁶¹ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p. 44.

⁶² Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p. 17.

Indigenization, on the other hand, is about supporting aboriginal organizations politically, and it is argued that the academy should be put into the service of this objective. The historian J.R. Miller notes that this has created problems for research because it has led to self-censorship, partisanship and venality.⁶³ As he points out, “scholars who work with native communities frequently find themselves confronted with the question of whether or not to publish a scholarly opinion that might run counter to the current political objectives of the community they are studying”.⁶⁴ Miller goes on to note that “[a]mong some native organizations there is a strongly held view that scholars are like politicians: those that are not with them are against them...”. This results in some academics “tak[ing] a favourable partisan position”, while others can be “intimidated into doing so or remaining quiet”.⁶⁵

Similar comments have been made about political science by Alain Cairns.⁶⁶ Cairns points out that it is common for scholars studying aboriginal issues to take on the role of “academic missionary” and to use their research in “serving a cause”;⁶⁷ concerns are expressed when it is believed that research findings might “soften the impact of colonialism by minimizing its negative effects”.⁶⁸ Cairns notes that

an academic publication on an Aboriginal issue may not be evaluated solely or primarily on its merits as a piece of academic research, but in a number of cases will additionally be viewed through [a] political lens. A scholarly article or book will be seen as aiding, or damaging, the pursuit of some political goal or objective. Unless he or she is particularly obtuse, a prospective author will understand that dangerous territory lies ahead. If the research project proceeds, the language that is employed will be carefully considered, and the questions that are asked might not be the researcher’s first choice. A cautious scholar may even conclude that some subjects are best left for another day when passions have cooled, or that a safer less politicized field has greater attraction.⁶⁹

More specifically, with respect to the constitutional debates of the 1980s, “there was a high degree of unwillingness to say anything that might be construed as unsympathetic to Aboriginal aspirations, such as impediments to or limitations of grandiose self-government ambitions for the small populations, under 500, of most Indian bands, or in the practical difficulties of self-government without a land base”.⁷⁰ Many academics, including political scientists, “were warned that high costs may follow any ‘deviation from the generally sympathetic orientation towards native rights’”.⁷¹ As a result, the “few scholars who have dared to express doubts about the appropriateness, and indeed authenticity, of aboriginal claims have been attacked and even ridiculed, regardless of the substance of their concerns”.⁷² And when indigenization initiatives ensure that scholars’ career prospects and research grants are determined by the extent to which

⁶³ J.R. Miller, “From Riel to the Metis”, *Canadian Historical Review*, LXIX (1), 1988, pp. 1-20.

⁶⁴ Miller, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Miller, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Alan C. Cairns, “Aboriginal Research in Troubled Times”, Unpublished research paper, University of Waterloo, December 19, 2008 [in author’s possession],

⁶⁷ Cairns, “Aboriginal Research in Troubled Times”.

⁶⁸ Cairns, “Aboriginal Research in Troubled Times”.

⁶⁹ Cairns, “Aboriginal Research in Troubled Times”.

⁷⁰ Cairns, “Aboriginal Research in Troubled Times”, p. 18.

⁷¹ Gibbins and Jhappan 1989, p. 211, cited in Cairns, “Aboriginal Research in Troubled Times”, p. 18.

⁷² Gibbins and Jhappan, p. 24, cited in Cairns, “Aboriginal Research in Troubled Times”, p. 18.

they can obtain the support of aboriginal communities, these political considerations will increasingly have the capacity to distort the research that is undertaken and how it is presented.

Why is Indigenization “Emancipatory”?

In contrast to political science, which is perceived as a “colonial enterprise”, indigenization is believed to deliver aboriginal peoples from oppression.⁷³ This is because it will “protect the integrity of Indigenous knowledge and traditions” and “[appreciate] Indigenous knowledge”, which is argued to be beneficial politically.⁷⁴ By challenging the authority of “western knowledge”,⁷⁵ aboriginal peoples will be able to become decolonizing agents and develop new forms of understanding that will facilitate aboriginal self-determination. Incorporating “aboriginal knowledge systems” should be promoted, it is argued, because this will enable aboriginal groups to reclaim their lands, revitalize traditions, and facilitate national self-determination. It will, according to Kuokkanen, create a new “imaginary”, which will prompt the development of decolonized relationships.⁷⁶

But, as was mentioned above, aboriginal “ways of knowing” differ from scientific methods in that they embrace spiritual beliefs and unsubstantiated opinions. Indigenization advocates support the recognition of this as “knowledge” on the grounds that the native population’s “subjective understandings of their conditions” must be accepted for them to be the “agents of their own liberation”.⁷⁷ As Betty Bastien explains, “the use of traditional ways of knowing among tribal cultures constitutes the initial and essential step in breaking the cycles of dependency. In this fashion, Indigenous people connect to the sacred, to their alliances, and to the knowledge that is generated from balance, free of dependency. This creates independence because it is self-sufficient and balanced, based on years of intimate observations of the web of place, community, and cycles of time passing”.⁷⁸ Accepting these “ways of knowing” gives aboriginal peoples power by enabling them to become stronger and better able to resist colonization.⁷⁹ It will, in the view of Kuokkanen, “call for new paradigms and epistemic relationships that will transgress and subvert the prevailing logic of hegemonic rationalism and colonial superiority”.⁸⁰

According to this view, colonization occurred because “indigenous knowledges” were devalued, enabling Europeans to demobilize the native population and establish sovereignty over them.⁸¹ As Angela Wilson asserts, “if Indigenous cultural traditions had been deemed to be on equal

⁷³ Ladner, “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, <https://vimeo.com/29385438>

⁷⁴ Larry Chartrand, “Indigenizing the Legal Academy from a Decolonizing Perspective”, Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, University of Ottawa, 2015.

⁷⁵ Alfred, “Warrior Scholarship”.

⁷⁶ This idea is drawn from Luce Irigaray, who maintains that “the ‘real’ is impossible without a simultaneous change in the ‘imaginary’”. Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p.4.

⁷⁷ Deborah Simmons, “Socialism from below and Indigenous peoples”, *New Socialist*, 58, September-October 2006, p. 15.

⁷⁸ Bastien, *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press ,2004), p.2.

⁷⁹ Wilson, “Introduction”, pp. 359-372.

⁸⁰ Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p. 157.

⁸¹ Leanne R. Simpson, “Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge”, *The American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3&4), 2004, p. 377.

ground with the colonizer's traditions, colonialist practices would have been impossible to rationally sustain".⁸² This conception is found in some of the postcolonial writings of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Paulo Freire, which maintain that colonization requires the colonized to believe in their cultural inferiority.⁸³ Consequently, restoring pride in one's culture is essential for overcoming colonization.⁸⁴ "Indigenous knowledge", in fact, is claimed to be an "epistemology of struggle", as it is an "experientially-based, non-universal, holistic and relational knowledge of 'resistance'".⁸⁵ As a result, indigenization advocates encourage these "ways of knowing" to be declared "equally valid" alongside scientific methods, or even as "superior" to them,⁸⁶ to give legitimacy to aboriginal political demands.

In political science, therefore, indigenization involves accepting the irrational viewpoints of aboriginal people so as to facilitate "decolonization". Because aboriginal organizations are generally interested in reclaiming traditional native lands and revitalizing aboriginal ancestral cultures, if indigenization is accepted as a principle, only research that is believed to facilitate these goals will be supported. Political science research will be encouraged when it provides arguments that legitimize a return of lands and aboriginal "sovereign" control, and vilified if evidence is presented that questions the feasibility and desirability of these proposals. Indigenization demands that scholars celebrate aboriginal spirituality and encourage the revitalization of aboriginal languages, tribal forms of governance and traditional economies. Questioning any aboriginal tradition is "disrespectful" at best, and possibly even "colonialist" and "racist".

Aboriginal organizations' concern with reclaiming land and encouraging traditional cultural revitalization has made "indigenous sovereignty recognition"⁸⁷ a focal point for indigenization advocates in political science, and thus is a major challenge for the discipline. Kiera Ladner maintains that indigenization in political science includes the development of "word warriors" to defend aboriginal sovereignty,⁸⁸ as well as to show that genocide was perpetrated against aboriginal peoples in Canada. "Indigenous nation building" is asserted as the primary reason for indigenization,⁸⁹ which involves efforts to "[re-claim] Indigenous sovereignty and

⁸² Wilson, "Introduction", p. 360.

⁸³ See, for example, F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963); A. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991); and P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1998). For an application of these ideas to the recognition of indigenous knowledges, see Glen Coulthard, "Indigenous peoples and the politics of recognition", *New Socialist*, 58, September-October 2006, pp. 9-12; Dei, "Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy"; and Shahjahan, "Mapping the Field...".

⁸⁴ Wendy Hart-Ross and Deborah Simmons, "Wasáse FAQs", *New Socialist*, 59, November-December 2006.

⁸⁵ George J. Sefa Sei, "Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy", *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 4(2), 2000, pp. 111-132.

⁸⁶ Winona LaDuke, "Social Justice, Racism and the Environmental Movement", Transcript of a speech at the University of Colorado at Boulder, September 28, 1993, www.zmag.org/zmag/articles/barladuke.htm (accessed January 2007).

⁸⁷ Larry Chartrand, "Indigenizing the Legal Academy from a Decolonizing Perspective", Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, University of Ottawa, 2015,

⁸⁸ <http://umanitoba.ca/centres/mamawipawin/1160.html> [accessed April 2016].

⁸⁹ Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, cited in Elina Hill, "A Critique of the call to 'always indigenize!'", *Peninsula*, 2(1), 2012.

authority...”.⁹⁰ As it is assumed that the recognition of indigenous sovereignty is essential for social justice, indigenization encourages research that supports this political goal.

In addition to perceiving indigenous sovereignty recognition as essential for aboriginal well-being, indigenization advocates support it because it is believed to be beneficial for all. This is because it is assumed that “aboriginal knowledge” enables the protection of the environment and the implementation of non-oppressive practices.⁹¹ Including aboriginal “traditions of knowledge” is characterized as an “emancipatory trend”⁹² because, unlike materialistic and militaristic western cultures that are detrimental to women, minorities and the environment, aboriginal traditions are perceived to be feministic, socialistic and ecologically sensitive.⁹³ Joyce Green points to the “healthy, compelling cultural ethos and identity offered by contemporary Aboriginal cultures...”,⁹⁴ and Deborah Simmons maintains that there is a “radical anticapitalist ethics underlying many indigenous traditions”.⁹⁵ According to Simmons, “radical indigenous resurgence can pose significant obstacles to capitalist expansion in renewing traditional modes of taking care of the land”, and this could form the basis of a “postrevolutionary socialist society”.⁹⁶ “Indigenous knowledges” are argued to pose a challenge to capitalist expansion through their beliefs about living in harmony with the environment. It is maintained that “indigenous knowledges” dictated that aboriginal peoples live according to “natural laws” opposing growth and the domination of nature, which prevented them from destroying the environment. As a result, many aboriginal people claim that they were able to “live a spiritually balanced, sustainable existence within [their] ancient homelands for thousands of years”.⁹⁷ Indigenization, therefore, is perceived as a way for political scientists to construct arguments that resist capitalism and create a more egalitarian and environmentally sustainable world.

The Implications for the Discipline of Political Science

While one would expect these arguments to be made by aboriginal organizations, their appearance in an academic context is surprising. This is because supporting a group’s political aspirations is different from declaring that their views are a form of “knowledge”. In order for something to be considered knowledge, there must be evidence to support it. While aboriginal peoples’ spiritual assumptions and subjective opinions might lead them believe certain things,

⁹⁰ Stewart-Harawira, “Challenging Knowledge Capitalism”, p. 39.

⁹¹ Ladner, “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, <https://vimeo.com/29385438> [accessed April 2016]. See also Malinda Smith, “Aboriginal Leaders in Conversation on Education”, <https://vimeo.com/25726401> [accessed April 2016].

⁹² Larry Chartrand, “Indigenizing the Legal Academy from a Decolonizing Perspective”, Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, University of Ottawa, 2015.

⁹³ Angela Wilson also maintains that indigenous knowledge is anti-capitalist because it is opposed to a “world based on the oppression of whole nations of peoples...”. Aboriginal “values and lifeways”, asserts Wilson, “are inconsistent with the materialism and militarism characteristic of today’s world powers”. She even suggests that such beliefs and practices “may resolve some of the global crises facing all populations today”. Wilson, “Introduction”, pp. 360-361.

⁹⁴ Joyce Green, “The Complexity of Indigenous Identity Formation and Politics in Canada”, *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 2(2), 2009, p. 38.

⁹⁵ Simmons, “Socialism from below and Indigenous peoples”, p.13.

⁹⁶ McNally, “The Return of Red Power”, *New Socialist*, 59, November-December 2006.

⁹⁷ Wilson, “Introduction”, p. 359.

these views could be erroneous.⁹⁸ The notion that these “knowledge systems” must be unconditionally⁹⁹ respected and recognized in political science is to prevent a consideration of the quality and quantity of evidence in determining their validity. One of the essential characteristics of the academy – the critical evaluation of truth claims – is therefore being undermined by indigenization initiatives.

As a result, the demands for the uncritical acceptance of aboriginal perspectives in political science will have serious consequences for the discipline. Although some indigenization initiatives, such as the revitalization of aboriginal languages,¹⁰⁰ are largely irrelevant to the research carried out in political science, the expectation that political scientists promote aboriginal spirituality, forms of governance and traditional economies has the potential to be very destructive to our understanding of aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations. In political economy, for example, aboriginal forms of governance and traditional economies have been historically determined as less developed modes of production. With indigenization, this area of theoretical inquiry will be marginalized as it conflicts with the political goals of aboriginal organizations. An inadequate understanding of how aboriginal groups have been incorporated into, and transformed by, the capitalist mode of production is the result.¹⁰¹

Indigenization, in fact, denies “western” and “linear” notions of historical development, where the present is perceived to “[grow] out of the past...and can be improved upon”, because it promotes the supernatural belief that history is “cyclical”. This aboriginal “conception of history” is extensively discussed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. As is summarized in Figure 3.2 of the *Final Report*,¹⁰² the Royal Commission asserts that the cyclical view of aboriginal peoples perceives “time as a circle that returns on itself and repeats fundamental aspects of experience”. The acceptance of this spiritual belief as “knowledge” has a political purpose because it reinforces proposals for restoring the original nation-to-nation

⁹⁸ It is recognized in non-aboriginal contexts, on the other hand that “belief systems” are “not knowledge”. See, for example, the critique of homeopathy on the CBC radio programme *The Current*, February 29, 2016.

⁹⁹ This word is actually used by Rauna Kuokkanen. As she puts it: “...this book will be calling for the indigenizing of the academy, and arguing that it is up to the academy to do its homework and address its own ignorance so that it will be able to recognize and give an unconditional welcome to indigenous peoples’ worldviews and philosophies”. She goes on to argue that this will require that “the academy...acknowledge that it is founded on very limited conceptions of knowledge and the world”. Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, pp. 2-3. Even more disturbing is the apparent acceptance of this in a review of Kuokkanen’s book in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. See Fraser Needham, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 42(2), 2009, pp. 549-550.

¹⁰⁰ Many argue that this can only be done by preserving aboriginal languages. Malinda Smith, therefore, claims that this revitalization is a responsibility not only of aboriginal peoples but also non-aboriginals, and Kiera Ladner argues for increased funding for aboriginal languages programming. “Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenizing the Academy”, <https://vimeo.com/29385438> [accessed April 2016]. On the same panel, Andrea Bear Nicholas even argues for the need for separate aboriginal post-secondary educational institutions. She maintains that indigenous knowledge cannot even be acquired if it is not discussed in an indigenous language.

¹⁰¹ I am currently developing a new theoretical approach – the political economy of neotribal rentierism – that challenges many of the assumptions of indigenization. For a discussion of this approach see “The Political Economy of Neotribal Rentierism: A Historical and Material Theory of Aboriginal-Non-Aboriginal Relations in Canada”, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, May 31-June 2, 2016.

¹⁰² Figure 3.1 “A Linear Perspective on the Historical Relationship” and Figure 3.2 “A Cyclic Perspective on the Historical Relationship”, *Final Report*, 1, pp. 34-35.

relationships that are perceived to have existed at the time of contact.¹⁰³ This justifies a revitalization of aboriginal traditional economies, political systems, and “world views” in the modern context.

In political science, the decision to accept aboriginal peoples’ “cyclical” conception of history, or to reject “western” notions of development, would have to be based on a critical evaluation of the evidence. Indigenization advocates in political science, however, avoid this and (erroneously) reject the developmental conception on the grounds that it denigrates the native population. Joyce Green (writing with Michael Burton), for example, claims that the idea of development is “laden with racist assumptions”, without providing any evidence to show how this is the case. Instead, the following irrelevant and distorted information is offered as a refutation:

The proposition is that if we just help those people to get with the program of capitalism and a job in the waged economy, they will stop being so dysfunctional. The development cabal proposes that privatizing reserve lands and trading Aboriginal land claims for a mess of potage in the form of a few jobs with corporations will benefit Aboriginal people by getting them into the market economy. Aboriginal and treaty rights are never part of this calculus.¹⁰⁴

While one can argue with the accuracy and validity of these assertions, in no way do they show the existence of “racist assumptions”. It is also untrue that the all members of the “development cabal” argue in favour of “privatizing reserve lands”.¹⁰⁵ Green and Burton fail to recognize that “development” is not synonymous with “capitalism”; the issue is productive involvement.

Green, in another article, also maintains that theoretical assumptions about historical development are a “myth”, and thus false. She maintains that envisioning “human development [as] an ineluctable trajectory of beneficial improvement correlated with ‘our’ mastery and exploitation of nature” is a “shared myth of liberalism and socialism”.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Daiva Stasiulis and Frances Abele conclude that “there is no particular virtue in seeking a replication of European stages in the evolution of social formations everywhere...”.¹⁰⁷ Peter Usher, as well,

¹⁰³ Aboriginal organizations maintain that they historically had a “nation-to-nation relationship” with the colonial powers, where they would share their lands with Europeans while maintaining their political autonomy. *Final Report*, 1, p.140.

¹⁰⁴ Joyce Green and Michael Burton, “A Twelve-Step Program for a Post-Colonial Future”, Canadian Dimension, December 6, 2013, <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/a-twelve-step-program-for-a-post-colonial-future> [accessed May 2016].

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard, *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press), pp. 252-3.

¹⁰⁶ Green, “Decolonization and Recolonization in Canada”, p.55

¹⁰⁷ Abele and Stasiulis, “Canada as a ‘White Settler Colony’”, p. 250. Glen Sean Coulthard also rejects what he calls the “*normative developmentalism*” of Marxism and the “typically nineteenth-century modernist view of history and historical progress”. The evidence he provides for this rejection is a quote from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri maintaining that all notions of progress perceive less developed cultures as being “locked in an immutable present without the capacity for historical innovation”. On the basis of this mischaracterization, Coulthard declares that “clearly, any analysis or critique of contemporary settler-colonialism must be stripped of this Eurocentric feature of Marx’s original historical metanarrative”. Again, the reason for “stripping” an analysis thusly appears to be political – an acceptance of the idea of historical progress would undermine Coulthard’s proposals for a

implies that it is erroneous to assert that aboriginal peoples' subsistence economies are relatively undeveloped in comparison to those of industrialized nation-states, concluding that such assumptions are based on an "underlying mythology that has contributed to our 'scientific' misconceptions about the Native economy of the North, to say nothing of the ideological justification for removing hunting peoples from the path of industrial development".¹⁰⁸ There is no engagement with developmental arguments and the evidence that are used to support them in these three cases, and so this seems to be a political, rather than an academic, objection.

The "motivating reasoning"¹⁰⁹ behind indigenization is evident in the fact that its advocates argue for "different perspectives" to exist side-by-side on the one hand, while decrying developmental theories as "false" on the other. This politically motivated inconsistency is made possible by the use of the slippery philosophical tendency known as "postmodernism".¹¹⁰ This is an epistemologically and culturally relativist approach that, as Alan Sokal - the physicist who wrote the famous hoax in the journal *Social Text* - explains,¹¹¹ is deployed "opportunistically to ward off the critiques of rationalists".¹¹² "Postmodernist doctrine", according to Sokal, enables "its adherents to look favorably on those theories that seem to support their political goals, while casting a skeptical gaze on theories that they deem politically pernicious".¹¹³ Postmodernism rejects notions such as objectivity because it does not want to be constrained by the fact that this "serves principally as a *filter* for distinguishing true propositions from false ones, plausible ones from implausible, and more generally for evaluating propositions and theories according to the degree of *rational warrant* that they enjoy in the light of the currently available evidence [emphasis in original]". Removing cognitive considerations in the evaluation of theories enables "social, political and psychological considerations [to] move to center stage". Postmodernism, therefore, enables indigenization advocates in political science to accept historical evidence that is consistent with their political goals, while rationalizing the rejection of academically valid ideas that would call them into question.

"resurgent politics of recognition". For a discussion of this politics of recognition see his conclusion. To refute evolutionary conceptions of pre-industrial cultures, Coulthard provides culturalist/nativist/primordialist quotations from Taiaiake Alfred and Leanne Simpson about the need to have "respect for traditional values" (Alfred, cited in Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, p. 155) and "re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past").

¹⁰⁸ Usher, "Staple Production and Ideology in Northern Canada, in William H. Melody et al., *Culture, Communication, and Dependency* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1981), p. 181.

¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth Renzetti has recently noted that "[m]otivated reasoning, social scientists will tell you, is one of the ways people have difficulty separating fact from belief... It's the idea that when you have an emotional stake in the outcome of a particular event, you tend to believe information, however, spurious, that supports that outcome". Elizabeth Renzetti, "In our brave new 'post-truth' world, every fact needs a fact checker", *The Globe and Mail*, May 21, 2016, p. A2.

¹¹⁰ "Postmodernism" is defined by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont as "an intellectual current characterized by the more-or-less explicit rejection of the rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment, by theoretical discourses disconnected from any empirical test, and by a cognitive and cultural relativism that regards science as nothing more than a 'narration', a 'myth' or a social construction among many others". Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), p. 1.

¹¹¹ Alan Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity", http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/transgress_v2/transgress_v2_singlefile.html [accessed May 2016] and Alan Sokal, "A Physicist Experiments With Cultural Studies", http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/lingua_franca_v4/lingua_franca_v4.html [accessed May 2016].

¹¹² Alan Sokal, *Beyond the Hoax: Science, Philosophy and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 338.

¹¹³ Sokal and Bricmont, p. 339.

Postmodern influences in political science further discourage an examination of developmental perspectives by encouraging politicized intrusions into the process of conceptualization. Conceptual analysis is an important area of political science because it “seeks to discover observer-dependent facts about the political world”.¹¹⁴ As one introductory political science textbook explains, “it is vital that we establish a common language as students of political studies so that we can avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and make our dialogue more effective and efficient”.¹¹⁵ Concepts help us to think about the social world, which is too complex to analyze without them. “Bad concepts make for bad analysis” because they prevent us from communicating meaningfully and improving our understanding the totality of politics and government in the world today.¹¹⁶

Indigenization advocates, however, argue that concepts should not be universally defined because meanings should be changed when applied to indigenous peoples so as to aid “decolonization”. Kuokkanen, for example, is “attentive to the dangers of definitions”, arguing that “there are no fixed meanings”.¹¹⁷ Concepts historically developed in political science are labelled “Eurocentric” so that different concepts, with the same name as the original, can be inaccurately applied to aboriginal circumstances. Others reject any attempt to apply a standard political science definition. Kiera Ladner, for example, notes that “traditional (that is, Eurocentric) conceptualizations of the nation typically include territory as an essential component. But, Aboriginal nations are not ‘ordinary’ nations – nor have they ever been – as they are very different from their European counterparts”.¹¹⁸ As a result, indigenization means that the ideas of “nation”, “sovereignty”, “law” and “government” constitute completely different things when applied to aboriginal groups.

The most important concept in political science pertaining to aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations is “sovereignty”. In political science, the underlying idea of sovereignty is that it is the authority to override all other authorities. The development of this concept is linked to the emergence of the international state system and the existence of civil wars in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. This led to the development of the principle that one state should not violate the capacity of other states to defend their borders, as well as the state having the ultimate authority to control conflicts between different factions within its territory. However, the influence of indigenization means that sovereignty is not defined in the same way when we discuss aboriginal societies. As Taiaiake Alfred explains, sovereignty in the aboriginal context means that “there is no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity”.¹¹⁹

Changing the meaning of sovereignty, when it is applied to aboriginal peoples, is politically convenient. Establishing pre-contact aboriginal sovereignty is required in the legal arguments for land claims and self-government. This is because the British legal system maintained that

¹¹⁴ Andrew Rehfeld, “Offensive Political Theory”, *Perspectives on Politics*, 18(2), June 2010, p. 475.

¹¹⁵ George A. MacLean and Duncan R. Wood, *Politics: An Introduction* (Toronto: Oxford University Press), p. 25.

¹¹⁶ J. Tyler Dickovick and Jonathan Eastwood, *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods and Cases*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁷ Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University*, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ Kiera L. Ladner, “Negotiated Inferiority: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’ Vision of a Renewed Relationship”, *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 31(1-2), pp. 249-50.

¹¹⁹ Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness* (Don Mills: University of Oxford Press, 1999), p. 56.

sovereignty could only be asserted over lands, in the absence of treaty or conquest, which “belonged to no one” (i.e. were not under sovereign control). Known as the doctrine of *terra nullius*, this idea was accepted as one of the justifications for the Crown’s ultimate authority up until the 1970s; it was assumed that aboriginal groups, because they lacked states, could not be sovereign and enforce laws on lands they traditionally occupied. This argument is now opposed because of its political implications, and so a number of indigenization advocates assert that all academics should “[r]epudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples...”.¹²⁰ Because it is claimed that aboriginal groups were “sovereign nations” before contact, the assertion of Canadian state power over aboriginal groups without their consent is perceived as violating international law.

Now, while it is an academic question as to whether or not aboriginal “sovereignty” existed before contact, what is important to note here is the political pressure that is being exerted on discussions about the matter. While it is understandable that political organizations might demand a repudiation of concepts that they oppose, political scientists should not agree to these restrictions unless it has been shown, academically, that the concepts themselves are found wanting. And as there is no evidence that an overriding authority existed in aboriginal societies historically, as they had no states, political scientists should not apply the concept of “sovereignty” to pre-contact Canada. Misapplying these concepts, in fact, creates problems for the discipline in increasing our understanding of the historical and material factors that influence political development. It also results in difficulties in discussing possible mechanisms for achieving aboriginal-non-aboriginal reconciliation. The erroneous belief that indigenous sovereignty existed before contact has created unrealistic expectations about what can be accomplished by pursuing aboriginal self-determination in late capitalism. This will make it more difficult to work out credible arrangements that will actually enable both aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians to live together.

As academically sound conceptualization relies on an accurate understanding of the past, the indigenization of historical research has had a particularly detrimental impact on the discipline of political science. This is because the demands of indigenization are intent on turning history into what Eric Hobsbawm has called “identity history”. Identity history, according to Hobsbawm, is partly mythological because it is deployed to buttress a version of the past that supports the aspirations of a particular identity group. As Hobsbawm points out, “good history” for an identity group is history that shores up national pride, a cause or simply “emotional satisfaction”.¹²¹ Hobsbawm goes on to point out that the emergence of identity history is understandable in that it appeals to marginalized collectivities who believe they are contesting a hegemonic culture’s claim to superiority,¹²² but that it is destructive to the discipline of history because it attacks its academic foundation – “the supremacy of evidence”.¹²³ Because it is

¹²⁰ http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf [accessed April 2016]

¹²¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Abacus, 2002), p. 356.

¹²² Hobsbawm, p. 358.

¹²³ A similar argument is made by Rolf Knight, with respect to native history, when he notes that the “danger involved when individuals, native or others, write about ‘their own’ people, especially in the context of ethnic nationalism, is that the past comes to be rewritten to do service for contemporary claims and sentiments. This may provide useful propaganda but it is detrimental to an understanding of how people actually lived and how social processes actually worked. ‘Correct understanding’ does not come from simply being a member of some group; this is as true for native Indian history as for any other”. Rolf Knight, *Nativism and Americanism*, p. 216.

“reading the desires of the present into the past”,¹²⁴ identity history is contrary to the assumption of universality needed for the academic study of history, and thus many areas of political science.

In the discipline of political science it is recognized that the reading of history should not be “selective”.¹²⁵ Political scientists, like historians, must document the past as accurately as is possible by relying on all available data that can be publicly scrutinized.¹²⁶ Although it is true, as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples points out, that history “is not an exact science” since “past events have been recorded by human beings who...have understood them through the filter of their own values, perceptions and general philosophies of life and society”,¹²⁷ this does not mean that all accounts of the past are equally valid. As E.H. Carr points out, history is not “a child’s box of letters with which we can spell any word as we please”.¹²⁸ In order to write meaningful history, political scientists must both ensure the accuracy of the evidence used and “bring into the picture all known or knowable facts relevant, in one sense or another, to the theme on which he is engaged and to the interpretation proposed”.¹²⁹ All work in political science should be scrutinized on this basis. Questions should be asked as to whether political science’s characterization of aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations selectively deploys evidence to buttress a particular political agenda. The same goes for the research that is undertaken by indigenization advocates in political science.

Because “identity history” is the view of the past promoted by aboriginal groups, demands that political science be indigenized will undermine research being undertaken (that is, the kind of indigenization that demands “decolonization” and “transformation”, not the indigenization proposals that argue in favour of the increased *study* of aboriginal peoples). Understanding the history of aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations is very important, but this is impossible when political scientists are encouraged to uncritically accept the views of aboriginal “knowledge holders” and “wisdom keepers”. Exaggerating the development of aboriginal pre-contact circumstances and interpreting aboriginal traditions romantically prevents an understanding of how aboriginal economies and political systems have been transformed when combined with capitalism.

¹²⁴Hobsbawm, p. 360.

¹²⁵Radha Jhappan, in her criticism of the work of Tom Flanagan, maintains that his work contains “an amazingly selective reading of history” that is “driven by a particular right-wing agenda that wants to undermine the [aboriginal] claims of collectivity.” This comment contains the tacit assumption that history should not be selective. Marci MacDonald, “The Man Behind Stephen Harper”, *The Walrus*, <http://walrusmagazine.ca/articles/the-man-behind-stephen-harper-tom-flanagan/4/> [accessed May 2012].

¹²⁶ The historian E.H. Carr makes this point when he characterizes history as a “constructive outlook over the past”. Carr rejects mysticism because “a serious historian may believe in a God who has ordered, and given meaning to, the course of history as a whole, though he cannot believe in the Old Testament kind of God who intervenes to slaughter the Amalekites, or cheats on the calendar by extending the hours of daylight for the benefit of Joshua’s army. Nor can he invoke God as an explanation of particular events”. For a further discussion of these points, see E.H. Carr, *What is History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), pp. 74, 109.

¹²⁷ Final Report, 1, p. 32.

¹²⁸ E.H. Carr, *What is History*, p. 26

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 28.

Conclusion

The most serious consequence of the “transformative” indigenization of political science, therefore, is that it accepts two concepts that contradict one another, impeding critical thought. Advocates for transformative indigenization misdefine the word knowledge to include beliefs that are contrary to evidence. They also try inveigle acceptance of the views of aboriginal “traditional knowledge holders” and “wisdom keepers” with accusations of racism and colonialism. This creates a fertile ground for the acceptance of false ideas. While this will obviously be harmful for the pursuit of the truth in the discipline, it raises questions about how the acceptance of erroneous beliefs as “knowledge” could be seen by indigenization advocates as emancipatory.

The bizarre assertion that appears in numerous indigenization articles by political scientists is that the pursuit of truth can be harmful and a source of oppression for aboriginal peoples. Since scientific advancements have occurred alongside colonial developments, indigenization advocates assume that the former must be responsible for aboriginal oppression.

But how can knowledge itself be a source of oppression? This claim was made most succinctly by Bruce Robbins, who, in response to the Sokal hoax in the September/October 1996 issue of *Tikkun* magazine, asks the following question: "Is it in the interests of women, African Americans, and other super-exploited people to insist that truth and identity are social constructions?". In answering this question, Robbins replies: "Yes and no. No, you can't talk about exploitation without respect for empirical evidence. But yes, truth can be another source of oppression". To illustrate how truth is a "source of oppression", Robbins notes that "it was not so long ago that scientists gave their full authority to explanations of why women and African Americans...were inherently inferior".¹³⁰

The fallacy of this line of argument was not lost on Alan Sokal. In response to Robbins' point about how scientific findings have been used to oppress women and African Americans, Sokal asks:

But is Robbins claiming that that is truth? I should hope not! Sure, lots of people say things about women and African-Americans that are not true; and yes, those falsehoods have sometimes been asserted in the name of 'science', 'reason' and all the rest. But claiming something doesn't make it true, and the fact that people including scientists - sometimes make false claims doesn't mean that we should reject or revise the concept of truth. Quite the contrary: it means that we should examine with the utmost care the evidence underlying people's truth claims, and we should reject assertions that in our best rational judgment are false.¹³¹

When examining current postmodernist criticisms of the social sciences made by indigenization advocates, in fact, one finds similar problems to the one identified by Sokal - the "[systematic confusion of] truth with claims of truth, fact with assertions of fact, and knowledge with

¹³⁰Bruce Robbins, “Anatomy of a Hoax”, *Tikkun*, September/October 1996, pp. 58-9.

¹³¹ Sokal, “A Plea for Reason, Evidence and Logic”, http://www.physics.nyu.edu/sokal/nyu_forum.html [accessed May 2016].

pretensions of knowledge".¹³² It generally turns out that it is not scientific epistemology that is being criticized, but the failure of academics to live up to ideals such as objectivity and rigorous analysis, which are essential in searching for the truth. In addition, postmodernists raise various sociological or ethical questions pertaining to social scientific research and teaching, but these have nothing to do with scientific methodology *per se*. This confusion is the result of the conflation of a number of separate levels of analysis, which include the following: ontology, epistemology, the sociology of knowledge, individual ethics and social ethics.¹³³

In political science, indigenization advocates most often confuse epistemological questions with those pertaining to the sociology of knowledge. They maintain that colonialist imperatives that resulted in social scientists accepting false beliefs as true means that the social sciences themselves are colonialist. They link political self-determination with demands to accept aboriginal beliefs, and social justice with “cognitive justice”. This justifies the dismissal of evidence-based “western” perspectives when they conflict with aboriginal ones on the grounds that the critical analysis of aboriginal “world views” will result in further colonization.

While indigenization is a relatively new initiative, the intellectual and political confusion that it is endorsing is part of a wider trend that has been occurring in universities since the 1960s. It is linked to the notion that the university should not only be involved in pursuing the truth, but should also validate the identities of those who have been historically oppressed. While it is assumed that these two goals are mutually reinforcing, they often come into conflict because the pursuit of the truth has the potential to offend deeply held beliefs. As Mark Mercer explains, “a community of intellectuals is a community of criticism and controversy” because it maintains that all ideas and values should be challenged. This will mean that “community feelings will get hurt, as people often quite naturally take personally attacks on the ideas and values that define who they are”.¹³⁴

Indigenization’s demand that aboriginal “knowledge” be respected so that aboriginal identities can be “valued and celebrated”, would destroy the intellectual foundation of the university. Untrue ideas will become more and more prevalent, especially in those disciplines that are deeply involved in the study of the past – archaeology, anthropology and history. Political

¹³²Sokal, “A Plea for Reason, Evidence and Logic”.

¹³³A good summary of this is provided by Alan Sokal, who notes that these levels of analysis include the following:

Ontology. What objects exist in the world? What statements about these objects are true?
Epistemology. How can human beings obtain knowledge of truths about the world? How can they assess the reliability of knowledge?
Sociology of knowledge. To what extent are the truths known (or knowable) by political, cultural and ideological factors? Same question for the false statements erroneously believed to be true.
Individual ethics. What types of research ought a scientist (or technologist) to undertake (or refuse to undertake)?
Social ethics. What types of research ought a society to encourage, subsidize or publicly fund (or alternatively to discourage, tax or forbid?. Sokal, “What the Social Text Affair Does and Does Not Prove”, <https://www.google.ca/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=what%20the%20social%20text%20affair%20does%20and%20does%20not%20prove> [accessed May 2016].

¹³⁴ Mark Mercer, “Choose Which Kind of University You Want”, <http://www.safs.ca/april2010/mercer.htm> [accessed May 2016].

science will also be seriously impacted because it relies on history to develop its theories about the nature of politics and government and their development. “Identity histories” are more and more likely to be entertained as accurate accounts of the past, and those who challenge these “histories” as being contrary to reason, evidence and logic will increasingly come under political pressure to remain silent.

The most tragic result is that it will be disastrous for aboriginal peoples themselves. Demanding that academics unconditionally “respect” and “honour” anything that is deemed to be “indigenous” cannot result in educational improvement for aboriginal peoples or “reconciliation” with non-aboriginals. Educational achievement can only be improved if people are better able to understand the world around them. This understanding cannot emerge in aboriginal communities if it is pretended that ideas contrary to reason are true. Deceiving others, even if it is rooted in good intentions, also cannot inspire trust. One of the most liberating effects of a real education is that it reveals that we can break free from the chains of tradition. To deny this realization to aboriginal people prevents them from becoming actual contributors to knowledge production and human progress.