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# 16

## INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE AND RENEWAL

### *From Colonizing Practices to Self-Determination*

DONNA DEYHLE

KAREN SWISHER

TRACY STEVENS

RUTH TRINIDAD GALVÁN

*As a group, Native American students are not afforded educational opportunity equal to other American students. They routinely face deteriorating school facilities, underpaid teachers, weak curricula, discriminatory treatment, and outdated learning tools. In addition, the cultural histories and practices of Native students are rarely incorporated in the learning environment. As a result, achievement gaps persist with Native American students scoring lower than any other racial/ethnic group in basic levels of reading, math, and history. Native American students are also less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to drop out in earlier grades.*

—U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003, p. xi

#### CLAIMING INDIGENOUS RIGHTS: THE EDUCATIONAL PLATFORM

In this chapter we will present educational research on curriculum and instruction that centers on Indigenous peoples, both as the researched and the researchers. Globally, Indigenous peoples' homelands comprise almost 20% of the planet's surface, and yet they are only 4% of the world's population (McCarty, Borgoiakova, Gilmore, Lomawaima, & Romero, 2005, p. 2). In their histories we see struggles against colonizing forces. As McCarty et al. (2005) summarizes, "With some exceptions, Indigenous peoples worldwide have been minoritized and marginalized in their homelands; they share with other

minoritized people a diasporic history characterized by invasion, colonization, displacement, enslavement, and genocide" (p. 2). Our primary focus will be Indigenous peoples in North America: First Nations Peoples, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. As it is important to cast our net throughout the American continent, we also bring to readers examples from Indigenous peoples in Mexico and South America. What is striking to us is an amazingly similar history of education among Indigenous peoples in the countries colonized by Great Britain. The First Nations people of Canada, American Indians and Alaska Natives of the United States, the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, and the Maori of New Zealand all experienced systematic assaults on their languages, religions, and communal ways of being. Indigenous peoples in Latin America, colonized by the Spanish, Portuguese, and the Dutch, also experienced similar assaults.

Our focus will reside on Indigenous peoples' efforts to resist continued attempts by policymakers, teachers, and administrators to eradicate Indigenous lifestyles, religions, and languages through assimilation efforts in government, public, and private schools.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, we will examine how Indigenous sovereign rights are being used to strengthen and enhance the future of Indigenous children. This includes not only how children should be taught, but also what they should be taught and by whom. Parents' and community members' demands on their children's schools range from the inclusion of native languages and local Indigenous histories, to an insistence on racially respectful treatment, to demands for Native teachers and schools. As Swisher (1994) writes, "The voices of Indian people have echoed consistent rhetoric, some of it going back as far as fifty years ago: Indian people want the opportunity to determine all aspects of their children's education" (p. 861).

This message is heard clearly in the united voices of Indigenous peoples in the development of The Coolangatta Statement (1999), a declaration of educational rights of Indigenous peoples. A task force commissioned by the National Organizing Committee of the 1993 World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPC:E) met from September 24 to October 1, 1993 to draft a framework for discussing Indigenous educational rights. The task force included representatives from America, Canada, Aotearoa (Maori name for New Zealand), and

Australia<sup>2</sup> and met at a place south of Sydney in the land called Coolangatta by Aboriginals of that area. Section 2.2.4 in The Coolangatta Statement (1999) states that

Self-determination in Indigenous education embodies the right of Indigenous people:

- to control/govern Indigenous education systems;
- to establish schools and other learning facilities that recognize, respect and promote Indigenous values, philosophies, and ideologies;
- to develop and implement culturally inclusive curricula;
- to utilize the essential wisdom of Indigenous elders in the education process;
- to establish the criteria for educational evaluation and assessment;
- to define and identify standards for the gifted and talented;
- to promote the use of Indigenous languages in education;
- to establish the parameters and ethics within which Indigenous education research should be conducted;
- to design and deliver culturally appropriate and sensitive teacher training programs;
- to participate in teacher certification and selection;
- to develop criteria for the registration and operation of schools and other learning facilities; and
- to choose the nature and scope of education without prejudice. (p. 6)

It is in this spirit of self-determination that the following sections are written. We do not want to paint Indigenous students and their parents as simple victims of colonialist racism and educational practices. Rather, we seek to provide a portrait that emphasizes the resilience, determination, and successes of Indigenous peoples in (re)claiming and (re)creating their lives, languages, and futures. Indigenous parents assert their rights to have the history, languages, and cultural beliefs of their people in the

curriculum their sons and daughters experience in schools. And they assert their rights to be respected as Indigenous peoples.

In presenting educational research that depicts the experiences of Indigenous peoples, we recognize how loaded the concept of research is to the many who have historically been subjected to the intrusive eye of European science—research that has collected their histories and knowledge and misrepresented it to the world. As Smith (1999), a Maori scholar, argues, “The word itself, ‘research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” because it is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1). Our challenge is to incorporate voices, experiences, and Indigenous thought from many points of view. We use a theoretical lens that Battiste (2000) describes as “postcolonial Indigenous thought” that both recognizes the effects of colonial domination on Indigenous societies yet acknowledges that postcolonial societies do not exist. Neocolonial structures and mentalities still function but resistance to these structures and mentalities occurs through the liberation of Indigenous thought, practices, and imagination.

Our understanding of the mechanisms of colonialist practices and neocolonial structures is grounded in critical theory. Our focus is on institutional inequities, moving the analysis away from a deficit perspective of Indigenous youth and their families, while at the same time capturing the dominant group’s role in creating educational inequities. We present research that illustrates how cultural differences become politicized within dominated and subordinated power relations and demonstrate how Indigenous students respond, often resisting, to the assimilationist practices of their educators. Most importantly, we present a significant body of research that argues that local knowledge, with Native language playing a prominent role, can have a positive and advantageous impact on Indigenous schooling. We begin with a brief history of resistance to European educational systems framed by an ideology of racial inferiority and forced assimilation.

#### ASSIMILATION: THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM IN THE AMERICAS

I suppose the end to be gained, however far away it may be, is the complete

civilization of the Indian and his absorption into our national life, with all the rights and privileges guaranteed to every other individual, the Indian to lose his identity as such, to give up his tribal relations and to be made to feel that he is an American citizen. If I am correct in this supposition, then the sooner all tribal relations are broken up; the better it will be for him and for the government and the greater will be the economy to both.

—Colonel Pratt, as cited in Utley, 1964, p. 266

The project of educating Indians was part of a larger problem created from the effects of colonization and was ostensibly based on principles of sovereignty and trust. During the early colonial periods of the United States, American Indians exchanged nearly 1 billion acres of land for promises of protection against invasion, for education, and for self-government in perpetuity. For almost 100 years, from 1778 to 1871, nearly 400 treaties solemnized the transactions—land in exchange for promises—between the federal government and Indian tribes and nations. In more than 100 of these treaties, educational services and facilities were promised, creating moral and legal obligations on the part of the federal government (Tippeconnic & Swisher, 1992, p. 75). From its beginnings in the 17th century, formal education for American Indians was based on these principles of sovereignty and trust responsibilities, which allowed the federal government an opportunity to create an educational system that would attempt to assimilate American Indians into mainstream America. For the next 2 centuries, the “Indian problem” was framed by deficit thoughts about Indigenous cultures that resulted in strategic policies to Americanize them. These policies unequivocally called for the complete eradication of the histories, religions, and languages of American Indians. For this reason, it has always been the strategy of tribal peoples to seek control of the education of their youth to ensure that their cultures will not be lost.

As in the United States, control over the education of Aboriginal children in Canada has always been a priority of First Nations’ peoples. After a long and hard-fought battle, their assertions were finally acknowledged in 1973, when

the federal government accepted their proposed Red Paper Policy, which argued that Aboriginal communities had the right to administer educational programs for their children. This policy was accepted in principle as national policy, although it has yet to be fully implemented. Since the 1980s, Aboriginal communities have slowly begun to reclaim and redefine education by assuming control of schools. The number of band-operated schools in Canada has exponentially increased as First Nations "have begun to move from models of colonial domination and assimilation to those that are culturally, linguistically, and philosophically relevant and empowering" (Battiste, 1995, pp. vii–xi).

Latin American examples of assimilationist motives and strategies include a colonialist desire for developing cohesive nation-states and to deskill Indigenous peoples' knowledge of their culture, language, and traditions, with what Maldonado (2002) refers to as cultural genocide. According to some researchers, national or state attempts to homogenize a population and incorporate Indigenous peoples into a state education system reflects a desire to create a unified nation as a symbol of progress and heightened civilization (Friedlander, 1975; Luykx, 1999). In essence, Indigenous peoples within these countries must "progress" according to externally imposed standards if these nation-states are to develop (Friedlander, 1975).

Mexico's plan of progress meant preserving the divisive categories of Indian and non-Indian while simultaneously assimilating Indigenous communities into Mexican society, or what Frye (1996) refers to as "turning Indians into Mexicans." Although the government of postrevolutionary Mexico has explicitly embraced a pluralist ideology, it in fact encouraged a Mestizo ideology that encompasses all its citizenry. This has resulted in a "colorblind" view of society in which mainstream is normalized. Hence, when government rhetoric turns to Indigenous roots, it consistently romanticizes the past and the noble Indian (Friedlander, 1975; Luykx, 1996). For the Ecuadorian government, its priorities have been to educate its Huaorani population to be "modern citizens" that can surpass their "uncivilized" and "deprived" circumstances (Rival, 1996).

A colonizing agenda for Indigenous students in some parts of Latin America, however, has meant neither full assimilation nor complete rejection, but rather a deskill of cultural

knowledge and ways of life (Maldonado, 2002; Rival 1996). For instance, for the Driqui of Oaxaca, schooling has resulted in a decrease in their agricultural tradition, symbolic relations, and rituals (Maldonado, 2002). Similarly, Rival (1996), in her work in Ecuador, claims that "schools, with their strong pro-agriculture advocacy remove children from their natural environment and *de-skill* them with regard to forest knowledge" (p. 159). When children are removed from the forest and the longhouse, they are removed from traditional social relations and cultural knowledge for increased hygiene, numerals, and school uniforms. Schools not only deskill students, they also create divides between communities that are school-literate and those that are not (Maldonado, 2002). This creates a division between not only those who master the language of wider communication (i.e., English, Spanish, Portuguese) and those who do not, but also those who move from an oral (everyone is a teacher) to a written tradition (in which only some can be teachers).

#### Religion and Residential Schools: Resisting the Curriculum

I cannot survive without my education and I cannot live without my Indian values. The reason why I cannot live without my education is because of the rapidly changing world. I cannot live without my Indian values, as well, because they provide the spiritual support I need to live a harmonious life.

—A Pueblo high school student,  
as cited in Peshkin, 1997, p. 81

The marriage of organized religion and schooling has been a particularly insidious means by which to systematically eradicate Indigenous cultures. British Protestants included a clause in the charter of the first English colony in Virginia that established directives whereby the "conversion" of Indians would occur through education. In Latin America, Spanish Jesuits set up a series of mission schools intended to eradicate native customs and beliefs; Dominicans, Franciscans, and other Jesuits duplicated those efforts in what is now the United States and Canada. The Spanish established Catholic mission schools throughout what is now California

and the southwestern United States. Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists had a powerful colonizing effect on First Nations people in what is now British Columbia. Throughout the Americas, religious indoctrination, as part of colonizing pedagogy, has always been “devoted to the task of Europeanizing the native intellect” (Noriega, 1992, p. 373).

Considered by colonizers to be the most powerful means by which to assimilate Indigenous peoples, residential schools were established across the globe in what is now Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and parts of Africa, China, and Russia (Bloch, 2004). Children of First Nations groups were removed forcibly from their homes and taken to alien institutions. Whereas in the United States schools were first run by various religious denominations subsidized by the federal government, in Canada these schools were run first by the federal government and then by religious denominations, primarily the Catholic and Anglican churches. Archibald (1995) provides an example in describing how missionaries and settlers had a common goal of Christianizing and civilizing Sto:lo tribal members. Non-Native teachers gave religious training and English language lessons to Indigenous children. Initially, Sto:lo values and customs were incorporated into their conversion methods and educational practices to gain cooperation, but these practices were later abandoned and replaced with an attempt to eradicate Sto:lo culture: “Anything associated with First Nations culture was disregarded or forbidden in the missionary system. . . . Separating the young from their elders was advocated by most missionaries as the only effective method of Christianizing and civilizing the Sto:lo” (Archibald, p. 292). The education of Sto:lo children then evolved into a system of industrial training in which students continued to receive religious education but also learned skills related to farming, stock-raising, and housewifery (Archibald, pp. 292–293). Resistance to attempts to erase who they were as Indigenous peoples, however, still existed in all aspects of their lives.

During the time the residential schools operated in Canada (1870 to 1988), 80 schools housed and educated approximately 125,000 children. These institutions, according to Chrisjohn and Young (1997), historically served as a form of psychological imperialism, which had devastating effects on First Nations peoples.

Canadian residential schools left a terrible legacy of both physical and emotional abuse. As Grant (1996) and Haig-Brown (1993) document, racism among staff was rampant, the speaking of Aboriginal languages was banned, and children (especially siblings) were isolated from each other to prohibit any form of cultural transmission. Removed from their homes and villages for 10 months of the year, Indian children lived “lonely, desperate lives in an alien and sometimes brutal environment” (Mallea, 2000, p. 25). Like their United States counterparts, First Nations children and their families endured unspeakable hardship, yet they showed resilience in maintaining their cultural bearings.

Indian boarding schools in the United States were first established by missionaries in the 1600s and represented the first assimilative attempts to remove American Indians from their tribal and family members, religion, language, and homeland by placing them in distant schools to learn non-Indian ways. By 1885, the federal government increased its involvement and responsibilities in the education of American Indian youth with the creation of over 106 boarding schools. Many of these were industrial training schools, such as the Carlisle Indian School established by Richard Henry Pratt in 1878, and included religious instruction in an effort to “lift up the lowly” in “true missionary spirit” (Trennert, 1982, p. 227). In these boarding schools, the use of native languages by children was forbidden under threats of corporal punishment, semiskilled vocational training was encouraged for Indians, students were placed as laborers and domestics in White families’ homes during vacation time, native religions were suppressed, and visits from family were, at best, annual visits. Like their Canadian peers, American Indian youth did not share their teachers and school administrators’ goals. They resisted.

Despite all efforts to the contrary, assimilation was “complete” for very few Indians (Archuleta, Child, & Lomawaima, 2000; Lomawaima, 1994; McBeth, 1983; Mihesuah, 1993; Trennert, 1988). Pulled together from tribes across the United States, the boarding school experience, in an ironic way, helped create a climate that increased a sense of youths’ “Indianness.” For the most part, Indian youth endured the schooling experience, retained a strong ethnic identity, and either returned to live with their families on the reservations or asserted themselves in lives outside their reservations. In many ways, Indian identity

in Canada and the United States is as strong today as it was 100 years ago. And yet, little has changed in education practices by the schools Indian youth attend today. Although most boarding schools have closed, shifting the responsibility of the education of almost 85% of American Indian youth to public education, teacher beliefs, pedagogy, and curricula still often view assimilation as the solution to the “Indian problem” (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997).

### THE INDIGENOUS LEARNER: RESISTING COLONIZING PRACTICES

The work I am taking now [high school] is so simple that it is ridiculous. I took this stuff in about grade four. I look at it now and my mind goes blank. I wasn't dumb before I got here, but I soon will be if I stay in this place.

—Wilson, 1991, p. 378

Indigenous peoples have shown remarkable resistance to efforts to eradicate Native traditions through schooling. According to Noriega (1992), a sustained “culture of resistance” in North America was employed almost from the first colonial encounter. This resistance allowed various tribes to “gradually devise strategies for defending their societies against many of the worst effects of the colonizing indoctrination process” (Noriega, 1992, p. 383).

We choose here, and throughout the rest of the chapter, to highlight the voices of Indigenous teachers, youth, and their families in representative ethnographic and other long-term studies as a means of showing the readers the general patterns of experiences revealed in the research. Educational practices framed with assimilationist policies consistently produced resistant American Indian students. This was evident in the first ethnographic research of American Indians in schools in an Oglala Sioux community in the late 1950s. Wax, Wax, and Dumont (1964/1989) documented that power relations, specifically cultural resistance, racism, and the assimilatory model used in school, were central to understanding the school failure—80% of the youth left school before graduation—of Oglala Sioux children. Cultural differences

were ignored or twisted into deficits by their educators. As a school official said,

The Indian child has such a meager experience. When he [*sic*] encounters words like “elevator” or “escalator” in his reading, he has no idea what they mean. But it's not just strange concepts like those. Take even the idea of water. When you or I think of it, well, I think of a shining, stainless steel faucet in a sink, running clean and pure. . . . But the Indian child doesn't think of water as something flowing into a bath tub. . . . guess the Indian child would think of a creek. . . . or of a pump, broken down and hardly working. (Wax et al., 1964/1989, pp. 67–68)

Over the course of their schooling, Oglala Sioux youth clearly understood that their teachers harbored negative assumptions about them and their community. Wax et al. (1964/1989) concluded, “As the pressure of the teacher becomes greater, the resistance of the pupils becomes more grotesque, so that like plantation slaves, they appear stupid or infantile. This, in turn, provokes the teacher into treating these adolescents with a condescension that only little children could tolerate” (p. 99). Educators viewed the school as designed to make the Oglala Sioux student less Indian. Indian parents, on the other hand, thought of their Indianness as an intrinsic part of their very being. Schools were viewed pragmatically as a means of qualifying students for better paying employment and not as an institution to extinguish who they and their children were. “In their judgment, the White is the alien, the enemy, and the intruder, who has brought the Indian people only misery. ‘Acting White’ is the most stinging epithet in their vocabulary” (Wax et al., p. 11). This combination of Indigenous resistance and derogatory teacher treatment created a dismal opportunity for educational success for these Oglala Sioux youth.

Like Wax et al. (1964/1989), Wolcott's (1967/1984) ethnography of a Canadian Kwakiutl village and schools revealed youth resistance in an environment he described as “antagonistic acculturation” (pp. 130–131). “Indian schools run by the federal governments of both countries [the United States and Canada] consciously directed their efforts toward replacing Indian ways with ways more acceptable to and characteristic of the dominant White middle class, although the respective societies have at the same time

responded prejudicially to the Indians who attempted to assimilate" (Wolcott, 1984, p. 137). Similarly, in a Cherokee community and school, Dumont and Wax (1976) describe a "cold war" of student resistance in classrooms whose goals are "to shape and stamp them into becoming dutiful citizens, responsible employees, or good Christians" (p. 205):

What typically happens is that by the seventh and eighth grades the students have surrounded themselves with a wall of silence impenetrable by the outsider, while sheltering a rich emotional communication among themselves. The silence is positive, not simply negative or withdrawing, and it shelters them so that, among other things, they can pursue their scholastic interests in their own style and pace. (p. 211)

Twenty years later, Foley (1996) described similar education experiences among Mesquaki youth and turns on its head the often misinterpreted "silent Indian." Normally seen as a self-esteem or cultural department problem, Foley claims this as a political and resistant strategy. Mesquaki students utilized this negative image of the silent Indian to remove themselves at least emotionally from a school environment that considered them motivationally and cognitively deficient.

In Wilson's (1991) study of a Canadian Sioux high school, students identified racial prejudice as central to understanding their lack of success and subsequent rejection of schooling. Students faced hostile teachers who believed the Indian students were racially and academically limited. Fulfilling the low expectations of their teachers, students undervalued their academic ability, taking boring, undemanding courses to minimize their engagement with the hostile school. Wilson describes the impact of this racial trauma:

It is true that the initial reaction was one of hopelessness, but then that hopelessness spurred them on to action. The action that they chose was that of dropping out of or abandoning school for a time. To them, staying in school would have been an unwise choice. Their adaptive strategies required withdrawal because the setting was impossible. They chose psychological survival. (p. 378)

Deyhle (1995) paints a disturbingly similar picture of the educational experience of Navajo

youth with what she calls "racial warfare" (p. 406). She argues that racism and misguided cultural assumptions about Navajos intertwined in the schools and worked to limit educational and economic opportunities for Navajos while maintaining political and economic power for Whites in the community. The White community viewed assimilation as a necessary path to school success. Deyhle's (1995) data revealed the opposite.

The more academically successful Navajo students were more likely to be those who were firmly rooted in their Navajo community. . . . Failure rates were more likely for youth who felt disenfranchised from their culture and at the same time experienced racial conflict. Rather than viewing the Navajo culture as a barrier, as does an assimilation model, "culturally intact" youth are, in fact, more successful students. (pp. 419–42)

Resistance also is evident with Indigenous peoples from Latin America. Its expression may be overtly oppositional, embedded in silence, or carefully strategic. Luykx (1996, 1999) describes Indigenous Bolivian preservice teacher resistance through performances and humor expressed in critical skits, humorous presentations, plays, or poetry readings. Their performances challenged the normales' (teacher schools) efforts to banish their Indianness. While schooling also intended to make modern citizens of Huaorani peoples in Ecuador, resistance, according to Rival (1996), was evident in their appropriation of one of schooling's most outward expressions. The school uniform that was to signify the division between the educated and uneducated, modern and traditional, and non-Indian and Indian instead became the equalizer. Men, women, and children, in or outside of schools, appropriated the school uniform. Rival (1996) points out, their "way of wearing school uniforms is not determined by their decision to challenge school culture. Rather, it is a form of local appropriation, a semiconscious attempt to control the terms of modern behavior in practice" (p. 163). Appropriation of school knowledge and the schooling experience is also common in Mexico. Maldonado (2002) focuses on Indigenous youth who appropriate school knowledge and increase their cultural capital as a collective endeavor. That is, they return with "knowledge and ideas

that they place at the service of defining and driving collective ethnic projects” (Maldonado, 2002, p. 168), transforming the schooling experience to reflect their culture and institute a collective project.

At the same time, American Indians have succeeded in using educational institutions to assert their Indigenous rights of self-determination. Haskell Indian Nations University is one example of a 19th century residential school that has reinvented itself through American Indian leadership. Established in 1884 as the United States Indian Industrial Training School for the assimilation of young Indian boys and girls into American society, Haskell has evolved into a premier institution of higher education that prepares American Indian and Alaska Native men and women to be scholars and leaders who will carry out the policy of self-determination among their tribes and nations.<sup>3</sup> It is home to one of the first Indigenous teacher training programs in the United States. Over its 120-year history, its purpose has shifted from education for assimilation to education for self-determination. As one of five boarding schools established in the late 1800s, Haskell is the only one that has continued to operate. With a student population representing the greatest tribal diversity of any other institution in the United States, Haskell Indian Nations University enrolls 900 students from approximately 130 tribes, nations, pueblos, villages, corporations, or rancherias each semester. These young men and women are presented with a curriculum that empowers them to complete their education at Haskell; they finish knowing more about what it means to be Indigenous than when they entered, regardless of where they fall on the continuum of assimilated to traditional in terms of their identity and upbringing. Funded by the United States Congress through the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior, Haskell is still a government institution, and through its history can be traced the history of Indian education policy in the United States. There is a wonderful irony in this history in that Haskell is viewed as a place where the future of sovereignty is supported and the right to be Indigenous is practiced within a federal bureaucracy that once tried to eliminate it.

Strategic resistance evident in Indigenous communities across the globe has been to reclaim educational theory and practice by creating or adapting curriculum and pedagogies

that better reflect Indigenous world views, that maintain Indigenous culture, and that resist assimilating cultural and political forces. As Martinez’s (2006) study with Indigenous youth in a Southwestern high school reveals, even curricular school decisions are fought with ideological tension and political force. Indian faculty at this high school developed Native American Studies courses that increased native pride and cultural preservation. However, even the creation of Indigenous-centered programs and curriculums can be minimized when placed at the periphery of the curriculum. Indigenous students, for instance, were “cognizant of the tension created by the binary—white/core (required) knowledge and red/periphery (elective) knowledge” (Martinez, 2006, p. 130) that situated required mainstream courses over Native American Studies elective courses. Despite this binary, students understood the importance and need for an Indigenous-centered decolonizing curriculum.

#### DECOLONIZING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION: RECLAIMING LANGUAGE AS A CORNERSTONE OF CULTURE

As you’re growing up here [pueblo community in New Mexico] you will hear things, see things and be involved in activities where the white man’s tongue has no place. They can never be explained in English because that language does not have the capacity to explain these things.

—Suina, 2004, p. 289

One of the most devastating effects of colonization on Indigenous communities, especially since the 20th century, was the eradication or near eradication of many Indigenous languages on the planet. Linguists estimate that of the present 6,000 plus languages, all but 200 to 250 are likely to die out or come close to dying out in the next century (Krauss, 1992). McCarty (2002) grimly warns, “Fully 84 percent of all Indigenous languages in the United States and Canada are in danger of falling silent within the next 20 to 40 years” (p. 180). Conscious of how central language is to culture, researchers agree that



language death essentially means the real loss of culture, traditions, and religion (Benjamin, Pecos, & Romero, 1997; McCarty, 2002; Sims, 2001; Suina, 2004). With regard to the Keres language spoken by Puebloan peoples in northern New Mexico, Benjamin et al. (1997) argue, "Language was the thread that tied together all the fundamental aspects of Cochiti culture. Its unraveling signaled a culture in distress" (p. 121). Much of the blame for this calamity of language death lies in education policies that have sought to eradicate Indigenous languages.

In 1887, the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs articulated a federal policy that prohibited Indian children to study any other language than English. This policy remained in effect for much of the next century (McCarty, 2003, p. 148). Native languages were outlawed in schools throughout the United States and Canada, and students caught speaking their home languages were punished severely (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; McCarty, 2003; Szasz, 1974). Even with the passage of the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) in 1968, bilingual education was virtually unknown in the schools American Indian students attended. But this act, as McCarty (2003) has argued, created a foundation from which to start reclaiming Indigenous languages. The 1990/1992 Native American Languages Act legally asserted "the right of Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies to use the Native American languages as a medium of instruction in all schools funded by the Secretary of the Interior" (Reyhner, 1992, p. 62). At the local community level, these federal policies have given rise to language programs that have successfully increased student participation and achievement (Begay et al., 1995; Francis & Reyhner, 2002; Holm & Holm, 1995; Lipka & McCarty, 1994; McLaughlin, 1995; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben, & LaFromboise, 2001; Wilson & Kamana, 2001), parent participation (Deyhle, 1991; McCarty, 1993, 2003), Native language development (Arviso & Holm, 2001; Holm & Holm, 1995; McCarty & Dick, 2003; McLaughlin, 1995), and graduation rates (McCarty, 1994; McLaughlin, 1995; Watahomigie & McCarty, 1997). A note of caution exists, however, on assessing academic success with only Western developed tests. Deyhle's (1986) research suggests cultural strategies, such as ways of displaying mastery, effect tests assessment value.

Even with successful local programs, government policies committed to cultural genocide

continue to thrive. Language death has evolved from harsh boarding school policies to new forms that include the imposition of national official language policies that threaten to eradicate most Native languages. The Official English movement in the United States and the imposition of Spanish and Portuguese in Latin America are examples of such efforts (Suina, 2004; Salinas Pedraza, 1997; Richards & Richards, 1997). A number of other factors such as personal or communal economic development, people's everyday interactions with outsiders, intermarriage with nonnative speakers, military conscription, the lure of the modern world, and the marginal status that Indigenous languages hold to the mainstream community have further contributed to the decline of native languages (Dick & McCarty, 1997; Hornberger, 1988; Lee & McLaughlin, 2001; Sims, 2001; Suina, 2004; Watahomigie & McCarty, 1997). Suina (2004) comments that for some tribes the "language shift has been escalating for more than half a century" (p. 283), while for others it has occurred in the last 20 years.

### Language as Cultural Knowing

Meaning is more important than words. When the elders say, "Keep the language," what they mean is, "Keep the thought," because language is the clearest representation of that way of thought. For English doesn't equal Ojibwe, we don't have a shared understanding. . . . English is noun-based, but all Indigenous languages are action-based. They are all defined by relationships to the thing. In essence, in thought. . . . that's the problem. When we try to teach Ojibwe culture in an English context, lots of things become pretty shallow.

—Hermes, 2005, p. 51

The need for language revitalization is an imperative for many who argue that Indigenous knowledge is embedded in the terms, subtle understandings, ways of talking, and histories inherent in language. Furthermore, something is irretrievably lost when language is not expressed in and through Native culture. Culture is more than just beliefs and behaviors; it is also epistemology,

the unique understandings of which can only be expressed through language specific to Indigenous world views. As McCarty (2003) points out, "Language loss and revitalization are human rights issues. Through our mother tongues, we come to know, represent, name, and act upon the world. Humans do not naturally or easily relinquish this birthright" (p. 148).

First and foremost, culture and language revitalization must be based on Indigenous epistemologies and in the language itself. Approaches that are not grounded in the Native language have been challenged as superficial by Indigenous researchers such as Mary Hermes (2005). She expresses the fear that, although heroic efforts have been taken by many educators, the implementation of a multicultural curriculum that simply added on Ojibwe, or other Indigenous cultural knowledge, has resulted in little enhancement of either student identity or academic success. Instead, she argues in support of teaching all curriculum content through the Ojibwe language:

Language has the potential to bridge the artificial gap between academic and cultural curriculum. Students grounded in their heritage language will be able to learn other course content without fear of assimilation. The reclaiming of language could propel the gains of the culture-based movement far beyond superficially adding fragmented pieces of cultural knowledge to the existing structure. Schools based on Indigenous languages create a cultural context—a filter through which any content can be viewed. (Hermes, 2005, p. 53)

In contrast to the add-on approach that Hermes (2005) critiques, successful efforts toward culture and language revitalization have been undertaken using a variety of approaches. Two pervasive and seemingly most effective rely either on maintenance bilingual-bicultural programs (using both the dominant societal and Native language for instruction) or language immersion (using the Native language as the medium of instruction).

#### EFFECTIVE BILINGUAL AND IMMERSION LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS<sup>4</sup>

Students are wearing out pencils faster than when I taught in English. Students are writing with a nonstop pencil in

Yup'ik, in contrast to English, in which the pencil used to pause in search of the next English word to use. So I call my students "little professors" because they are writing with such a smooth flow.

—Lipka, 1998, p. 57

More than 50 Indigenous groups within the United States at the turn of the new millennium were attempting various forms of language revitalization (Hinton & Hale, 2001; Hornberger, 1997). Many have adapted existing programs that have been found to have success elsewhere. One such program in Aotearoa has served as a model for other programs throughout the world. The first Maori-medium education was developed in the late 1970s with a few bilingual education programs in rural communities that used a transitional approach to language learning. Then a whole school, full immersion language preschool program called *Te Kohanga Reo*—in Maori, language nests—was established in 1982 and was initially run by parents. As a result of Maori parents' demands, the program has been expanded into all levels of education and incorporated into the state education system (May, 2005, pp. 367–368). The Maori Language Act was passed in 1987, making Maori a co-official language (with English) in New Zealand. There is now evidence to suggest that a "language reversal, or a process by which a language begins to move back into more prominent use" (Paulston, 1993, p. 281) is taking place. In 2003, 21,520 Maori children—or 14.1%—were receiving instruction in the Maori language; 90 schools operated immersion programs, and 340 schools offered either bilingual or immersion programs (Harrison & Papa, 2005).

With the realization that their language would not survive another generation without new speakers and inspired by the Aotearoa (New Zealand) program, a movement was begun in 1984 to revitalize the Hawaiian language. The first *Punana Leo* (Hawaiian for language nest) was opened as a total immersion preschool that Native Hawaiian parents successfully fought to expand into K–12 public schools on five islands. As a consequence, more than 1000 children have become fluent in Hawaiian. A language that was almost silenced 2 decades ago has been revitalized in Hawaiian communities throughout Hawaii, not only increasing the number of

people learning the language but also the domains in which it is spoken. Native Hawaiians speak of the joy in hearing parents and their children conversing in their Native tongue in shopping malls and other public places for the first time in a generation (Warner, 1999).

One of the first and best known American Indian bilingual programs was the Hualapai project at Peach Springs in northwestern Arizona (McCarty, Watahomigie, & Yamamoto, 1999; Watahomigie & McCarty, 1994; Watahomigie & McCarty, 1997). Started in 1975, this program used thematic curriculum content organized around the local language and social environment, affirmed students' identities as Hualapai, and capitalized on their prior knowledge, specifically their bilingualism, as a means of enhancing their school experience. These instructional changes in which the Hualapai language and culture were authentic and integral parts of the school, along with an increase of Native teachers that enhanced the integration of the school with the community, resulted in Indian students' increased success at school.

Not only do bilingual-bicultural programs enhance learning of and in the Native language, but they have also been shown to improve Indigenous students' proficiency in the dominant societal language. McLaughlin's (1989, 1991, 1992) ethnographic study of one of the first bilingual schools on the Navajo reservation portrays a program successful at serving both objectives. More than 35 years ago, school administrators, teachers, and community members designed K-12 instruction in Navajo to reinforce the cultural and linguistic resources of the students who, at that point, had the lowest test scores in the Navajo Nation. McLaughlin found the purposeful use of Navajo print in schools and homes, where individuals used letters, journals, lists, and notes to express themselves in Navajo; this practice promoted the maintenance of traditional culture and improved school success; these Navajo students consistently scored higher than other comparable reservation children on tests of reading, language, and math in English. McLaughlin's research suggested that educators need to reinforce, not neglect, the cultural identities of children and that active participation of parents and the use of the Navajo language should be integrated into all aspects of classroom life.

Other studies of long-term bilingual programs confirm the positive effects of such programs.

Holm and Holm (1995) reported positive student gains, when measured against other students on the reservation, in the bilingual program at Rock Point Community School. Leap (1991, 1993) found that the use of Native language in conjunction with English in the Wykoopah (two paths) program on the Northern Ute reservation, enhanced students' academic opportunities by building a foundation for literacy development in both English and their Native language. Begay et al. (1995) documented the positive long-term effects of a bilingual program at the Rough Rock Community School. On locally developed criterion-referenced measures, students' end-of-the-year scores consistently showed substantial improvements in oral English and reading. Begay et al. argued that in addition to enhanced student achievement, the bilingual program altered larger power structures by employing local community educators who taught according to community norms and used local cultural and linguistic knowledge.

The metaphor, walking between two worlds, is frequently used to describe the struggles faced by Indigenous students. In an insightful critique, however, Henze and Vanett (1993) argued that this metaphor masks the complexity of lived situations and multiple loyalties and may work to limit the options of these youth. The White world is only marginally available as a choice for Indigenous youth because of poverty, racism, discrimination, and lowered teacher expectations of their potential for success. And the idealized or stereotypical traditional world of their elders is a thing of the past. What is needed is a third world that reflects Indigenous youths' contemporary lives. Effective language revitalization programs recognize that most Indigenous children walk in multiple cultural worlds and develop strategic curricular plans to engage this complexity.

The work of Jerry Lipka (1998) and a group of heroic Yup'ik teachers exemplifies this kind of strategic plan. Over the past 25 years they have collaborated in transforming the culture of schools Yup'ik children attended with what they called "culturally negotiated pedagogy" (Lipka, 1998, p. 31) that included immersion classes in Yup'ik. Yup'ik teachers frequently used direct questioning techniques—a pedagogical style frequently used by White teachers—and spoke with a slower pace that was softer in speech tone. They also structured in more small group and individual work than their White peer teachers. Some of

their cultural patterns could be called Western, others Yup'ik. As Nancy Sharp, one of the teachers, explained, "You know, there is a difference between the old culture and the new. I'm in between and must combine those differences and see in what ways I can be a better teacher for my students" (as cited in Lipka, 1998, p. 53). Yup'ik teachers recognized and honored the cultural hybridity of their students who were provided rich opportunities and choices of activities in both Yup'ik and English. This included community interactional patterns. Sharp argued, "There are things about teaching that are more Yup'ik. Now that I teach in Yup'ik, I see that we teach by repetition, by doing it over and over. I do not like the phonetics way of teaching, with things broken out step by step, teaching the vowels and then the consonants, and so forth. Rather, I teach it with the content" (as cited in Lipka, 1998, p. 54). This also included instruction through the native language, "We see a different way, and when our way is used, the students will speak both languages well. They will know who they are as Yup'ik and speak English without shame or confusion" (Sharp, as cited in Lipka, 1998, p. 56). The Yup'ik program also positively impacted student engagement in learning.

As opposed to school practices that deny or ignore their students' cultural resources, schools that tap into local knowledge and seek the wisdom of the Indigenous community become wise schools (Lipka, 1998, p. 67). This is what Lipka and the Ciulistet Group have done. By illustrating that Yup'ik culture, language, and everyday community practices can enhance the teaching of core academics, such as mathematics and science, they have challenged the devaluation of Indigenous knowledge in schools and have found a culturally relevant way to engage their students.

For some communities the survival of the language has also rested on developing its written form and creating written material that promote its development and increase its dissemination (see Gonzalez Ventura, 1997, for the Mixtec; Hornberger, 1988, 1997, for the Quechua in Peru; King, 1997, 2001, for Ecuador's native languages; Salinas Pedraza, 1997, & Meyer, Maldonado, Ortiz Ortega, & García., 2004, for Indigenous languages in Mexico; Richards & Richards, 1997, for the Mayan's of Guatemala). Salinas Pedraza (1997), for example, reveals that for the Mixtec language the written form becomes a crucial part of the preservation of native traditions. He warns,

however, that native speakers must be involved in the development of a written form since it is they alone who can represent the everyday life of its people.

Other revitalization projects in schools include language classes, afterschool programs, and literacy projects. These efforts have also included curricular changes such as the development of authentic texts (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998; McCarty & Dick, 2003; Sims, 2001), the incorporation of culturally specific hands-on experiences in the classroom, the use of the ceremonial calendar for teaching activities (Benjamin et al. 1997; Suina, 2004), and the introduction of special language development sessions for language teachers (Benjamin et al. 1997; McCarty, 2001).

### **The Broader Community as Key to Language Revitalization**

Decisions about language use and measurements of success in its revitalization must lie with the Indigenous community. McCarty's (2002) ethnographic study of Rough Rock Demonstration School, the first Navajo controlled school on the Navajo Nation, is a powerful example of one Indigenous community's efforts at self-determination. By positioning Navajo culture, history, and language as central to the curriculum, Navajo parents, many of whom had struggled with harsh boarding school experiences, argued for the critical importance of local language, knowledge, and control to alter historically framed authority and power relationships. As one parent explained, "My language, to me . . . that's what makes me unique, that's what makes me Navajo, that's what makes me who I am" (McCarty, 2002, p. 179). The move to center Navajo language, as McCarty (2002) points out, is supported by educational research: "Children who learned to read first in Navajo learned how to read (period). That ability aided rather than hindered their English literacy development" (McCarty, 2002, p. 184). And the move to include the cultural capital of the Navajo community in school enriched and validated students' lives outside of the classrooms.

The Navajo bilingual-bicultural program incorporated local petroglyphs, historic architecture, landforms, and sacred sites as locations to teach oral history, geography, geology, and mathematics, which in turn provided instructional context for hearing, speaking, reading, and

writing Navajo (McCarty, 2002, p. 185). During summers communitywide literacy camps enabled Navajo children and youth to interact with elders while studying livestock management, ethnobotany, drama, storytelling, and Native arts. Although trained Navajo teachers have dramatically stabilized the school, during the past 40 years curriculum and pedagogical approaches at Rough Rock have varied with high teacher turnover, unstable federal funds, and educational policy shifts in the federal government. Central to these struggles are the tensions in the Federal-tribal relations around tribal sovereignty. Beyond documented student successes, McCarty (2002) argues, "Indigenous self-determination may be Rough Rock's greatest legacy" (p. 197).

It is well known that in order for a language to survive and have true meaning for its speakers it must be used in the everyday activities of its community (House, 2002; Pecos & Blum-Martinez, 2001). Indigenous communities throughout the world struggle with this issue. And, although school bilingual and immersion programs cannot secure the revitalization of a Native language, schools can play a critical role in supporting Indigenous educational rights of self-determination. Indigenous communities (re)claiming their knowledge and identities, are developing more community related programs that create a more pervasive native language environment. As Benjamin et al. (1997) point out, "rather than simply offering language classes, the main thrust must be the reinforcement and revival of the activities and events which bring tribal members together" (p. 126). In some communities, language implementation policies mandate native language use for all official tribal business (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998) and in others tribal government employees take on-the-job language classes (Suina, 2004). Hualapai speakers in Peach Springs, Arizona organize community dances, storytelling and arts and crafts activities that further promote language development (Watahomigie & McCarty, 1997). Researchers have found that in successful language revitalization efforts, the use of Indigenous languages permeate all facets of Indigenous life (Benjamin et al., 1997; Hornberger, 1988; Pecos & Blum-Martinez, 2001; McCarty, 2002; Sims, 2001; Suina, 2004).

Tribes have recognized the important role elders can take as mentors, instructors, and cultural keepers of knowledge (McCarty, 2001; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998). Young people serve as language apprentices and in the Cochiti

Pueblo youth and elders are "paired for cultural and work exchanges" (Benjamin et al., 1997, p. 131). Similarly, an intertribal language revitalization program in California founded by the Native California Network (NCN) relies on a master-apprentice approach. Older Native speakers of the language are teamed with young tribal members with whom they spend up to twenty hours a week speaking only their heritage language while going about their daily lives. Training workshops are part of the program where committed young tribal members are taught immersion techniques to expand language learning into the community. In four years, the program trained close to fifty teams for over twenty different languages. Many new speakers are now quite fluent in their heritage language (Hinton & Ahlers, 1999).

### **Obstacles and Challenges to (Re)Claiming Language**

Indigenous communities have confronted many obstacles in their attempts to revitalize Native languages. As discussed earlier, the pervasiveness of assimilationist thinking and efforts to gain control of educational policies and practices in local schools that serve Indigenous youth has created a long uphill battle for tribal peoples. In addition, community disagreement as to the role of the native language, its place in schools, and the method of its transmission (oral or written) sometimes undermine revitalization efforts. In places like Guatemala and other Latin American countries native language literacy practices have served as colonizing tools (poignantly referred to as *Alfabetizarse para desaparecerse*, disappearance through literacy, 1952–1944, and *Alfabetizarse para integrarse*, integration through literacy, 1944–1984; Richards & Richards, 1997). Schools often isolate native language programs or treat students as second-class citizens (Suina, 2004). For instance, Sims (2001) describes early attempts in the 1970s and 1980s by the Acoma Pueblo (one of 22 tribes in New Mexico) to implement the Acoma language. The ultimate goal of this transitional program was the acquisition of English. Since the native language was viewed only as a vehicle toward English proficiency, it did not result in language vitality.

Even when Indigenous peoples have tailored language programs toward educating their own

youth, nonspeakers of those languages have been found to appropriate and misdirect the goals of these programs in an attempt to control the resources associated with them. Warner (1999) found that in Hawaii, the Native language has become “highly politicized by non-Indigenous Hawaiian language educators attempting to colonize the field and control resources purported to redress wrongs to the native people” (p. 68). Warner (1999) asserts,

Language—the words people use to describe their environment, thoughts, emotions—as an expression of worldview is a medium through which people transmit culture and history. Language, separated from the environment it evolved to describe, and the thoughts and emotions that come out of that environment, becomes something new and different. The Hawaiian language taught and learned out of context, distinct from the culture (i.e., its people), becomes a new language. (p. 77)

Warner (1999) argues that non-Indigenous speakers of Indigenous languages are ill-equipped to represent Native languages in the same ways that Native speakers can. For accurate and effective transmission of the Indigenous language to occur, it must be taught by Indigenous speakers. Furthermore, Warner’s findings suggest that revitalization programs need to be controlled and implemented by Indigenous peoples not only because of the necessity for passing on culturally-embedded meaning but also to resist neo-colonial appropriations of Native cultures. Salinas Pedraza (1997) also contends native language practices must not be devoid of critical thinking or creativity as has been the case until recently for the Mixtec in Mexico. Similarly, Kaomea (2005) describes the consequences that resulted when curricula was not sensitive to the broader community of hegemonic race relations. She describes the danger in making curricular changes without broad structural changes when she found that in an Hawaiian Studies program, students’ work tended to echo colonial discourses that legitimized the oppression of the Hawaiian people rather than critiquing their history of colonial domination.

The lack of authentic material, trained teachers, resources, or texts and time to create them was another obstacle tribes face (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; King, 2003; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998; Salinas Pedraza, 1997; Suina,

2004). Others point to the need for a critically conscious community and group of educators that speak about and for a bilingual and bicultural community (Salinas Pedraza, 1997). That is, community discord regarding the place and use of the native language also point to the very vital conversations and communal consciousness that communities need to have so as to question not only the linguistic status of their language but its social standing (Hornberger, 1988).

Despite setbacks and challenges, language revitalization efforts have realized great success in a number of ways. In addition to enhancing learning in both the heritage language and the dominant societal language, of utmost importance has been the fact that many languages have been successfully reintegrated into tribal tradition, great pride has been taken in the effort, and positive dialogue and tribal relations have emerged from the process (Dick & McCarty, 1997). Sims (2001) reports that Acoma Pueblo language camps witnessed increased youth and parent commitment and enthusiasm about not only the Acoma language but community relationships, and that this evidence had in effect prompted parents to make a more conscientious effort to speak the language at home. Indigenous educators have also organized and joined coalitions in Oaxaca, Mexico interested in liberatory education and in support of bilingual education, Indigenous cultural knowledge and the teachers’ Indianness as vital to their work (Maldonado, 2002). Others also report that the entire language revitalization process has created a larger awareness as to the importance of reviving their native language and ultimately of the need for self-governance (Benjamin et al., 1997). As Benjamin et al. (1997) highlight that “this issue has served as a reaffirmation of their efforts to safeguard their religion and culture. Having been on the brink of cultural annihilation, they know how careful they must be about their community’s future” (p. 123).

## VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

The project of Indigenous self-determination has become much more complicated as a result of globalization over the past several decades. The global movement of people, media, capital, and ideas has permanently altered the landscape of Indigenous cultural and political expression. In one sense, colonialist practices against local

Indigenous peoples have now expanded from the level of the nation-state to a global level wherein powerful Western ideological and cultural forces permeate almost all world societies. Yet as most scholars agree, the influence of these forces has resulted not necessarily in more homogeneity, but in new and diverse cultural forms organized in new ways as local societies import global influences (e.g., Hannerz, 1996; Watson, 1997). From one perspective, the inevitable blending of cultures presents a new challenge to Indigenous peoples who have fought a long and difficult battle in their own lands against assimilation. Globalization requires new vigilance and a renewed commitment to fight the loss of distinct cultural systems, Indigenous ways of knowing, and language death.

From another perspective, with global communication come opportunities for better organization of Indigenous political movements and sharing of Indigenous knowledge. Strategic, organized activities that result in declarations such as The Coolangatta Statement (1999) can effect positive social change at the national and international level. One such strategy that has taken on international momentum involves claims for reparation. A recent success was evident in the Canadian government's long overdue acknowledgment of its abuse of its Native peoples. On November 25, 2005, the Canadian government pledged \$4.3 billion in funding for housing, health care, education and economic development for the one million First Nation, Inuit, and Aboriginal peoples of the northeastern and Arctic territories. The Canadian government recognized that the reparation was for centuries of neglect and racism. In addition, \$1.7 billion will be given to aboriginal victims of sexual and psychological abuses experienced in forced Christian residential schooling. In pledging this compensation, the Canadian government has agreed with Indigenous leaders' arguments that abuses in schools have been the root cause of poverty and social problems on reserves. It is a daunting challenge to replicate this gesture as all federal governments will not easily relinquish funds for reparations but it is a project worth pursuing and could have immeasurable positive impact on increasing resources toward education.

### Sharing Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Indigenous scholars discovered that Indigenous knowledge is far more than

the binary opposites of western knowledge. As a concept, Indigenous knowledge benchmarks the limitations of Eurocentric theory—its methodology, evidence, and conclusions—reconceptualizes the resilience and self-reliance of Indigenous peoples, and underscores the importance of their own philosophies, heritages, and educational processes.

—Battiste, 2002, p. 5

For Indigenous peoples, colonialism has meant the misappropriation and commodification of their traditions and cultural knowledge. Spiritual, medicinal, and philosophical orientations native to the colonized have historically been used by the colonizer to exploit and reap financial benefits. Consequently, the struggle to reclaim authenticity of, and control over, their own forms of knowledge has occupied a position of political prominence for many Indigenous peoples. Maori scholar Smith (1999) argues, for example, that Indigenous peoples have to prove that "what was used for centuries to heal an illness was something that was 'discovered' and then had a value added to that discovery through some sort of scientific process" (p. 104). The imposition of science, grounded in Eurocentric values and notions of authenticity, onto Indigenous knowledge, forces an ongoing clash between Indigenous ways of knowing and science (Cajete, 1993). Smith (1999) argues that Indigenous peoples will continue to have to struggle to authenticate, reclaim, and protect Indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions. According to Martinez (2006), this may also mean defining for themselves what constitutes an educated Native American.

Yet this struggle for reclamation and control lies in tension with an Indigenous belief in the transformative possibilities of Indigenous ways of knowing when shared with non-Indigenous others. Worldviews that move humans closer in connection with each other and the environment lie in stark contrast to Western ways of organizing life and offer appealing, hopeful epistemological alternatives to social, political, economic, and environmental problems. Indigenous orientations such as those that focus on holism and interdependency offer alternative roadmaps toward more respectful and compassionate interpersonal and international relations and a sustainable environment. For example, MacIvor

(1995) argues for the expansion of Aboriginal knowledge beyond social studies and language arts and integrating these perspectives into physical sciences curriculum. She argues that as conventional science is increasingly inadequate in addressing global environmental crises, Aboriginal principles and knowledge may promote more cooperation and a greater sense of responsibility toward the environment.

Smith (2005) frames this argument as moving away from attempting to develop pedagogies that address the unique needs of Indigenous children to a shift in epistemological orientation that moves Indigenous ways of knowing from the periphery to the center of educational theory and practice. Smith (2005) argues that

Reconceptualizing education from an Indigenous perspective is innovative and presents a great opportunity to consider a wide range of educational issues from a different basis. . . . Indigenous epistemologies, rather than, say, pedagogical styles, can lead to a different schooling experience and produce a different kind of learner. (pp. 94–95)

An epistemological reorientation is also explored by Barnhart and Kawagley (2005) who advocate a collaborative approach. At the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, they have developed a model of converging knowledge systems wherein traditional Native knowledge systems and Western science converge on common ground that reflects both ways of knowing. By linking Western research to the Native knowledge base already established in local communities and organizing core principles that incorporate both world views, “Indigenous communities are more likely to find value in what emerges and to put new insights into practice as a meaningful exercise in self-determination” (Barnhart & Kawagley, 2005, p. 21). Barnhart and Kawagley see this as a win-win situation; not only are Native knowledge systems moved from the periphery to the center thus broadening the scope of knowledge for all, but also Native people become more receptive to Western science, a benefit which can then be used for political purposes toward self-determination.

In conclusion, it is the voices of Indigenous peoples that must direct all of these discussions about how best to achieve self-determination. A broadening base of theory by Indigenous scholars

thrives and it is from this scholarship that models of education that can best meet the needs of Indigenous children will emerge. One example of this kind of project is evident in Karen Gayton Swisher (Standing Rock Sioux) and John W. Tippeconnic III’s (Comanche) book (1999), *Next Steps: Research and Practice to Advance Indian Education*, in which Indigenous scholars assert their voices in the project of reshaping both the curriculum and pedagogies used in the schooling of Indigenous children. From math to science curriculum, to reading strategies, cultural practices, language programs and counseling, the message of self-determination and academic success echos throughout this body of research. We need to listen. The words of the Indigenous poet ‘Imaikalani Kalahale (as cited in Kaomea, 2005, p. 40) should serve to guide non-Native educators:

If to help us is your wish then stand  
behind us.

Not to the side.

And not to the front.

## NOTES

1. In 2000, the United Nations’ Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution to establish the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues—a demand by Indigenous peoples started in 1977. This forum includes the right to assert Indigenous language and cultural rights not represented by recognized UN sovereign nations.

2. The representatives are as follows: Bob Morgan, Director Jumbunna Aboriginal Education Centre, University of Technology, Sydney, and Chair, National Organizing Committee, WIPC:E 1993; Errol West, Associate Professor and Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Education Centre, James Cook University, North Queensland; Martin Nakata, Torres Strait Islander, PhD student at James Cook University; Kez Hall, Kungarakany, Aboriginal human rights activist and community worker, Finnis River, Northern Territory; Karen Swisher, Standing Rock Sioux, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Indian Education, Arizona State University, USA; Freda Ahenakew, Cree, Professor, Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba, Canada; Paul Hughes, Coordinator, Aboriginal Education Curriculum Unit, South Australian Education Department; Tānia Ka’ai, Te Whana-a-Ruataupaare, Ngāti Porou, Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education and Maori Education, Auckland College of Education, Aotearoa



(New Zealand); and Nerida Blair, Coordinator, WIPC:E, Education Seveteriat.

3. Haskell Indian University is one of the 36 tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) now established in 13 U.S. states and the province of Alberta, Canada. The tribal college movement first began in 1968 with the establishment of the Navajo Community College (now known as Dine' College) on the Navajo Nation.

4. Like Hornberger and King (1997), we utilize the term language revitalization as the conscious efforts of a community to revive, maintain, or restore its language from its current state.

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