

**OUTSIDER RESEARCH:**  
**HOW WHITE WRITERS “EXPLORE”**  
**NATIVE ISSUES, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCES**

by

Susanne Elizabeth Dabulskis

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
Graduate Department of Education  
University of Toronto

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Outsider Research:**

#### **How White Writers “Explore” Native Issues, Knowledge and Experiences**

Master of Arts, 1997

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This thesis explores the perceptions of six non-Aboriginal, employed knowledge producers (academics, film-makers, journalists) who are of Euro-Canadian background, and whose work is primarily on Aboriginal issues and peoples. The author, also an outsider researcher of Euro-Canadian descent, begins by noting that a cultural genocide is presently occurring in Canada with respect to Aboriginal people. Through exploring in depth Aboriginal views on knowledge production, including the concept of writing as resistance, the thesis shows how Aboriginal peoples have clearly articulated their need to ‘tell their own stories’ and how critical are the issues of access and appropriation to the Aboriginal communities faced with cultural genocide.

Exploring the views of white knowledge producers using qualitative research methods, the thesis is able to show that, often, white writers defend their ‘right’ to work on Aboriginal issues through relying on a conceptual framework of cultural difference. That is, Aboriginal peoples are seen as culturally different from the mainstream, as peoples who require ‘help’ in telling their stories. The thesis concludes that white knowledge producers will contribute to cultural genocide unless they become critically aware of Aboriginal views, and of the impact of their own activities on a continuing cultural genocide. Relying on roles such as facilitators or bridges between cultures enables white knowledge producers to minimize the continuing oppression of Aboriginal peoples in which they play a part. The study is grounded in critical race theory, and is a reflection of the discourse of cultural difference and its relation to the knowledge production of dominant groups within society. The importance of social responsibility, tracing one’s power and privilege as it enters into exchanges between Native and non-Native people, and recognizing one’s complicity as Euro-Canadian group members in a racist society like Canada’s, is emphasized.

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## **Preface: Outsider Research**

I am an outsider researcher.<sup>1</sup> I am not of Aboriginal ancestry and yet I write on issues relating to Aboriginal people. I entered graduate school two and a half years ago to obtain a masters degree in education and with the intention of assembling a Native as a Second Language (NSL) resource book for the learning of Ojibwe as a second/third language in the First Nations communities in and around Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Many of the NSL learning materials currently being used in the Northwestern region of the province are produced on Manitoulin Island, where the Ojibwe/Anishnaabe language differs in some key respects from that spoken in the First Nations communities in the Sault Ste. Marie area.

I speak English, French, and basic Ojibwe, and have taught French as a second language in Ontario, English as a second language in Japan, and have 'supply' taught Ojibwe as a second language in Northwestern Ontario. After teaching in Japan for one year, I returned to Sault Ste. Marie to live. At that time, I began to learn how to speak Ojibwe as a third language. During that year, I moved between different schools in Sault Ste. Marie as a substitute teacher for French and Ojibwe, and I recognized a general lack of funding and support for Ojibwe language learning. I thought that I might attempt to assist in developing additional learning materials and resources for the elementary-level instruction of Anishnaabe. I spoke to two Native teachers about this before leaving for graduate school and they informed me that a project like that would be extremely helpful in enhancing the current language program since these teachers, unlike the French language teachers across the province, must make extensive changes to or completely redo the rather limited language learning materials they receive from

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<sup>1</sup> This term is described in greater detail later in this preface.

Manitoulin Island. I repeated a series of colonial moves throughout this experience. After travelling to Japan to teach, I returned to Canada and became involved in 'Native issues.' Then, after seeing the disparity between French and Ojibwe language learning materials, and knowing that I would be returning to graduate school, I proposed to 'help' Native people in this way, thereby positioning both them and myself within a salvage paradigm in which Indigenous people were seen as victims with a dying language in need of 'saving' or 'rescuing', and I became a so-called 'saviour' of this supposedly 'dying' language, culture and people, which would not continue to exist if it were not for me [sic] (Crosby, 1991: 270). I asked NSL teachers of Aboriginal ancestry who I hardly or did not know, their opinions about what *I* planned to do, using them as spokes people and resource people to evaluate the usefulness of such a project - and assuming that their agreement that the *need* for additional NSL learning materials/resources equated to *me* then proceeding to produce them. I also assumed that as a person who spoke only basic Ojibwe, I could actually be of use to develop materials on learning that language, and that, in 'helping' assemble or develop a resource book on Native language and culture, I would not replicate my own racist/colonial/privileged beliefs as a Euro-Canadian. In addition, I assumed that the 'problem' facing Native language programs in northern Ontario schools had to do with the lack of materials for Ojibwe language instruction, without recognizing that the cultural genocide of Native people by governments in Canada was initiated on various fronts *including* an attack on their languages. In short, in this scenario, I created the image that it was Native people who 'needed' me, although it was actually quite the opposite - I 'needed' them to fulfil 'the other half' of this colonial paradigm.

After taking several courses at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, however, including one on marginal groups within society and the politics of their resisting domination, I began to believe that a more effective way to 'help' Aboriginal people might be to assemble a collection of stories from First Nations women in the Algoma region. After learning of the limited access these individuals have to institutions like publishing houses, I thought that I might better facilitate their speaking out 'in their *own* voices' [sic] and in doing so, challenge existing forms of oppression. Here again, I made several assumptions in so doing.

First, I assumed I could actually ‘help’ Aboriginal peoples, and especially Aboriginal women, and that they ‘needed’ me to do so. Again, this was according to the salvage paradigm in which I believed and within which I centred myself and ‘positioned’ First Nations people. Secondly, I saw myself as merely the *facilitator* of the struggles facing Native people, not implicated in their continuing oppression. I envisioned myself as merely a ‘vehicle’ for the telling of their stories, thereby declaring my innocence and neutrality, and assuming not only that the telling of their stories would be beneficial and empowering for them, but that as a Euro-Canadian substantially removed from their subject locations and lived realities, I could ‘accurately’ tell their stories. Along with blocking out the voices of these Aboriginal women through possibly accessing major publishing venues usually denied to them, I would be silencing them in another significant way by claiming that they were speaking ‘in their *own* voices.’ Julie Stephens argues that this technique, often used in feminist writings on women in India by ‘Western’ feminists, is a highly problematic one:

... [T]he most frequently used claim to truth is the inclusion of and emphasis on the ‘voice’ of non-Western women. The discourse prides itself on being unique in providing the opportunity for Third World women to ‘speak for themselves’. But what does ‘speaking for themselves’ mean in this context? Firstly, it certainly does not mean that these women actually do speak... the discourse wants to make the investigating subject *appear* invisible, not actually *be* invisible... It ‘allows’, ‘encourages’, or ‘lets’ them speak; it claims not to speak for them. The problems inherent in such premises need further examination... If anyone is actually ‘speaking out’, it is the interviewer, yet the discourse repeatedly insists that it ‘does not speak for’ the non-Western woman (95, 97)

I would be claiming that these were the voices of First Nations women and that this was what they had *actually* said, instead of what I, as an outsider from a dominant group, *thought* they were saying, what I *wished* them to say, what I had *selected* to include them as having said, and what they had said that I had omitted. As Chow argues, the move “in which we try to make the native more like us by giving her a ‘voice’” is firmly inscribed in Anglo-American liberal humanism (1993: 35). However,

As we challenge a dominant discourse by “resurrecting” the victimized voice/self of the native with our readings... we step, far too quickly, into the otherwise silent and invisible place of the native and turn ourselves into living agents/witness for her. This process in which *we* become visible, also neutralizes the untranslatability of the native’s experience and history of that untranslatability. The hasty supply of original “contexts” and “specificities” easily becomes

complicitous with the dominant discourse, which achieves hegemony precisely by its capacity to convert, recode, make transparent, and thus represent even those experiences that resist it with a stubborn opacity. (37, 38)

And finally, in proposing to 'collect' the stories of First Nations women with the intent to edit and publish them, I denied Native women agency - not only in assuming that I had the right to re-tell their stories and speak on their behalf, but that *they* could not or were not doing so themselves.

Then, in January of 1995, I enrolled in a graduate-level course on Indigenous education taught by a Euro-Canadian, male professor. I was handed an extensive list of texts available on Aboriginal people. The cover of the booklet was a large, faded photograph of an old Native man in long braids and deep wrinkles (Figure 1). Inside, there were over two hundred names and titles of new books and language-learning kits relating to Aboriginal people written almost entirely by non-Native authors. We were handed two course books, both required reading. One book covered the topic of Aboriginal self-government in Canada and was written by a white/Euro-Canadian male journalist. It was to be purchased at a discount from the professor, who brought them to our first class in a box. The other text was given to us without our having to pay for it. It deals with the ecology of Indigenous education and was written by an American male scholar who is of Aboriginal descent. This work looks primarily at incorporating a spiritual and ecological aspect into all education.

It is important to note that the second text, although written by an Aboriginal writer, is not written within a Canadian context and does not concentrate on the political issues currently confronting Native people in Canada. This is not entirely problematic in itself except for the fact that the *other* book assigned for course reading which deals with such important and relevant issues, especially those relating to Aboriginal self-government, was written by a non-Native/outsider researcher. In addition, and as already mentioned, the text by the Native American writer concentrates on incorporating a spiritual and ecological aspect into all education. This is not entirely problematic either, in and of itself, but becomes so within this context, where it is assigned as the text representing 'an Aboriginal perspective' and thereby illustrates how Non-Native people, like the Euro-Canadian professor who assigned it in this class, often align spiritual and environmental tropes with the

experiences of Aboriginal people. Finally, the ecological and spiritual text by the Native male writer is written *outside* of all present and past historical, political and social contexts, and therefore, does not possess a truly culturally-decolonizing, anti-racist, or Aboriginal-centric focus - the definition and importance of which I will explore in chapter one of this thesis.

In another class I was taking at the time, I was handed a recently-accepted doctoral thesis that my professor found intriguing and thought highly of, and which she encouraged me to read. It is entitled, *As If Other, As If Indian: Reader Response to Appropriation of the Native Voice in Contemporary Fiction of Northern Ontario* by John Flood (1992), a Euro-Canadian doctoral graduate of the University of Toronto. The professor in that class, a non-Native, Euro-Canadian, middle-class woman, had supervised the thesis, which claimed to have a “holistic” focus. The work, among many other detrimental things, often recorded the author’s apparently unproblematic and hence unchecked desire and experiences of somehow believing he was “Indian” for the majority of his life, which this excerpt demonstrates:

[Indian] is a difficult term for me because although the word Indian is the one with which I grew up, it is now in social disrepute. While the nomenclature for what an Indian is has gone through major changes in the last three decades... the essence of being an Indian has not. Perhaps I feel a resonance with the people because *I used to be Indian*, because in identifying with Indian story I share an *intimacy* with Indian voice. But surely this is not a factor that should exclude others who have no previous biological claim to Indianness. (27) (emphasis added)

In reading appropriated Euro-Canadian literature, Flood uncritically describes how he can re-connect and become intimate once again with “being/becoming Indian”:

As I project composites of Indian in Northern Ontario fiction, I become Indian. As the voice of Indian becomes my voice, our stories become one. This is an event of identity-ing, it is an event where in acting as if Indian I live the metaphor of the performance of Indian. This Indian, that Indian. *My Indian. My Indian other. My absence made present.* In announcing that in reading Northern fiction my voice is an Indian voice, I am startled by the phonetic resemblance between the words *author* and *other*. I am startled that the quest to achieve my own voice takes me on a voyage into the Indian wilderness within my own story. That I am the author of the story of other. (36)

Flood’s depictions of Native people here and throughout the work are overtly racist ones. His desire to be close to and become the “Other” uses and exploits Aboriginal people - they become a resource for him to tap into and



connect with as a privileged non-Native. This reduces First Nations people, their identity, culture and experience to a mere backdrop with which to enhance Flood's own "bland landscape of whiteness" (hooks, 1992: 29). Furthermore, Flood's racist yet unchallenged claims that the appropriated novels (including the six explored in his thesis) of non-Native writers are *more* authentic than those written by Aboriginal writers because they resonate with *his* personal experience and reality of being "Indian" even as a white, male academic, are not only dangerous and troubling ones with far-reaching implications, they directly reflect the white supremacist academic and societal structures from which this body of knowledge emerges.

In a third academic moment that would later prove to be central to the production of this thesis, in January of 1995, I attended a talk given by Celia Haig-Brown, a white scholar who has documented the experiences of Aboriginal people for study at the graduate level. Haig-Brown is now a professor at York University and has conducted two rather extensive studies on Indigenous people in Canada for her masters and doctoral degrees. Both of these studies have been published in book form by Canadian publishers and are quite well-known. They are *Taking Control: Power and Contradiction in First Nations Adult Education* (1990), and *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (1988). Haig-Brown's presentation, entitled, "What's a White Girl Like me Doing in a Place Like This?" was based on her research investigating "Indian" residential schools as a non-Native researcher. While listening to the assumptions and comments made by this supposedly responsible scholar with regard to her work with Aboriginal people, I became quite concerned. The title of her presentation alone was troubling, as it substituted "nice" with "white," when these words are not, in fact, interchangeable; it portrayed Haig-Brown, who is a middle-aged, Euro-Canadian, female researcher interviewing Aboriginal people about their residential school experiences for her graduate degree, as an innocent "girl," which she clearly is not; and it refers to her work with Native people as "a place like *this*," which is a far from respectable view of this area of study. In addition, I heard statements such as, "Clearly I do not believe that the work I am doing is contributing to the oppression or I would not do it" (1991: 16) and "I wondered if my work might contribute in some acceptable way to the education of my racist brothers and sisters" (9). After hearing

such comments, and then reflecting on my experiences before and during the graduate courses I had taken, I grew increasingly concerned about the possible negative implications of research on Indigenous peoples conducted by non-Native scholars and writers. I refer to this research as “outsider research,” which is the topic of the current study.

Outsider research, as it is defined for the purposes of this study, refers to research conducted by those who are not of Native or Aboriginal ancestry.<sup>2</sup> It includes the study of Aboriginal people, communities, art, culture, literature, education, government, challenges, music, language, spirituality/religion, mythology, writing, politics, lives, experiences, stories, folklore, and current and historical events including the policies relating to Native people, by non-Natives. Outsider research refers to the knowledge produced on these and other subjects relating to Native issues, knowledge and experiences currently or in the past by non-Aboriginal people including films, television programs/series, books, journal and magazine articles, papers, theses, essays, novels, stories, conference presentations and seminars, classes, classroom materials, artwork, educational teaching kits and a host of other materials - any or all of which may be written, published, funded, produced, assembled, edited, supervised, organized or facilitated by non-Natives, and including work that is written, edited, or produced in

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<sup>2</sup>The terms “Outsiders” or “whites” used in this study refer primarily to males and females from a middle to upper class, Euro-Canadian background. Those who belong to such a category were interviewed for this thesis. These two labels, along with the terms “Euro-Canadian” and “non-Native” are meant to infer privileged group members in North American society - with a particular focus on those belonging to Canadian society. Equating the term “non-Native” with “white” is not meant to further exclude, discount, or marginalize those Canadians who are not from either an Aboriginal or Euro-Canadian background. However, due to the relatively limited scope of this research project, the implications of the knowledge production on Aboriginal people by outsider researchers who are not Native but who are marginalized within Canada and the US, such as “people of colour” or those from an “Asian” background, are not examined here. Furthermore, due to the rather limited scope of this project, the effects of race in combination with class, gender, ability and hetero sexism cannot be fully traced here. At the same time, however, it is noted that it is through a *combination* of these intersecting and interlocking systems of oppression that dominance continues to be reproduced within a capitalist, imperialist, and racist liberal-democratic nation like Canada.

People who are of mixed or partial Aboriginal ancestry are defined as “Native,” “Aboriginal,” “Indigenous,” and/or “First Nations” for the purposes of this study. However, it is not my intention to overlook or negate the particular experiences and varying subject locations of these people; nor is this categorization meant to reduce the experiences of those with mixed or partial Aboriginal ancestry and those defined as First Nations people to one parallel and singular “Native experience.” At the same time, I sincerely apologize to those who are once again negated, mis-named, discounted or forcibly labelled through the use of such definitions.

The terms, “Native,” “Aboriginal,” “Indigenous,” and “First Nations” people are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. In most cases, the term, “Indian” is used in parentheses when evoked. Although done for purposes of ‘practicality,’ these labels are used here with the recognition and continual awareness that many members of the dominant Euro-Canadian group of which I am a part, have used them as well as additional terms in conjunction with other violent colonizing moves in efforts to manage, oppress, exploit, silence and ultimately destroy the First peoples of North America.

“collaboration” with Native people themselves for the purpose of publication or dissemination publicly and for profit.

In this thesis, I explore outsider research in an effort to call attention to intellectual moves that purport to be inclusive and respectful of Native people but which actually obscure issues of white power and privilege in the relationship between outsider researchers and Native people. I am concerned that outsiders repeat an imperial gesture even while they view themselves as “helping” Aboriginal people. That is, as helpers, facilitators, or bridges between two cultures they can see themselves as decidedly “different” from whites who oppress. In so doing, outsiders can end up appropriating voices and once more enjoying access to resources denied to the marginalized group members that they are seen as “helping.” My intent is to question what it might mean to work in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples. That is, I am interested in determining how outsider knowledge producers might confront the problem of doing research on marginalized people without replicating old imperial structures in which white people are the experts and Aboriginal peoples the object of study. This thesis is the result of such questions.

In chapter one of the thesis, I begin by outlining the ways in which Native people have experienced cultural genocide. I then proceed to outline various strategies of resistance Native people describe, including one very important method of empowerment called cultural decolonization (Adams, 1993). After defining cultural decolonization, I examine the ways in which the writing of Native people is key to their cultural decolonization. Specifically, I outline how Native women authors and scholars have found writing to be an important strategy of resistance, hence their insistence on issues of access and appropriation. Finally, I review the challenges that contemporary Native writers and artists face when attempting to produce culturally decolonizing work in Canadian society. Here, I focus on two key barriers Indigenous producers of knowledge face: access and appropriation.

Chapter two concentrates on methodological aspects of the current study. I begin by situating this current body of knowledge within present-day Canadian society in an effort to demonstrate the multiple forces impacting

upon Native people, many of which are directly related to land and resources. I attempt to demonstrate that what we see in chapter one - the marginalization of Native writers within the publishing industry - occurs as a direct result of the racist policies and procedures of a greater nation-state in which publishing and knowledge production as well as land rights, play a significant role. In this section, I also situate myself and attempt to identify my own complicity in the oppression of First Nations people. Then, I describe the methodology of this study: how I proceeded to conduct it, the ethical concerns I had in relation to it, and who I included as part of the study. At this point, I introduce the participants of this study: Kate, Ed, Mark, Ron, Helen, and Alex, who are Euro-Canadian scholars, film-makers, and journalists. All six produce knowledge on Native issues, and all have written on the subject. As stated in the final two parts of this section, I analysed and presented data with a specific and constant eye on how non-Native knowledge producers articulated their understanding of Native issues and their own responsibilities as members of the dominant group.

The second half of chapter two outlines a broader discursive framework within which the current work is situated. It deals mainly with the theory that informs the study. After a brief introduction to the chapter, I begin by identifying the anti-racist approach to be utilized in the current research project. Next, I examine the concepts of race and racism and the implications of these in relation to power and dominance. Finally, I will proceed to examining more thoroughly the theoretical notions of modern racism within a contemporary (post)colonial and (post)modern context. More specifically, I explore how a discourse of cultural difference rather than one of anti-racism contributes to and sustains domination. To illustrate, I trace the impact of this approach in American literature on African-Americans (Morrison, 1992), the challenges facing African-American and Aboriginal women in scholarship (duCille, 1994 and Monture-Angus, 1995), cultural difference and how it is used in sexual assault judicial cases involving Aboriginal people in Canada (Razack, 1994), and Orientalism (Said, 1979, 1989).

Chapter three of this thesis is a presentation of the data collected through my interviews with participants. This chapter is divided into two main themes: a discourse of difference, and responsibility and the outsider

researcher. The first theme describes what a discourse of difference within the contexts of present-day Canadian society and with particular reference to Aboriginal people looks like, how it operates, and what it allows, as opposed to using a discourse of anti-racism. Section one begins with a look at the benefits participants cited for working with Native people, their culture and their communities - a major theme that emerged from my interviews with them. Next, the ways in which participants in this study view Native knowledge producers compared to non-Native writers, scholars and film-makers like themselves, are explored. Third, the participants' levels of awareness with respect to the racism and inequity present in contemporary Canadian society is examined. The second major section of chapter three presents the theme of responsibility and the outsider researcher. I investigate how participants in this study see outsider research, non-Native researchers, and the impact of the two. In addition, I look at how these six knowledge producers envision themselves as working in solidarity with Native peoples. Concluding remarks are found at the end of the thesis.

In this work, I argue that white writers often defend their 'right' to work on Aboriginal issues through relying on a conceptual framework of cultural difference. That is, Euro-Canadian knowledge producers see and portray Aboriginal peoples as being culturally different and as needing 'help' telling their stories. Meanwhile, many Indigenous writers and scholars insist on speaking, writing and publishing themselves. In fact, Indigenous knowledge producers have stressed that writing is an effective form of resistance and as such, issues such as access and appropriation are critical in view of the cultural genocide they and their communities are facing. It is my intention to offer some insight into how the discourse of cultural difference is used by some contemporary Euro-Canadian knowledge producers working on Native issues to reproduce a system of domination. In addition, I intend to demonstrate how white knowledge producers rely on roles such as facilitators or bridges between cultures which enables them to minimize the continuing oppression of Aboriginal peoples in which they are complicit. Since the scope of the study is rather limited, including only six participants, I cannot make generalizations about *all* non-Native knowledge producers. At the same time, however, this limited number of participants has allowed me to look closely at what each of these six knowledge producers' actually say and how

they say it. This is crucial, since examining “talk,” as van Dijk (1993) points out, can provide “more or less direct access to what people believe” (32).

In addition, since the present study covers those involved in multiple sites of knowledge production, including the media (both journalism and television), the university, and film, glimpses into a cross-section of different types of knowledge production is provided. It is hoped that through demonstrating the perceptions of the non-Native producers at these sites, readers will pay particular attention to the ways in which members of dominant groups articulate their roles as non-Native knowledge producers working in this area so that oppressive practices can be interrupted. In addition, I hope that this study informs readers of the importance of viewing films and television programs, as well as reading texts and articles on Aboriginal issues critically, especially those produced by non-Native people, and those suggested for reading or viewing by other non-Aboriginal people such as Euro-Canadian university professors. For, as Handel Wright (1994) has suggested: “Perhaps what needs to happen is for the persistent myths of neutrality (e.g., the neutral teacher, the neutral curriculum, the neutral class of students) to be put to rest and social difference to be taken up seriously in the pedagogical situation” (31, 32). Crucial work remains to be done in this area exploring how the discourse of cultural difference examined in this study appears in the actual written or visual work of Euro-Canadian knowledge producers, and serves to reproduce systems of dominance.

**Figure 1**



This image was used uncritically in 1995 as the cover-page of a booklet distributed by a Euro-Canadian male professor in a graduate course I attended on Indigenous issues. It is an example of the problematic images of Aboriginal people reproduced by non-Native researchers and educators in contemporary Canadian society.



# CHAPTER ONE

## Cultural Decolonization

### Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the numerous ways in which Native people have experienced cultural genocide. I then examine various strategies Native people use as resistance this continuing genocide, including one very important strategy called “cultural decolonization” introduced by Aboriginal writer and scholar, Howard Adams (1993). After defining cultural decolonization, I examine the ways in which the writing of Native people plays a key role in their resistance and empowerment. Specifically, I outline how Native women authors and scholars articulate and practice writing as resistance. Finally, this chapter looks at the numerous challenges that contemporary Native writers and artists face when attempting to produce culturally decolonizing work within a racist society like Canada. It focuses on two key barriers these Indigenous producers of knowledge face: access and appropriation.

### The Cultural Genocide of Native People

“They came for our land, for what grew or could be grown on it, for the resources in it, and for our clean air and pure water. They stole these things from us, and in the taking they also stole our free ways and the best of our leaders, killed in battle or assassinated. And now, after all that, they’ve come for the very last of our possessions; now they want our pride, our history, our spiritual traditions. They want to rewrite and remake these things, to claim them for themselves. The lies and thefts just never end.” (Thunderbird, 1985 as cited in Churchill, 1994: 216)

It is clear that Native peoples and cultures in Canada and in the United States have experienced a genocide unlike anything this continent, and some would argue, the world has ever seen (Churchill, 1994).

Lemkin has defined genocide as

a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objective of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language,



national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and the lives of individuals belonging to such groups. (Lemkin, 1944 as in Churchill, 1994: 13)

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to deny that there has been innumerable systematic attempts by the Canadian as well as the American nation states to destroy Indigenous cultures, economies and social systems in various ways throughout the centuries (Fung, 1993: 20). Before examining the methods used to do this, however, let us first look at the current state of things for First Nations peoples in Canada.

To begin, the alarming social conditions of First Nations people are but one indication of the cultural genocide they have suffered. There has been a legacy of pathological social conditions for First Nations people since Europeans settled in Canada - among these, poor schooling, high infant mortality rates, under or unemployment, premature deaths, coerced sterilization, police harassment, and poor housing (Philip, 1992: 156). In addition, Aboriginal people today can expect to spend more time in prison, experience a lower life expectancy, be exposed to more illness, family violence and alcohol abuse; have inadequate water and sanitation systems, live in housing that is "flimsy, leaky and overcrowded," be without a job, and have children that do not complete high-school, college or university, compared to non-Aboriginal people living in Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996: 2). Poonwassie (1995) writes that the current poverty and soaring unemployment in First Nations communities in Canada has created conditions that are prevalent in the least developed countries of the world (47). In fact, when Bishop Desmond Tutu visited Indian reserves in Quebec in 1990, he compared them to homelands in South Africa. Canada is a member of the G-7, a club of the richest and most industrialized countries of the world. In addition, it has been repeatedly been rated the best country to live in in the world by the UN for its quality of life. However, this does not apply to First Nations. When it comes to the living conditions of First Nations peoples, Canada is on record for violating basic human rights (Poonwassie, 1995: 47).

In August of 1991, the Canadian government set up a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples comprised of four Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal commissioners to investigate the issues surrounding the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada and to advise the government of their

findings (Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, 1996: ix). This commission held 178 days of public hearings, consulted dozens of “experts,” visited 96 communities, commissioned numerous research studies, and reviewed several previous inquiries and reports. The central conclusion of the Royal Commission, simply stated was the following: “The main policy direction, pursued for more than 150 years, first by colonial then by Canadian governments, has been wrong” (x). Although this concluding phrase is quite problematic, since it separates what is referred to as a colonial government from the Canadian one (the word “post-colonial” is not used to link the two), it is clear that the findings of the commission are quite clear: there have been innumerable injustices inflicted upon Aboriginal Peoples in Canada by the Canadian government. Furthermore, the Commission found that the treaties between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments have never been fully honoured, and that these treaties have been replaced with policies intended to 1) remove Aboriginal people from their homelands, 2) suppress Aboriginal nations and their governments, 3) undermine Aboriginal cultures, and 4) stifle Aboriginal identity (1,2). Although the reasons for acknowledging these wrong-doings stated by the Commission are questionable (ie., to protect “the image of Canada in the world and at home” (2)), the issue still remains that these crucial injustices must be both acknowledged and wherever possible, rectified by the Canadian government.

Culturally, there are several different ways in which a nation state can attempt to inflict genocide on a particular group in society. One of these ways is through the denial, by way of force, of a people’s right to speak their Native language. This was done through forced residential schooling in Canada, where Native children were forbidden to speak their first languages, and were punished severely for doing so. A second method of cultural genocide is to forbid a people to conduct ceremonies reflecting their culture or religion. The Canadian government did this by outlawing Aboriginal sun dances and pot latch ceremonies in the late 1800s, and placing great restrictions on Aboriginal people themselves through public policy (Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, 1996: 14). Another way in which cultural genocide is enacted is through the appropriation of a people’s thoughts, languages and culture by the persons outside of that culture and the reinforcement of such a paradigm by the nation-state. This is very evident in the continued knowledge production done by outsiders on Aboriginal

people which is fully endorsed by Canadian society. An additional way in which cultural genocide can be inflicted upon a people is through the continual presentation of their culture, people and religions as deficient or pathological as compared to the mainstream population, leading to the internalization of these beliefs by the people themselves, along with the creation of government policy around such myths. It can be argued that the Canadian nation-state has indeed, committed acts of cultural genocide on First Nations peoples in this way. We will now look more closely at the ways in which this was systematically done.

The deliberate and systemic attack by the Canadian government on the First Nations culture and people through the implementation of public policy outlawing Native languages and religious practices is one of the central ways in which this nation has attempted to destroy and ultimately eliminate the culture of Native peoples. In Canada, Native languages were violently suppressed and Native cultures traumatized by close to five hundred years of physical, emotional, and spiritual coercion (Fife, 1993). When Confederation was declared in 1867, it was negotiated only between the English and the French without consultation with the Aboriginal peoples or their governments. John A. Macdonald, the Prime Minister of Canada at that time, stated that it would be his government's goal to "do away with the tribal system, and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion" (Ministry of Supply and Services, 1996: 14). In the words of the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, in the early 1920s, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem" (Erasmus, 1989:11). The British North America Act, Canada's first Constitution, set out specific Western laws that assumed domination over the Aboriginal peoples themselves, as well as their lands. These laws later became enacted in the Indian Act, which outlawed several key elements of Native culture, including the potlatch ceremony -outlawed in 1884 and central to the cultures of west coast Aboriginal nations, and the sun dance - outlawed in 1885 and central to the cultures of prairie Aboriginal nations (14). In addition, in 1885, the Department of Indian Affairs implemented a pass system which greatly if not entirely restricted the movement of Native people, who were not permitted to leave the reserve or do business with any non-Native person without "permission" from the Indian agent (14). The Indian agent travelled to reserves frequently to "check" if all the

Canadian government's laws were being obeyed. Since dancing, gathering together for ceremonies, or leaving the reserve to do business was a criminal offence for Native people in Canada, it was illegal for Native people to practice aspects of their own religion and culture, let alone empower themselves through financial endeavours.

More recently, primarily from 1900 to approximately 1960, Native communities suffered what some have called a period of cultural arrest as the residential school system, along with various other cultural prohibition laws, artificially created cultural stagnation for Native people (Maracle, 1991: 85). The first residential school was established in Canada in 1849 by church and Canadian government leaders who wished to undermine the independence and culture (which they defined as "savagery") Aboriginal people had at that time. The last of these residential schools closed in the 1970s. Attendance at residential school was compulsory for Native children. These children were taken forcibly from their families, oftentimes quite violently, and "schooled" for eight or more years far from their homes (Ministry of Supply and Services, 1996: 14). Refusal to send one's child to residential school resulted in imprisonment and/or heavy fines. At the residential schools, the Aboriginal languages, customs and "habits of mind" of the children were altered or suppressed, oftentimes through cruel and abusive treatment. Many Native children were physically, mentally and sexually abused and tortured by the clergy. In addition, many strong and healthy ties established between the children and their parents and families were destroyed by the residential school system (15). During this same period in Canada, the Canadian government continually relocated entire Aboriginal communities as they saw fit, so that the European settlers could use that land for mining, forestry, energy or agricultural purposes (16). These relocations were described as serving "the national interest" (16). Lee Maracle writes that, in addition to all of these overwhelming circumstances, no forum existed or was created where the value and function of traditional Native oratory could be acknowledged, so Aboriginal people were then silenced from expressing the injustices they were experiencing (Maracle, 1991: 86).

As a direct result of colonial influences that attempted to silence and disempower Aboriginal people, Indigenous stories and thoughts were then outrightly appropriated by white writers who claimed to be writing as

Native People (95), or who interpreted Native culture and experiences for the non-Native public. Outsider researchers would enter Native communities, as they continue to do today, observe Aboriginal ways of living and record what they saw there. Then, they would work up the stories and events that they had documented in order to “educate” the non-Native public. It was thought then, as it is today, that educating non-Native people about Native culture, lives and experiences could only be beneficial to all involved. In fact, currently in Canada, most non-Native researchers, writers and film-makers continue to work under the assumption that knowledge production on Native people benefits this marginalized population since it “gives” them a voice. Several things are missed in this assumption, however. One is the fact that the extreme hardship being experienced by First Nations people has *not* been a result of the misunderstanding or ignorance of Native culture by Euro-Canadians. As we have seen, these moves have been deliberate attempts by the Canadian government to eradicate Native people and their culture for the benefit of non-Native Canadians. Furthermore, one cannot “give” Native people “a voice,” because they already have many voices, and these voices are speaking and writing about their situation. The problem is that, not only are Aboriginal people in Canada not being listened to, but the same non-Native elites who have attempted to destroy Aboriginal cultures, languages and people now employ and fund those speaking about the issues - namely outsider researchers, journalists, film-makers and writers. Since outsiders are the only ones given access on various levels to do such work, in speaking *about* Native issues, many times, outsiders ultimately speak on the behalf of Native people, even if they themselves do not perceive this to be the case. The reason for such a system of filtered knowledge should now be quite evident: the continued domination and exploitation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada by the Canadian government, which the Royal Commission has clearly found through their investigation.

Aboriginal stories, as well as their spirituality, have often been referred to as the glue that holds First Nations societies together. Therefore, the appropriation of these elements of Native culture by non-Natives is not only a cultural, but a political act (Walkem, 1993: 32). Understandably, then, such methods of appropriation are extremely destructive for Native people and their culture. Non-Native, outsider researchers are sought out

as experts on Native culture and profit from this link, while Native people themselves are judged as unauthentic, less knowledgeable or biased about Native issues and experiences. The silencing and exploitation of Native peoples via appropriation is one of the greatest challenges facing them today, and therefore, this method of cultural genocide is covered in much more depth in a later section, entitled “Challenges to Cultural Decolonization.”

Janice Acoose (1995), has argued that the negative portrayal of Indigenous people by non-Natives in Euro-Canadian literature is another way in which Native people have suffered cultural genocide. This occurred as a result of a proliferation of Eurocentric literature sanctioned by the nation which “ignored the distinctions of [Indigenous] cultures altogether by writing about ‘Indians’ as a generic group with no distinguishable cultural differences” (90). Acoose states such stereotypical depictions of Native people were not only cultural misrepresentations in the literary sense, but led to the formulation of highly racist and sexist social, political, and economic policies involving Indigenous people in Canada (90). A recent example of this is given in Marcia Crosby’s article, “The Construction of the Imaginary Indian”:

In 1989, government lawyers, in disputing Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en land claims, attempted to establish that Indians who eat pizza, drive cars and watch television - that is, who no longer live as “traditional” Indians residing in some timeless place - did not meet Eurocentrically established criteria for authenticity under which, the courts assert, Indian “rights” were established. (Williamson, 1989 in Crosby, 1991: 279)

Thus, literary depictions were not just stereotypes found in literature and art - they made their way into the minds of those creating and enacting policies involving Native peoples in courts and thus had specific material consequences. More specifically, Eurocanadians continually constructed and used racist and sexist images of Indigenous women like “the romantic Indian princess, the easy squaw, and the hopeless, suffering victim,” so as to justify and reinforce Canadian society’s social, political, economic, and spiritual oppression of these women (64). These images continue to operate in ways that violate and oppress Aboriginal women. For example, in late 1994, the buried bodies of four young murdered Native women - Eva Taysup, Shelley Napope, Calinda Waterhen and Janet Sylvestre, were found outside of Saskatoon, Canada. The media barely reported on the discovery, and

when it did, referred to the women as ones who “frequented downtown bars” and were part of the “downtown bar scene” (Acoose, 1995: 87). Two and a half decades earlier, the body of Helen Betty Osborne, a young Native woman was found brutally raped, beaten and murdered (69). A subsequent *Report of the Aboriginal Inquiry of Manitoba* found that Helen Osborne

fell victim to vicious stereotypes born of ignorance and aggression when she was picked up by four drunken [white] men looking for sex. Her attackers seemed to be operating on the assumption that Aboriginal women were promiscuous and open to enticement through alcohol or violence. It is evident that the men who abducted Osborne believed that young Aboriginal women were objects with no human value beyond sexual gratification. (Report, 14 as cited in Acoose, 1995: 70)

When Native women writers began to produce literature which contextualized their experiences and thus, depicted more positive images of Native women, they were dismissed as “biased” and “bitter” (Acoose, 1995: 67).

Jeanette Armstrong (1991) has written that there is a systematic method of genocide at work in Canada still today which attempts to destroy the self-worth of First Nations adults and children through continually sending them negative messages about themselves. She writes:

Our people, everyday, everywhere are being told, “You are not good enough. You are not valuable as a Native person. Your language, your culture, your history, your customs, your ceremonies, none of those things are valuable, even the way you look is wrong. Your skin colour is wrong. The way you dress is wrong. Things you eat are wrong. And in order to be any kind of a human being, any kind of real person, you have to dress a certain way. You have to look a certain way. You have to pitch your voice a certain pitch because if you sound too Indian, if you look too Native, then there is something wrong with you. You are not going to be able to succeed to do anything. You’ll never be any good at anything. You’re ignorant. You’re a savage. You’re primitive. You always will be as long as you’re Native. (189)

Armstrong writes that messages like these are sometimes more subtle than the tools of colonization used two hundred years ago, but not always. For example, she states that in current as well as past Canadian legislative, bureaucratic, and educational processes, messages alluding to the worthlessness of Native people are blatant, and lead to the internalization of a sense of inferiority among Native people (189).

Thus, the negative images of Indigenous peoples in the writing and publishing of Euro-Canadian literature, the use of such racist stereotypes to inform government policies and processes, and the continued

appropriation of aspects of Native culture by non-Natives, are some of the ways in which the Canadian nation inflicted cultural genocide upon Native peoples. Such silencing and exploitive tactics, combined with the repeated relocation of Native peoples from their home communities, the removal of Native children from their biological families, the outlawing of many traditional Aboriginal methods of resistance and survival, and the forced sterilization of many Native women, led to the Canadian government's successful traumatization of many Native people. With this traumatization came their disempowerment and the increased dependency of Native people on the very government that continued to oppress them.

### Strategies of Resistance

"I, as a contemporary Indigenous artist, see how white man's time has distanced me from my ancestors. The contemporary Indigenous artist sees himself as someone with very little left, but ironically he sees an unlimited potential for articulation of the modern experience. He sees that time, understanding and respect will liberate possibilities, which before were thought to have completely vanished." (McMaster, 1991: 15)

As we have seen, Native peoples have experienced substantial acts of cultural genocide against their languages, religions, and people. However, both themselves and their cultures have far from disappeared. Looking at statistics alone, Ontario's Aboriginal population is expected to increase in size by 40 per cent by the year 2011. A higher birth rate, a decrease in infant mortality, and increased longevity are the reasons for this projected population increase (Ontario Women's Directorate, 1990: 2). Marcia Crosby, in the article, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian," (1991), writes:

This is not to say that aboriginal cultures did not go through dramatic changes that were violently imposed on our communities. However, we did not all die. We are still here - altered however, and without the "authenticity" that some, nostalgically, would like to impose. Neither have we all been successfully assimilated into Euro-Canadian culture. (270)

According to Crosby, it is crucial for the non-Native body politic to realize that Native culture and peoples may have changed in different ways over the centuries, but Aboriginal people have not by any means disappeared. It is predominantly non-Natives who have portrayed Native culture as "dead and dying," Crosby explains, and



this has been done with only self-serving, Eurocentric interests in mind. She argues that if something is seen as dead or dying, efforts can then be made to “save” this supposedly helpless thing called Native culture. What is actually occurring, however, is that the same people who declare Native culture as either extinct or going through fatal changes, also position themselves as the saviours of it, thereby profiting from the very cause they have declared as such. Crosby writes that in the past, “this interest extended to dominating or colonizing First Nations people, cultural images and land, as well as salvaging, preserving and reinterpreting material fragments of a supposedly dying native culture for Western ‘art and culture’ collections” (267).

Janice Acoose, in her book, *Iskwewwak - kah' ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: neither Indian princesses nor squaw drudges* (1995), stresses that despite 400 years of cultural invasions, Indigenous cultures have survived and are very much alive (110). The mythologies of Native people, for example, are just one testament to that vitality. When invasions to Native culture occurred, explains Acoose, Native mythology, ceremonies, rituals, and languages “went underground,” but did not disappear altogether. Furthermore, the abilities of Native people to resist total conformity and assimilation remained, as did their spirits (110).

This being so, there have always been strategies of resistance. Aboriginal peoples, who constitute approximately 10% of Canada’s population, and who struggle as minorities within a liberal-democratic nation state, have the following principal options for the resistance and transformation of their peoples: practices of daily life on the land; kin-keeping, maintaining, rebuilding and building rural and urban communities; political negotiations with governments; litigation in courts; [and] civil disobedience” (Culhane, 1995: 148). In addition, as we will see shortly, Native people can also use cultural decolonization as another strategy of resistance and empowerment.

### Defining Cultural Decolonization

“Collaborator leaders and associates, government funded elites and mainstream opportunists cannot contribute to Aboriginal culture and history. They are only tourists and exploiters in our homeland.” (Adams, 1993: 253)

Cultural decolonization, as defined by Adams (1993) is “a new focus on the understanding and awareness of Indian/Metis culture and history from an authentic Aboriginal perspective and sensitivity” (251). In addition, cultural decolonization with respect to Native peoples is “a readjustment of white mainstream culture and history which has served as justification for conquest and continued imperial domination” (251). According to Adams, the current time in Canada is optimum for Aboriginal intellectuals, authors, academics and activists who possess an aboriginal consciousness to analyse and understand the ‘how’ of their new form of oppression and powerlessness, and to write with and as part of the Native peoples, but not for them (254). Through writing that is Aboriginal-centric, Adam writes, Native people can once again be seen as a people with a historically well organized socio-economic system and a developed civilization that is worth studying. Furthermore, using an Aboriginal-centric approach, Aboriginal society becomes what it really is - dynamic, evolving and progressive, versus how white supremacy myths portray/ed it - as static and archaic (251).

There are several important characteristics of cultural decolonization. The first is that knowledge is perceived “in terms of a specific place and time as a principle of intellectual inquiry” (251). According to Adams, the current place for Metis, Indians and Inuit is Canada, and the time is imperial capitalism. Adams writes that situating this knowledge is crucial since it provides a perimeter for historical and cultural analysis, and in doing so allows Aboriginal historians and writers to use a critical analysis of British and French colonialism (252).

Another main characteristic of cultural decolonization is that explanations to the white mainstream population by Aboriginal people should not be a major focus or concern. The reason for this requirement is evident in this observation by Emma LaRocque:

For the last two decades, we have been faced with the weary task of having to educate our audiences before we could even begin dialoguing with them! Our energies have been derailed from purely creative pursuits. Many speakers and writers have been cornered into the hapless role of apologists, incessant (and very patient) explainers, and overnight experts on all things Native. And in response to the negation and falsification of our histories and cultures, some have been pushed to cultural romanticism, even perhaps cultural self-righteousness. (LaRocque, 1990: xxii)

Furthermore, Fedorick writes:

Pardon me, I get ethnocentric as hell, but the other problem with road access is the presence of many non-Aboriginal persons. Damn it, when it is advertised as a Native writing workshop, why do other people show up? When I went to communities, the non-Native people controlled those workshops, as much as I could sit there and say, "no, sorry, we don't like it." It is a very sensitive thing to attempt to deal with non-Native people in those situations. There can be seven Native people in the room, and the non-Native person will hog the conversations, to get that one person to the point where he can understand the basic symbolisms, and we are talking English. We are not talking another language. (Fedorick and Lutz, 1991: 222)

Therefore, one of the first tasks in the effective cultural decolonization of Native people, according to Adams, is for artists, activists, scholars and writers to direct their energy into much-needed analyses and interpretations of Aboriginal history and culture toward the masses of Aboriginal people themselves, whenever possible, with a view "from below" to the "inarticulate and poorly educated people" (Adams, 1993: 254). This must be done for several reasons - because it directs much-needed energy back to Native people themselves, because it gives Native people hope and empowerment through providing them with Aboriginal-centric knowledge production, and because writing and speaking to members of what Adams calls a quasi-apartheid society like Canada does not change mainstream attitudes or ideology. The only way those attitudes can be changed, he writes, is not by incessant explaining to the mainstream population, but by "changing the structure and institutions of the state" (255).

Lastly, the most important factor in the process of decolonization, according to Adams, is the attainment of a certain state of mind and spirit, which he calls "Aboriginal counter-consciousness" (253). This state is described as "a spirit of devotion to the cause of self-determination, justice and equality," and is crucial to the liberation of Native people. In order to produce knowledge that is truly culturally decolonizing, Adams states that one must work within this framework of Aboriginal nation-hood. In this way, knowledge produced is truly Aboriginal-centric and thus liberating for Native people.

As we have seen, Adams stresses how the current time in Canada is optimum for Aboriginal intellectuals, authors, academics and activists to write, for it is through their writing that the cultural decolonization of Native

peoples can be achieved. In using Aboriginal-centric approaches like the ones mentioned above, Adams claims that decolonized people themselves will begin to perceive of their culture and history as valuable, rather than inferior. In addition, the colonizer's society that continues to dominate Native people may ultimately be transformed.

### Writing as a Form of Resistance

"I don't need to read books written by white people about my people that show me as being oppressed, and poor, and colonized. I know that and I can talk about that. It might take me a while, but I can do it, thank you. If you really are my friend, then get out of the road and let me do it. And if it takes 20 years, it'll take 20 years. We will tell our own story." (Campbell and Lutz, 1991)

Recently, there has been what Perreault and Vance (1990) have called "a profound change" within Aboriginal communities and in relationships between Native and non-Native Canadians (xi). One of the most significant changes in this relationship is the increasing number of Aboriginal writers making their literary presence felt in Canada. Wheeler (1991) states that historically, it has always been the artists of any people, rather than the politicians, that have made substantial changes within a society (75). Furthermore, he states that even though writers and artists have been traditionally persecuted and poor, it will be these people, rather than politicians, that will lead to change for Native people.

Many First Nations writers, artists and film-makers agree with Wheeler's view that their art and writing are as much or even more empowering and politically effective than the work of politicians. In fact, there is evidence that the work of Aboriginal writers can be threatening to some Native politicians, who block its access so that they can be re-elected. D.L. Birchfield, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma who is presently serving on the National Advisory Caucus for a Native American Mentor and Apprentice Writers program, has observed the political effectiveness of Aboriginal poetry in this way. Birchfield (1993) states that much of contemporary Native poetry is highly accessible to people who have not been formally educated, as long as they

are Indians (202). Moreover, some cultural references alluded to in Native poetry may be baffling or incomprehensible to non-Natives or Eurocentrics, but present no barrier to Native people (202). Therefore, much Native contemporary poetry reflects the empowering aspects of Aboriginal-centric writing (Adams, 1993). At the same time, however, since Aboriginal poets are known to speak their mind about contemporary and relevant Native issues eloquently, honestly, and sometimes boldly, some of their poems including statements about Native politicians, Tribal Chiefs, or turmoil in the nation are blocked before election-time, and not given space in tribal newspapers (Birchfield, 1993: 202). This example alone reflects the politically powerful aspect of Native poetry.

Another example of the empowering nature of Native writing is reflected in Birchfield's coverage of the first Native American gathering of writers in Oklahoma in 1992. Although this was not considered to be a political gathering but a literary one, Aboriginal writers from all across North America gathered to share, learn and network with one another (1993: 192). Birchfield notes that not only a greater awareness of Native literature was experienced at this writer's conference, but a voicing of the injustices facing all Aboriginal peoples also took place there. He writes:

There was a lot of anger expressed at the festival, anger at the way non-Natives have portrayed Native peoples in works of history, anger at the way Native literature, poetry and fiction is evaluated by Eurocentric literary conceptions, anger that abysmally ignorant people such as television's Andy Rooney of *60 Minutes* can have the platform of a newspaper column to proclaim the senselessness of Native values in the contemporary world, anger at New Age, non-Native commercial exploitation of sweat baths and sacred ceremonials, anger at the contemptuous attitude of prison officials for the cultural and religious rights of incarcerated Native peoples, anger at the appalling rates of suicide and its aftermath, anger at the callous indifference of governmental institutions to the needs of urban Indians, anger at the seemingly inopposable plans to dump nuclear waste on Indian reservations, anger at stereotyping, anger at the well-meaning, unintentionally destructive activities of friends, anger at the murder of an employee of a Native publishing house in Canada, anger that Native writers from portions of Central America cannot share the places of their youth with their own children because they are on a death list, anger at the intimidation and racial slurs and threats of physical violence of bigots against Native voices, including those of poets who refuse to be cowed into submission, but who do not relish the thought of becoming martyrs. (208)

Birchfield observes that thoughts and reflections like these were expressed in workshops, panel discussions, plenary session speeches, casual conversation and in the readings themselves. Since the writers came together

to share, their angers “were voiced in an environment that made networking a natural thing” (208). Thus, they could join in many affirming and constructive ways, and offer support, knowledge and resources to one to another. Furthermore, not only could anger at injustices be expressed, but joys could be experienced also:

Where there were angers, there were also joys, joy in the appreciation of the literary work of others, joy in hearing a poet read a poem that some people knew by heart, joy in the insuppressible humour of Native peoples, joy in being brought together to share with one another, to draw strength from one another. (208)

Thus, the Native American gathering of writers was a very positive event personally, politically, and professionally for many Aboriginal writers. Birchfield writes that when “poets and other literary writers are filled with angers and joys the predictable result is writing and publishing” (209). Thus, in addition to immense sharing and networking that took place at the first Native American gathering of writers, came the inspiration to write manuscripts, book proposals, short stories and poems. In this way, then, Aboriginal writers have come together to unite as people with a common interest and a common strength, and this has been extremely empowering for them.

“I wouldn’t be writing now if Momaday hadn’t done that book (*House Made of Dawn*). I would have died.” (Paula Gunn Allen as cited in Birchfield, 1993: 204)

Even when not meeting with other writers, however, many Native people have found both writing and reading the work of other Native authors a fulfilling and fruitful way to regain strength in the face of oppression. Native women in particular, have spoken of the reconnecting force that operates in the work of Aboriginal writers they have read. Lee Maracle and Janice Acoose, for example, are two contemporary Indigenous writers among many in Canada who have discussed the liberating aspect of Native people’s writing, and Native women’s writing in particular on them and others. Like Adams, Maracle and Acoose see writing as an effective form of cultural decolonization which has not only reconnected them to other Native people, but has begun the process of liberation for all Native peoples.

The writing of Native people, according to Acoose (1995), demonstrates “the ways in which Indigenous peoples in Canada have clung tenaciously and still cling, to [their] cultures, [their] ways” (110). It is evident that a majority of the writing by Native women possess many of Adam’s Aboriginal-centric characteristics, such as spatial and temporal specificity, and the contextualizing of Native peoples’ experiences - economically, politically, socially and spiritually. In these ways, Native women’s writing characterizes what effective culturally decolonizing work looks like. However, what is perhaps most interesting about Acoose and Maracle’s work is that, even as writers themselves using a mainstream medium which is often a competitive one, they do not hesitate to refer to, include and give credit to the work of other Native authors that have contributed to their development and their people’s development in some way. In this way, many Native women writers reflect what Janice Acoose (1995) refers to as a “connectedness” of Indigenous’s peoples’ world view and their subjectivities in the world (108) and what Lee Maracle (1991) has called “a spirit of cooperation that just underlines everything [Native people] do” (176).

Lee Maracle is an extremely influential and inspiring Aboriginal-centric writer and editor. She co-edited the work, *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures* with non-Native women and explored the gruelling impact this experience had on her in later works. In addition, Maracle has written many articles and instrumental books including *Ravensong* (1993), *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* (1990), *Sojourner’s Truth and Other Stories* (1990), “Just Get in Front of a Typewriter and Bleed,” (1990) and *I am Woman* (1988), that have revealed the empowering aspect of literature for Native people, and more particularly, Native women. Recently, Maracle and Monture-Angus read some of their latest work at a women’s bookstore fundraiser for a Native women’s shelter in Toronto. Maracle writes that Native writers generally support one another: they want to read each other, they want to see each other, and they want to experience the circle, a circle which will grow to be “fuller,” “rounder,” and “more magnificent” as time goes on (Maracle and Lutz, 1991: 176).

In the article, “Skyros Bruce: First Voice of Contemporary Native Poetry” (1991), Maracle refers to the work of Skyros/Mary Bruce, an Aboriginal poet who strongly influenced the “cultural development” of First

Nations through the publishing of her revolutionary poetry nearly two and a half decades ago. Skyros Bruce, or Mary Bruce of the Squamish in North Vancouver, published a small book of poems in 1973 which voiced the modern concerns of her people (86). In it, Skyros Bruce situates herself in the present, rather than the past, and then looks forward toward the future of her people, “where a different story colours the world” (86, 91). Maracle explores the strength that Skyros Bruce’s poetry embodies as follows:

She relies wholly on herself, her lineage, her indigenous sense of the world to extricate First Nations’s people from a state of chemical dependence and unloved despair to a prophetic vision of the future upheld by her ancestors. She does this at the same time that she takes old metaphors into the modern world. Culture, ancient and present, comes alive, becomes a breathing living being with future significance. She pioneers the end to the stultification and stagnation of what is perceived as native traditional oratory. She moves our sense of poetry of the past beyond the lines separating modern from ancient and spearheads a cultural revolution that has both feet in the past and points to the future. (Maracle, 1991: 91)

Thus, through her writing, Skyros Bruce transformed what was perceived to be a stagnant, traditional Native oratory into a vibrant, new vision for her people. In addition, her poetry, as it connected concepts of the past, present and future led to a “cultural revolution” among Native people that gave new hope to present and future generations. In these ways, Skyros Bruce exemplifies one of the first truly Aboriginal-centric poets.

Janice Acoose (1995) is yet another contemporary First Nations writer in Canada who has found reading the work of other Native women authors, as well as her own work, extremely inspiring and empowering. Acoose uses the word “re-empowering” instead of “empowering” to describe the impact of Aboriginal-centric writing on Native consciousness, but like Adams, states that the act of this type of writing is an effective method of decolonization after centuries of intrusion by extremely powerful imperialistic forces and colonial agents (68). Acoose sees Indigenous art, in its various forms, as serving numerous purposes. It is an “affirmation” of Native people, a “reflection” of their contemporary lives, a “snap-shot” of their history, and a “testimony” of their survival and continuity as peoples (118). In addition, Acoose states that even though there are a number of Native authors who “proclaim their re-connection to the Mother” through their writing, there are just as many



who use this method of resistance to “engage themselves in the struggle against systemic and institutional racism” (111).

Acoose herself became politically conscious of the powerful influences of racism and what she calls “white-christian-canadian patriarchy” through the reading of Native authors as a mature university graduate student (13). One of these writers was Maria Campbell, whose autobiographically-based *Halfbreed*, became the critical centre of Acoose’s book. Acoose explains how Maria Campbell was 33 years old when she wrote her story, which grew out of Campbell’s anger and frustrations as a decolonizing writer who looks back upon her life and “begins to understand how christianity has constructed her identity and defined her in accord with the patriarchy” (97). Campbell’s writing, therefore, becomes an act of resistance, which Acoose explains as follows:

Through the construction of her text, Campbell looks back upon her life with a renewed vision and a stronger connection to those powerful, resourceful, and dynamic women who came before her. What she writes has rarely been said by Indigenous women in north america. The racism and sexism experienced by the protagonist is something that too many Indigenous women experience living on this continent. (1995: 100)

Furthermore,

Campbell has survived... colonial oppression, abusive men, and systemic racism and sexism. She refuses to let her ancestors’ sufferings be white-washed by liberal do-gooders... Their liberal gentleness and practice of recording history by excluding injustices done to Indigenous peoples, she argues, encourages Canadians to believe that horrible racism doesn’t exist in this country... Her voice refuses to let Canada erase what has been done to her people. (101)

Campbell’s *Halfbreed*, therefore, contextualizes Indigenous people’s social, political, spiritual and economic reality, and in doing so, “intervenes in the Euro-Canadian literary tradition” by challenging existing stereotypes of Indigenous women (13). At the same time, Campbell’s work continues to inspire other Indigenous women like Acoose to begin writing and thereby reclaim and reconnect with their own ideologies, and ultimately, their own decolonized selves (15). For reasons such as these, *Halfbreed* is considered to be not only an Aboriginal-centric piece of literature, but one of the first that contributed to the decolonization of Native people. In Acoose’s words, *Halfbreed* is a monumental piece of work that initiated a process of “re-creation, renaming, and empowerment for many Indigenous women writers” (13).

Emma LaRocque is a Cree writer who, in addition to Maria Campbell, affected Acoose profoundly through her writing. Acoose has written that LaRocque:

calls attention to the various types of 'power politics in literature' that for too many years disempowered Indigenous people by dismissing, romanticizing, censoring, and labelling [them]. She insists that Indigenous peoples were not rendered voiceless, despite very deliberate and institutionally sanctioned attempts to silence [them]. (111)

Emma LaRocque knew at a very early age that she wanted to write (LaRocque and Lutz, 1991: 181). When she was in grade eight, LaRocque says that she felt a "profound need to self-express" as a Native person, because, she says, "there was so much about our history and about our lives that, I quickly learned, has been disregarded, infantilised, and falsified" (181). LaRocque refers to her strong need to write as a "missionary zeal" in which she could tell about the humanity of Native people, because "Indian-ness was so dehumanized and Metis-ness didn't even exist"(181).

In the article, "Here Are Our Voices - Who Will Hear?," a preface to the anthology *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada* (1990), Emma LaRocque writes that "much of Native writing, whether blunt or subtle, is protest literature in that it speaks to the processes of our colonization: dispossession, objectification, marginalization, and that constant struggle for cultural survival expressed in the movement for structural and psychological self-determination" (xviii). LaRocque writes that because the pain of Native people is inherently a "part of this land," Native people become "uncomfortable mirrors to Canadian society," and as such, their voices are often cast as "voices of the past" by the mainstream society which wishes to silence them (xxvii). To LaRocque, the act of writing becomes an act of resistance against this silencing. Its purpose is that of "seeking truth," and "giving voice to a people's journey that spans centuries," a journey which she says not only alludes to Native peoples but those who waged war on them (xxvii). Writing, then, states LaRocque, becomes empowering as Native people are called upon to listen to the voices of despair among them and in them, to "retrieve, redefine, and reconcile" the scattered pieces of their people, and become "challenged to dream new visions to bring hope for the future" (LaRocque, 1990: xxvii).

Patricia Monture-Angus is yet another First Nations writer who has found her own writing extremely empowering as an oppressed Native woman in Canada and has written about this experience. In her latest work, *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (1995), Monture-Angus writes the following about writing:

Things happen and I write them all down, sometimes quite compulsively. Writing - talking back - is the process through which I come to terms with my pain, anger and emotion. It is the process through which I am able to come to terms with my oppression, the oppression of my people, and the corresponding feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that sometimes ride over me like a tidal wave... *Writing is a place where I have found both strength and empowerment.* (55) (emphasis mine)

For Monture-Angus, the process of writing has not only been a process of coming to terms with her own oppression, but also the oppression of her people. Furthermore, writing has also been a place where she has found strength and empowerment instead of helplessness and hopelessness.

Monture-Angus, like LaRocque, knew as a child that she wanted to become a writer. Reading and writing provided her with a world of escape growing up and helped her cope when life became increasingly difficult. Later on in her life, university allowed Monture-Angus “to easily escape into the world of the written word” (49). For her, words were and still remain to be many things, including “the doorway to the world where meaning is questioned,” “the realm of the intellect,” and “the vehicle by which [she] can share [her] ideas and quest for meaning” (46). Today, Monture-Angus, who is also a lawyer, professor, and academic describes these titles as “all empty of any real meaning” (51). Instead, she writes, “I want to be a writer, an artisan... And I only want to paint with words” (51).

Monture-Angus parallels the concept of self-empowerment with that of voice. She is keenly aware of how she and other Native people are silenced, and thus excluded from Canadian society. According to Monture-Angus, Native people receive their voices when they become empowered. To her, there is an important link between overcoming silencing tactics and ending Native peoples’ collective exclusion. She states: “It is much easier to exclude a silent so-called minority, than a vocal one” (29). Thus, for Monture-Angus, writing provides a tremendous opportunity for Native people to empower themselves, resist domination, and speak out against

oppression. In addition, it is through her own writing that Monture-Angus will maintain her voice, and therefore, her power, even as a so-called minority.

Thus, as we have seen, it is Native women in particular, who have found the act of writing a re-empowering and liberating experience, even as they write from what are often the margins of society. This writing, however, has not only empowered those writing. Numerous Native women within society have gone on to write and empower themselves to a large degree because of the presence of other Indigenous authors whose works have influenced them. Surely, then, the novels, poems and articles produced by Indigenous authors open up additional possibilities of political resistance for Native peoples in ways which were previously thought to be limited, at best, non-existent, at worst, by non-Natives. Furthermore, through their contextualization of Indigenous peoples' lives and experiences, Aboriginal-centric works substantially challenge those traditionally-held beliefs about Indigenous peoples reflected in much of Euro-Canadian literature. Therefore, Native people are no longer depicted as part of a dying race in need of saving, or as "suffering victims with no hope of survival" (Acoose, 1995: 108). Nor are they portrayed as people "bound and determined to assimilate and make it in the white world" (108). Instead, even in the aftermath of colonial destruction, Indigenous artists and writers have taken control of their own destiny and have found unlimited potential within for articulating their own experiences. Through their art and writing then, Native people have not only envisioned liberation for themselves and their people, but have taken real strides towards it.

### Challenges to Cultural Decolonization

Since many Native writers and artists find their work not only empowering for themselves, but an effective strategy of resistance and liberation for their people, it is important to examine the ways in which their culturally decolonizing work is persistently undermined within Canadian society. Thus, this section will deal with two of the most pertinent issues facing First Nations writers, artists and film-makers, as well as other artists of colour today: access and appropriation.

### Access

In the article, "The Disappearing Debate: Racism and Censorship," Philip reiterates Williams argument that "no work is in any full, practical sense produced until it is also received" (Williams in Philip, 1990: 214). If this is, in fact, the case, then much of the work produced by individuals belonging to marginal groups within society has not been fully produced since much of it remains unpublished. Just like a performance without an audience, much of the writing by First Nations people has gone without a readership.

Philip (1990), in response to the argument that in a democracy, everyone has the right to write from any point of view, maintains that "for far too long certain groups have not had access to any of the resources necessary to enable *any* sort of writing to take place, let alone writing from a particular point of view" (213). Philip writes that access to education, financial resources and most importantly, a person's belief in the validity of his or her own experiences or reality are all necessary to the process of writing. However, certain marginalized groups within a racist and capitalist society like Canada have been denied access to such things which has greatly limited their ability to self-express through writing and publishing (214). In addition, a network of systemically-racist institutions and organizations continue to reinforce one another, privileging white writers while excluding First Nations, Black and Asian writers. Therefore, a discussion about who has a right to write from whose point of view cannot begin before it is acknowledged that, in general, only people from privileged groups within society have actually been provided with the means to write and publish.

In January, 1993, the Ontario Women's Directorate produced a document called *Women in the Labour Market: Focus on Aboriginal Women*, which covers some of the challenges Aboriginal people and Aboriginal women, in particular, face within Canadian society. It declared that, according to the 1986 Canadian census, there remains a wide gap between the percentage of Aboriginal people who have graduated from secondary school compared with the rest of the Ontario population: over half of the Aboriginal population in Ontario have not graduated from secondary school (4). Of these, only five percent of Native people go on to complete university (4, 5). Furthermore, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal women is almost double that of women as a group.

Systemic sexism and racism, chronically high unemployment conditions in many northern and rural Aboriginal communities, the perpetuation of negative stereotypes about Native peoples and work, as well as limited access to education and training continues to makes it difficult for Aboriginal women, in particular, to get paid employment (3). Barriers are sometimes deliberately created, including job applications which demand lengthy employment histories as requirements, or academic skills that are not job-related (5). And, in addition to the extremely limited formal education and training programs for Aboriginal peoples in rural settings and on reserves, there are few off-reserve job placements or employment relocations to urban areas for Native women. Within a society like Canada whose economy is capitalist-based, such high unemployment is an indication of the extreme disempowerment of Native women, in particular.

For those Aboriginal women who do find employment, the rate of pay they can expect is substantially lower than both Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal peoples, even in the clerical field where they are a majority. The average income for Aboriginal women in 1986 was almost half of that for non-Aboriginal people: \$10, 855 for Native women, compared to \$19, 283 for non-Natives. Thus, when it comes to valuing Native people as members of Canadian society by providing them access to the financial resources, educational institutions, or employment opportunities necessary for their empowerment, if not survival, Canada continues to deny Native people. At the same time, many members of the privileged dominant society continue to be provided access to these various Canadian educational institutions, financial resources and employment opportunities.

Once Aboriginal people have overcome such challenges and have produced artistic material despite the odds against them, they come up against another substantial barrier: racism in publishing and funding. Philip (1992) states that even though much is said about Canada's multicultural policies, racism invades all aspects of Canadian life, particularly writing and publishing. She writes that African, Asian and Native Canadian writers are consistently underfunded by arts councils, publishers are reluctant to publish their works, and if and when their work is published, it is often ignored by reviewers (148). According to Philip, then, there remains a dominant culture in Canada which is white, middle class and Anglo-Saxon. For all others who do not belong to

this dominant culture, racism is a reality. Thus, a real concern for First Nations writers and people as well as other artists and of colour is what Patricia Monture-Angus has called "the insidious nature of racism and the ways in which racism is structured and sanctioned in this society" (1995: 41).

Greg Young-Ing, in the article, "Aboriginal Peoples' Estrangement: Marginalization in the Publishing Industry" (1993) writes that historically, just as Aboriginal peoples have been denied participation in most sectors of Canadian industry, economy and society, so too has their access to the publishing industry been blocked. From 1990 to 1993, for example, no books by Native authors were published by a large Canadian publishing house. During this same period, over one hundred books *about* Aboriginal peoples, written by non-Natives, were published (185). According to Young-Ing, Aboriginal literature continues to be marginalized within Canadian society. He states that larger publishing houses will publish a novel by a recognized non-Native author like W.P. Kinsella, who mocks Native life on a reserve, but not publish books by Aboriginal authors. For example, Lee Maracle, who has produced a great number of books, was refused by many large presses who called her work angry and bitter. Maracle then went on to publish through small independent presses, Aboriginal presses, or small feminist presses. Furthermore, in the 1992 Fall catalogue of the largest publishing house in Western Canada, which is one of the largest in Canada, numerous titles *about* Aboriginal peoples written by Non-Natives are listed, while no books by Aboriginal authors appear (Young-Ing, 1993: 185). Not only is this type of marginalization racist, writes Young-Ing, it "blocks out the voice of the race while putting others in place to speak about the race and profit from doing so" (185).

In the final report from the Vancouver Forum held in 1990 on appropriation and Indigenous writers and performing artists funded by the Canada Council Explorations Programme, it is evident that an overwhelming number of Native people experience difficulties related to access at every step of getting their work published, produced and distributed in Canada. It was clear that, through the discussions held, Native people face several considerable challenges - from accessing information on how to acquire project funding to getting their own work

published. Several of the greatest challenges Native artists and writers face directly relate to their knowledge production as marginalized people within a racist society.

To begin, it is important to note that very few Native artists are presently supported by public funding bodies such as government funded art agencies, journals, periodicals and distributors in Canada (Kane, 1990). It became obvious at the Forum, "Telling Our Own Stories: Appropriation and Indigenous Writers and Performing Artists," that this lack of financial support was a significant detriment to Native artists who want their work to be recognized and heard. There are several reasons why very few Native artists are funded by public funding bodies. First and foremost, is the fact that access to information about funding opportunities is very limited, if not non-existent for many Native people living in rural, reserve as well as urban areas of Canada. Native people, who, as we have seen, are the poorest and most marginal people in Canada, are generally not encouraged to produce knowledge, and therefore, are provided with little or no information on where or how to apply for funding that might be available to them.

Secondly, once a Native artist and/or writer learns about where to apply for funding, the process itself can be a frustrating, alienating, and disappointing one for them. The allocation of funding in Canada is most often reviewed and approved by committees or boards. Oftentimes, there is little or no representation of Aboriginal people on these councils. This seriously jeopardizes both the number and quality of Native projects that get funded. Viola Thomas, a participant at the Forum stated, "I was continually frustrated because there were never any Native representatives on the large majority of the decision making bodies who gave out grant monies for Native people. And there is no easy access in terms of finding out about what funding is available (1990: 14).

In relation to publishing, several participants at the Forum referred to how a majority of Non-native publishers, editors and producers in Canada have a colonial mentality which influences what they choose to publish. Since non-Native publishers inherently believe that their european-based education, and european literature and art forms, are superior



when a Native person conforms to that white supremacist mind-set, that person may be eligible to get that non-native support because that Native person is perpetuating the stereotypes and therefore appealing to the producers or publishers' white supremacist beliefs. But generally, non-native producers, publishers and art institutions do not promote Native art. Since they do not have an understanding of Native art and Native people, they don't know how to make production decisions that will produce an accurate and 'true' Native story... The non-native publishers and producers don't give Native art the respect, time and promotional context it deserves because they themselves do not know the truth about Native people or their art. (1990: 12)

Thus, the conscious or subconscious racism enacted by those non-Natives in key positions of power in publishing, producing and art institutions directly hinders the cultural production of Native artists and writers.

Not only do the elites making decisions possess a colonial attitude that affects the cultural production of Indigenous artists and performers. Many times, the audience that is to receive work produced by Natives, as part of a fundamentally racist society, also has this mentality. Thus, another major challenge faced by Native artists and writers that came out in the Forum related to the audience that would receive their work. Many writers experienced difficulties reaching the public because of a general lack of understanding about the history and the current experience of being Native in Canada (12). Therefore, much of the Native art promoted by non-Native publishers conforms to stereotypes in order to meet the desires of this primarily white, mis-educated market.

One participant stated that:

these difficulties are due to the prejudice of whites in the dominant society, thinking that only white people or highly educated peoples from other cultures can be experts - not only about their European-based community but about absolutely any community and anything in the world. This colonial mind-set prevents them from seeing native people as valuable people with something significant to say. (12)

Again, the colonial mind-set of non-Natives that consistently attempts to underestimate and discount the valuable work of Native knowledge-producers is not only frustrating to Native artists, but influences the work that they produce. On this topic, Emma LaRocque has stated:

If Native writers have felt like they have been speaking into a vacuum, it is because we have. Neither the white nor the Native audience has received us. If white audiences have largely misunderstood us, Native audiences have been virtually non-existent. Linguistic, cultural, geographic, and social distances fostered by colonial forces have prevented the development of broadly based Native intellectual community. (LaRocque, 1990: xxii)

With the realization by the Native community that little can be done about the practices of major Canadian publishers with respect to Native authors and the recognition that work by Native people is indispensable, two small Native publishing houses have been created. Pemmican Publications and Theytus Books are two publishing houses in Canada which support First Nations writers and provide access to those who have had to go through the alienating process of attempting to be published without success. Pemmican is a Metis publishing house which publishes both Native and non-Native writers. Its mandate is to “provide opportunities for Metis and Native people to tell their own stories from their own perspective” (Young-Ing, 1993: 185). Theytus Books, the first publisher in Canada under First Nation ownership and control, was established in 1980. It is a division of The En’owkin Centre in Penticton, British Columbia, which also runs the only First Nations writing school in North America - the En’owkin International School of Writing (EISW). In contrast to Pemmican Publications, Theytus Books is entirely staffed by Native people and publishes only First Nations authors (186). In this way, Theytus encourages the writing of Aboriginal-centric materials.

However, discussions at the Forum also dealt with how there are too few Native publishers and producers. It became evident that Native publishers, producers and art institutions need to be established and supported. Lee Maracle stated, in reference to this issue:

We need to deal with the economics of producing our own materials. There are three Native publishing houses in this community which are always going under or not getting projects started and getting monies into our communities to produce our own materials. Chief Masks' Bookstore: not only does it need books, it needs to keep going, it needs to keep the doors open. We need to guarantee things like that. (1990)

In addition, Carol Geedes stated in her presentation:

We sometimes get the impression that we have a lot of Native film and video makers, but in fact there are still very few. Our stories are still being told by other people. I think not only of this as a moral issue, but it is also an issue of actual misappropriation of public funds. (1990)

Therefore, even with the establishment of these Native-controlled institutions, there are still challenges to surmount. The creation of Native-controlled publishing houses and theatres is a positive ray of hope for Native writers. However, Native art and writing still must pass the Euro-Canadian “test,” and for that reason, continues

to be constricted. Moreover, even though some have argued that self-controlled publishing is the best solution to the challenges faced by Aboriginal writers, there is still the ever-present discrimination by large Canadian publishers for those Native writers who approach them wanting their works published and distributed in Canada. Thus, it can be said that there is a certain degree of “ghettoisation” that occurs when Native people *must* go to Native controlled presses to have their work accepted or even considered for publication. In addition, the mainstream audience continues to buy books, whether fictional or non-fictional, written by non-Natives *about* Native people, as they perceive Native writers to somehow be less knowledgeable or more biased about their own experiences.

In conclusion, it is clear that there are some serious questions to be raised about racism as it relates to “real-life” access to the funding, publishing and production of work by Indigenous authors, artists, and performers in Canada. As it stands now, the representation on funding bodies is predominantly non-Native Euro-Canadians with a colonial mentality, leading to the approval of projects that fit the stereotype of “Native art and literature”; the mis-educated non-Native audience/market perceives whites as the experts on Native culture, and thus, Native people's own views and works are discounted; Native artists and writers are not provided with information on how to access funding, and there are very few Native-run publishing houses or film industries supported by the general Canadian public and government. Moreover, those employed to disseminate knowledge to the mainstream public in such sectors as the media and the academy are usually non-Native Euro-Canadians.

Thus, to put it mildly, Native people who have attempted to have their work published in Canada have experienced much discrimination. Since Aboriginal writers have had to surmount a number of other impeding factors related to access which affects their work, such as cultural and language barriers, systemic racism and sexism in the educational and economic sectors, residential schools, ethnocentrism in the academic establishment, competition from non-Aboriginal authors, and a lack of Aboriginal controlled publishing houses, their estrangement in the publishing industry makes it virtually impossible for Native authors to produce and publish in Canada. Therefore, it not surprising that in the Canadian publishing industry, even excellent work by

Aboriginal writers has gone unacknowledged altogether or been delegated “a low profile marginal position” (Young-Ing, 1992: 184).

### Appropriation

The second greatest challenge facing Aboriginal producers of knowledge today is the extensive appropriation of their culture. There has been a tremendous theft of Native voice, language and thought by non-Natives that has contributed to the cultural genocide of Native people. Those in the West have a great interest in First Nations people and society. Interest in this area is not a recent phenomena, but rather, dates back hundreds of years. It has been manifested in various ways: from the non-Natives’ collecting and displaying of “Indian” objects, displaying Native peoples themselves as objects or human specimens, constructing images which are often misrepresentations and stereotypes of aboriginals throughout literature, the academy, in the media and in visual arts, and most violently, through the colonization of First Nations people, their cultural images and their land (Crosby, 1991: 267).

Fung states that the primary dictionary meaning of the word appropriate is “to take and use as one’s own” (Fung, 1993: 17). Obviously, many cultures and populations take and use parts of other cultures, such as food, languages, clothes, and even religions, since there are different cultures that overlap and mix with others (17). However, in relation to groups that have traditionally been marginalized and exploited by a dominant culture, the taking and using of a different culture oftentimes is not done within a context of sharing. On the contrary, it is done within a context of stealing and subjugation.

In Canada, as we have seen, Native people have suffered at the hands of their oppressors. European settlers invaded Canada with the intent to rule it. Within the colonial context of Canada, this was often done with a “violent process of assimilation, coupled with the marketing of superficial difference either for profit or political gain” (Fung, 1993: 18). Thus, the critique of cultural appropriation must be done within this colonial context, taking into consideration the fact that white, Europeans purposely sought out to destroy the social, economic and

cultural systems of the First Nations people in order to dominate Canada. Cultural appropriation ought to be, in a so-called socially responsible and accountable society, “first and foremost a strategy to redress historically established inequities by raising questions about who controls and benefits from cultural resources” (18).

Appropriation, according to Lee Maracle (1991),

... is a direct by-product of the colonial system which segregated post-colonial Native students into industrial or agrarian residential schools, forbade them to speak their own language and impeded their mastery of English, creating an entire population, with a few exceptions, who were unfamiliar with language in general. (85)

This, in turn, replicated a racist and colonial paradigm which set Aboriginal people up to be exploited by Outsider researchers who came to record Native stories in semi-literate English and then worked these stories up into literary novels, short stories and other accounts for their re-telling to a primarily non-Native audience (85).

Besides the “outright theft of stories themselves,” writes Maracle, such a colonial paradigm created a new dilemma for modern First Nations writers and people: “authenticity of Aboriginal perspective” (85). That is, non-Natives who appropriated Native stories, art, culture and even commented on Native experiences for non-Natives, not only silenced Native people, they became the so-called ‘experts’ on Native people and were rewarded for their work. One of the greatest barriers to the empowerment of Native people is that there are too many white voices speaking as if they are the experts about Native experience and understandings (Kane, 1990). These journalists, writers, artists and producers are not only stealing stories, but they are also stealing the audience and the market, and getting paid handsomely for doing so. Maria Campbell states:

Much of the history of our people has been written by non-Native people. A few years ago in Alberta, a special department was set up in the University of Alberta and millions of dollars was poured into this project. The project involved non-Native people studying the writings and the history of our people. These were called “the Riel Papers.” Not one penny of that was ever spent on encouraging Metis writers to do the work. (1990)

In addition to being considered “experts” on the Native culture and people, non-Natives who continue to speak for and about Native people portray the image that Native people are victims in need of saving. Even when the message appears to be a positive one demonstrating the ways in which Native people are empowering themselves,

the implicit message is still that Native people need “help.” After all, if someone is speaking for them and is employed to do so, it is assumed that those people cannot do so themselves. What is really occurring, however, is that the Native voices are getting blocked and drowned out by these white voices. In addition, the modern voice of First Nations writers is being “crippled” (Maracle, 1991: 86).

A crucial factor to consider in the discussion of appropriation is the degree to which various cultural elements such as stories or spirituality and the appropriation of them impact upon First Nations people. Many Native people have frequently spoken out about the value of their stories, their spiritual beliefs and practices to their cultures. For example, in the article, “Stories and Voices,” Ardith Walkem (1993) explains the various functions stories provide in her culture:

Stories are powerful: stories affect change, stories give strength, stories entertain, stories heal. Storytelling is a constant creation process which places us in the world and keeps us connected. Stories within all First Nations are transmitters of social mores and the values that the nation feels are important. Stories and words can also be seen as having a sacred power. They are a component of the glue that binds different generations together and keeps people intact. The issue of ownership of stories and the “right” of people from outside certain cultures to tell the stories of those other cultures is a matter that is currently experiencing a flurry of debate. When someone tells your stories and speaks with your voice, your voice is silenced. (31)

Furthermore, Walkem writes:

Stories are alive and they change to encompass and apply to new situations. The changes that I make to the story in telling it to my niece are part of the story. I am able to make these changes and have the story remain complete because I have a respect and understanding of the story. Understanding the power of story within First Nations culture means also recognizing that simple changes, far from being a simple stretch of the imagination, represent a political act of interference. Storytelling is the act of a person involved within a community who is involved in the process of being within their community. Given the importance of stories in transmitting First Nations cultures, a mistelling represents a destruction. (32)

Walkem writes that the appropriation of First Nations peoples’ voice is centred on issues of identity and authenticity (32). She argues that since certain images of Aboriginal people have been “frozen in history” in the minds of many Euro-Canadians, it is possible for many of these white people to identify with images of Native people in the past and attempt to possess part of this identity, “while not thinking about the impact of this appropriation on the present” (32). Walkem is one of many First Nations people to articulate the importance of

stories to her culture, and the damage that occurs to her culture and society when Native stories are appropriated and Native people silenced. Lenore Keeshig-Tobias refers to the extensive appropriation of Native voice by non-Natives as “culture theft, the theft of voice” (Keeshig-Tobias, 1990). “Stories,” she writes, “are not just entertainment. Stories are power... Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks” (Keeshig-Tobias, 1990).

Ward Churchill in *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in Native North America* (1994) examines the destructive nature of the appropriation of Native North American culture by non-Natives in North America and Germany. Churchill looks specifically at New Age and Men’s movements and demonstrates how the appropriation of spiritual traditions from cultures around the world inherent in these movements, called “hobbyism,” not only debases respective cultures and societies, but leads to the genocide of oppressed peoples, cultural and otherwise (212). Unlike Druids, who have not existed for millennia, Native North Americans, along with other Indigenous peoples around the world are not immune to the culturally destructive effects of various types of appropriation (212). Churchill elaborates on this point by stating that:

... [C]ultures indigenous to America *are* living, ongoing entities. Unlike the Druids or the ancient Greek man-cults who thronged around Hector and Achilles, Native American societies *can* and *do* suffer the socioculturally debilitating effects of spiritual trivialization and appropriation at the hands of the massively larger Euro-immigrant population which has come to dominate literally every other aspect of our existence. (216).

Thus, according to Churchill, appropriation of Native spirituality by non-Natives who are in search of healing is extremely destructive to Native peoples and their cultures - cultures which are not extinct or ancient, but “living, ongoing entities” (216). Thus, he says, this type of appropriation must stop.

Lakota author Vine Deloria, Jr., in the discussion of appropriation, states that not only as a result of the men’s movement, but also because of academic anthropology, “the realities of Indian belief and existence have become so misunderstood and distorted... that when a real Indian stands up and speaks the truth at any given moment, he or she is not only unlikely to be believed, but will probably be publicly contradicted and ‘corrected’ by the citation of some non-Indian and totally inaccurate ‘expert’ (Deloria, 1982: 190 as cited in Churchill, 1994: 219). According to Deloria, it is once again, the outsiders who will profit from their involvement with Native

knowledge production as younger Indians in urban areas and in universities use the terms of these so-called 'experts' to view their people and themselves rather than the terms of their elders, thereby "[setting] the members of Indian communities at odds with one another" (219).

Russell Means, AIM leader and Oglala Lakota, claims that the appropriation of the spiritual aspects of Native culture is even more detrimental than what has been done "by Hollywood and the publishing industry," or by American sports teams that have Native people as "pets or mascots" (Means, 1993 as in Churchill, 1993: 218). In response to this appropriation, Means states that those claiming 'ownership' of Indian ceremonies and spiritual objects degrade Native North American people and that "if [Native] culture is dissolved [via the expedients of spiritual appropriation/expropriation], then Indian people as such will cease to exist. By definition, states Means, "the causing of any culture to cease to exist is an act of genocide" (Means, 1993 as cited in Churchill, 1994: 218).

In 1990, an advisory committee to the Canada Council for racial equality in the arts was formed in a seemingly "progressive" attempt to focus on the troubling issue of systemic racism at the Council. Twelve aspects of the Council's functioning were addressed by this committee, including such things as human resources, communications and board appointments (Fung, 1993: 16). At the time when the Committee began its work, the Canada Council, a major funding body for artistic projects within Canada, had no non-white staff or board members, except for cleaning staff (17). In one section of the recommendations that dealt with jury and advisory board membership, the Committee made a recommendation regarding cultural appropriation. This statement was short and rather general since another committee of aboriginal artists was also working on this issue at the time.

The media, after learning of this recommendation to the Council, immediately picked up on the issue of cultural appropriation and responded in a flurry about everyone's inherent "right to write." What was completely, and some would say, deliberately overlooked, was the systemic racism of the Council that had made the formation of such a committee, along with this and other recommendations necessary (Fung, 1993: 16). Furthermore,



newspapers also failed to mention that the Council had rejected the recommendation concerning cultural appropriation.

Marlene Nourbese Philip, in the article, “The Disappearing Debate: Racism and Censorship,” presents a sound argument about how censorship was and is continually used as an “argument by the white middle class, for the white middle class, about the white middle class” in regard to “publishing manuscripts in which the protagonist’s experience in the world, by virtue of race or ethnicity, is substantially removed from that of the writer” (1990: 209). Philip examines how the dominant class, the white middle class, has used their privileged discourse to discuss whether or not they should be allowed to write from the point of view of the oppressed. Not only is this racist, states Philip, but it silences those who speak out against such false representation. The discourse on racism does not come from the mouth of the privileged, and so, the claim against these acts of racism is not acknowledged by the media or many of those in academe (210). Since the personal narrative of those who experience oppression in their own lives is vital in giving a voice to non-white writers, Philip reiterates the impact of a stereotypical, false representation of the subjugated when a story is retold about oppression and the oppressed by someone who is white. Philip goes on to explain how the writing of such stories by white writers is much more widely published and read than books by non-white writers or more specifically, by Black or First Nations women.

“The Disappearing Debate” is an important article since it once again points out how the privileged place of whites in society not only allows but encourages them to speak about and on behalf of marginalized others without any consideration whatsoever of the impact this speaking has on the struggle and well-being of the oppressed, or without interrogating why only certain people who are substantially removed from the situation have been chosen to tell the story. It is important for whites to realize that when one is a stranger to another culture and experience, one must ask some serious questions about what one’s writing will do to those people one is writing about. As Philip’s article points out:

Writers have to ask themselves these hard questions, and have to understand how their privilege as white people writing *about* rather than *out* of another culture virtually guarantees that their work will, in a racist society, be received more readily than the work of writers coming from the very culture. (218) (emphasis mine)

One must consider, for example, the impact that initials such as B.A., B.Ed. M.A., Ph.D. or a white face on the back flap of a book has on a society where the dominant do, in fact, relate these initials and appearances to a higher level of “knowing.”

Furthermore, the mere fact that the on-going discussion about appropriation continues to be recentred on the emotional issue of censorship and on the rights of whites to write as members of oppressed groups or about them is, in itself, an indication of who has the privileged discourse in this debate. The terms used in the framing of the appropriation argument are not only frustrating for those once again trying to be heard on the issues, but they facilitate the blatant misuse of precious energy that could otherwise be spent producing creative work or addressing the inequities so visible in society and relevant to the argument. Moreover, the censorship cry is distracting many people from seeing the real issue - that of racism within publishing and production, and the social responsibility of privileged white writers in acknowledging such racism. Philip points out that

writers ought to recognize and acknowledge that along with their privilege comes a social responsibility. Essentially, the individual writer will decide how to exercise that social responsibility. Writers may, of their own accord, decide not to use the voice of a group their culture has traditionally oppressed. Others may decide that their responsibility impels them to something else, but they ought to be impelled to do something (218).

But even more than this, for justice to occur, Philip points out that “changes have to be made at other levels and in other areas such as publishing, distribution, library acquisitions, educational curricula and reviewing” ( 213). She states that when there was a Women’s Press debate about this issue, “there was no discussion about how to enable more Black women to get into print, [for example,] or how to help those small publishing houses committed to publishing work by Black authors, or any of the many tasks that must be undertaken to make the writing and publishing world truly non-racist” (213). Therefore, it is quite clear that by continually using the

argument of censorship, whites are deliberately re-centering the debate on their own rights concerning the issue of appropriation and are given direct access to the mainstream public to do so.

To conclude, it is evident that the issue of appropriation has become a highly charged and emotional one for many writers, both Native and non-Native. Obviously, there is much more to consider than one's inherent "right to write," or the supposed attempts to silence white writers and knowledge producers. What has become erased or obscured in the discussion about cultural appropriation is the great inequality present in Canada between those members of society's privileged groups who are not only encouraged to write on everyone and everything, but are rewarded for doing so via employment opportunities, funding grants and royalties, and those marginalized writers who are, to put it simply, denied access to these same things. The issue, then, is not one of censorship, but one of access.

The debate about the appropriation of Native culture is misguided if it focuses on whether or not someone who is an outsider to Native society can create an "accurate" or "authentic" portrayal of that society. What is crucial to consider is that the appropriation of First Nations stories, thoughts and experiences is about a lack of respect, at best, and about the enactment of genocide of a people, at worst. Appropriated ceremonies or mainstream stories about the modern-day experiences of Native people in Canada are not produced in a vacuum where everyone on the playing field is equal and free. Rather, as we have seen, this type of knowledge production is predicated on the silencing of one group for another group's profit, and the insistence on the right to do so, despite the consequences. Therefore, given the systematic attempts by the Canadian state to destroy First Nations cultures, economies and social systems, the desire to "report back" to the dominant "mainstream" society about Aboriginal people and issues (by way of writing *or* film producing) as outsiders must be seriously interrogated. We will now look at the present-day racist society from which such detrimental work emerges in an effort to better understand how outsider work on Native people, along with other culturally genocidal moves of dominance, generally go unquestioned. This is also done in an effort to disrupt the hegemonic flow of events that continue to oppress Native people and to also interrupt what Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes as the

“dangerous” and “implicit” management of race within hierarchies of domination in the name of “cooperation and harmony” (1990: 195).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology and Theoretical Framework

#### Introduction to the Methodology

Native knowledge producers and their work continue to be marginalized within Canadian society, as I argued in the last two sections of chapter one. However, it is not only in the publishing industry that Native people find themselves unjustly treated. I began this thesis by tracing the methods and the effects of historical cultural genocide on Indigenous people. In this chapter, I begin with a look at the various ways in which Aboriginal people in Canada are currently facing the real and violent impact of racism, injustice and oppression in their lives with direct relation to access to land and resources. This is done in an attempt to situate the current body of knowledge within not only historical, but contemporary social, political and societal contexts that inform and influence it. As Goldberg, van Dijk and Dei all note, the contextualizing of knowledge must occur in order to produce truly anti-racist work. Knowledge, particularly knowledge about the social, Goldberg notes, is not produced in a vacuum (1993: 149). The political economy and culture of a society never cease to inform the knowledge being produced (149). By furnishing assumptions, values, and goals, the political economy frames the terms of epistemologic projects and these epistemological foundations, writes Goldberg, “are at the heart of the constitution of social power” (149). It is hoped that by situating the current thesis within a greater contextual framework, it can perhaps interrupt many socially-acceptable hegemonic practices for at least a brief moment and thereby perform the task of a truly effective anti-racist endeavour.

This section begins by situating this body of knowledge within the contemporary realities of Aboriginal people relating to the land. I also attempt to locate myself, as an outsider researcher, within the contexts of this modern-day Canadian society. I then proceed to outline the procedure I followed for the study. After looking at some of the ethical concerns I had about doing such work, I introduce the participants of this research project:

Kate, Ed, Mark, Ron, Helen, and Alex. Finally, I demonstrate how I analyzed and presented the data collected in the interviews. The second half of this chapter deals with the theoretical framework of the thesis.

### Situating This Body of Knowledge

As already mentioned, the contextualizing of all knowledge is needed in an effort to produce anti-racist work. Further, it is critical to examine racism in a historically-specific way so that one does not get stuck in generalities and vagueness and once again leave the question of dominance and inequality out of the picture (van Dijk, 1993: 173). As van Dijk also states,

... one pedagogical and hence political problem with... generalized psychological or sociological approaches [that do not historicize racism] is that prejudice, xenophobia, resentment, and hence racism may be seen as universal or natural for any group - an argument routinely used by all contemporary racist groups and parties. (173)

Thus, it is key that the racism described in this thesis is placed within a historical context.

Contemporary forms of racism in Canada began historically, as we have seen in chapter one, with the cultural genocide of Aboriginal people by federal and provincial governments. This cultural genocide was enacted in several ways, one of which involved the breaking of a series of agreements or treaties made with Aboriginal peoples to share the land equitably between Native and non-Native people (Ministry of Supply and Services, 1996: 1). The political situation at the current time within the liberal, democratic nation of Canada with reference to Native issues is a very complex one and cannot be examined in great detail in a limited study of this kind. At the same time, however, there are several events which can provide a general overview of Canada's current economical, political, and social climate within which the current thesis is located. I will now briefly cite some examples of those as they directly relate to Aboriginal people's struggle for the land that was taken forcibly from them. I also refer to some of the resistance mounted by Native people in an attempt to identify their active agency in these struggles. These events are cited in an attempt to provide insight into some of the forces impacting upon Aboriginal people in the nation-state of Canada at the current time.

In 1990, there was armed conflict between Native and non-Native forces at Kanesatake (Oka) - an event which the Royal Commission referred to as having “tarnished” Canada’s reputation as an extremely “tolerant” liberal democratic state, both abroad and in the minds of many Canadian<sup>1</sup> citizens (Ministry of Supply and Services, 1995: ix). A group of non-Native townspeople who owned land beside a First Nations community wished to expand an already-existing golf-course onto an ancient Aboriginal sacred burial ground. Indigenous people from Kanesatake, across Canada and around the world, protested this move and refused to have their burial grounds dug up and removed. Non-Native military forces were sent in to ‘rectify’ the situation. Many Aboriginal people, including those who were not directly involved with the ordeal, were treated as terrorists, both by the non-Native military operation that was called in and the media reports and court cases which followed the event.<sup>2</sup>

In 1993, another incident occurred that again, directly related to Indigenous people and their land. The Chippewa “Indians” of the Stoney Point First Nations began to move back onto land they were forcibly removed from over fifty years earlier. In 1942, for military purposes, the residents of Stoney Point were removed from their land and their homes bull-dozed with a guarantee that they could return with the ending of World War II. Their land was never returned. Then, during the summer of 1995, after rising tensions between police and unarmed protestors, Dudley George, an unarmed Aboriginal protestor, was shot and killed by police. Police reportedly told George earlier that same day that when the shooting began, he would be “the first one to go.” A police inquiry into his death is currently underway, although a public inquiry is being requested by his brother, Gerald George, family, and other Native community members (Scott, 1997).

In January of 1993, the severely impoverished living conditions of the Innu of Davis Inlet gained worldwide attention when national and international reports covered some of the problems residents were facing -

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Euro-Canadians” may be more appropriate here. Euro-Canadians, who are often considered to be “true” Canadians within this nation-state because of their whiteness, have the privilege of believing that Canada is “tolerant.”

<sup>2</sup> Alanis Obomsawin’s film, *Kanesatake: 200 Years of Resistance* (1993) by the National Film Board of Canada covers the event in detail.

especially the extremely high incidence of solvent abuse among Mushuau Innu children. Three decades earlier, in 1966, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador relocated an entire community of Mushuau Innu to Davis Inlet, an island designed for 150 people, approximately five kilometres off of Labrador's mainland. As the population grew, the community lived in conditions poorer than those of other Native communities in Canada. The island community, which is now severely overpopulated at 500 people, has access to few economic opportunities. It is also experiencing widespread health and social problems and wishes to move to an appropriate site on the mainland which is closer to the original 'traditional' hunting grounds from which they were forcibly removed three decades ago.

However, in December of 1993, and in September of the following year, residents of Davis Inlet insisted on changes to a racist and unfair Provincial justice system and disallowed the province of Newfoundland to hold court in their community. Justice inquiries done into legal systems and judicial procedures in other provinces of Canada such as Nova Scotia<sup>3</sup> and Manitoba<sup>4</sup> at around the same time supported the view that judicial and legal systems, in almost every area, were profoundly "racially prejudiced" against First Nations people, with the treatment of Aboriginal people described as unfair and "tragic" (Manette, 1992 in Poonwassie, 1995: 41). Nevertheless, when residents of Davis Inlet insisted that their concerns be heard on this issue through disallowing court to be held in their community, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador immediately suspended discussions with the Innu on the much-needed relocation of their community, their land claim, and the devolution of provincial programs and services to Innu control. In addition, upon the request of the Newfoundland government, the federal Canadian government agreed to suspend its talks with the Innu on the same items based on the fact that the residents of Davis Inlet did not allow the provincial government to hold court in their community (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1995: 1, 3).

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<sup>3</sup> The Donald Marshall Inquiry, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, 1991.



As can be witnessed to some extent here, within contemporary Canadian society, First Nations people must endure great struggles as they attempt to assert their rights with respect to land and resources that were taken unfairly from them in the past. However, Native people are insisting that their voices be heard on key issues such as land rights, education, self-government, the future of their children, and the appropriation of their art, voices, and experiences. In many ways, Aboriginal people are taking their own education, land, art, and children back into their own hands from their white oppressors. In addition, along with Indigenous peoples around the globe, First Nations people are increasingly claiming and asserting their human rights regarding these and other issues, and are stepping forward to make it clear that “their domination and subjugation is no longer acceptable” (Coon Come, 1995:16). In Canada, Aboriginal peoples have mounted resistance against recent events such as Hydro Quebec’s proposed Great Whale/James Bay hydro-electric project, Quebec’s sovereignty referendum, the Canadian federal government’s low-level military training flights and mineral exploration in Northern regions of Canada, the abuse encountered by Native children in former residential schools, and a legacy of racist government and societal actions. As a privileged Euro-Canadian whose energies are not being used to combat such oppressive acts, I now attempt to situate myself within the racist and white supremacist society that enacts and condones such practices.

### Situating Myself

As already stated, I am located within the society whose violent racist acts I describe above. I am, thus, complicit in the oppression of Aboriginal people. The dictionary definition of complicity is the participation or partnership in wrongdoing (Collins, 1992: 97; New Webster’s, 1991: 200). The concept of complicity raises important concerns about the study of race by those who have not experienced racism themselves. It calls attention to the privilege of many knowledge producers who write and publish on issues relating to Native people, but who walk out onto the street as whites and participate in a society that privileges them.

In attempting to do truly ethical and responsible work, it is important to examine the ways in which one oppresses *and* one is oppressed. Spivak calls this “try[ing] to unlearn your privilege” (1990: 30). Although it holds no guarantees, and although it risks the re-centring of whites and whiteness once again, for writers from dominant groups of society to examine the ways that they and their work is an integral part of current interlocking systems of oppression is a step toward creating a truly equitable society. If privileged members of society who write and produce on marginalized group members can see, articulate, and admit the ways in which they and the work they produce actually contribute to and benefit from the oppression of the people they study, only then may it become at least *possible* for them to make steps toward rectifying inequitable power structures in society.<sup>5</sup> Without such an acknowledgement of privilege and how it relates to the domination of subjugated group members, however, the system can not and will not change.

As is being argued here, it is through locating oneself and one’s ever-changing positions within hegemonic structures that allows one to move beyond oppressor-victim categories in an effort to produce work done with integrity and with social responsibility, or to work out other ways in which to do so. As a white researcher who has chosen to produce knowledge on Native issues in the mid-1990’s in Canada, therefore, I need to examine how I take part in hegemonic systems, both as one who is oppressed *and* as one who oppresses. In other words, besides seeing and stating only how I may be disadvantaged in society, I must continue to look at “on whose backs... my freedom rests” (Fellows and Razack, 1994: 1065).<sup>6</sup>

I am a first-generation, heterosexual, able-bodied Euro-Canadian woman from a working- to middle-class background. As one at a graduate level of studies, I speak in many ways, from a privileged subject location,

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<sup>5</sup> However, (and unfortunately), this does not necessarily infer that they will do so. There must be, what Karani (1996) calls “a cognitive shift” that takes place in the minds and hearts of privileged group members in society so that they can begin to perceive not only of how they are positioned in various ways that oppress others, but how they might personally begin to rectify overwhelming social inequities from which they now benefit.

<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Fellows and Razack state: “The freedom to act autonomously very easily can maintain the status quo, leaving many relations of domination untouched and even strengthened, because those who have choices and can pursue them most easily are invariably of the dominant groups... we need to remind ourselves of the difference impasse: to ask, in other words, what our responsibility to is to each other, and how each of us is implicated in the dominance of others” (1065).

especially in relation to many Aboriginal peoples. To obtain my university degree, I am required to write this piece of work, all the while knowing that even the critical writing which I am attempting to produce reproduces the current unequal social arrangement. That is, as a member of a privileged group of society myself, I benefit from the oppression of Native people in numerous and often un-named ways, from educational and employment opportunities open to me as a Euro-Canadian to which marginalized groups including First Nations people are denied access, to not being continually confronted by racism and white suprematism every day. To put it bluntly, I am where I am within this racist and capitalist society because most Native Canadians are where they are. Thus, I am complicit in the oppression of First Nations people and people of colour. I cannot ignore the structures of racism and inequality, and indeed have an obligation to name them. The goal of anti-racist work is to enable us to devise strategies that disrupt patterns of domination. It is in this spirit that I pursued this thesis.

### Procedure

One year ago, I collected the course outlines on classes taught on Aboriginal issues at the site of the university. I gathered every possible course outline and reading list relating to Aboriginal people, culture, politics, language and literature, from York University and the University of Toronto at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Having examined these outlines in detail and conducted further research, I found (not surprisingly) that an overwhelming majority of the courses were taught by non-Aboriginal people, and that the books and articles listed on course readings were written primarily by non-Native researchers. In addition, I came across popular yet problematic university courses like the following humanities course, entitled 'Religions of Native American Peoples', from the 1994-95 academic year:

Description: Introduction to the study of non-Western religions, analyzing primal cultures and early civilizations using Amerindian examples, considering traditional (Ojibwa to Inca) and contemporary (American Indian Movement, Peyote Religion) phenomena and their interrelationships with Western religion. Canadian examples will predominate...

What this course is not: This course is not an introduction to the practice of any Native American religious tradition. *If you are interested in the practice of Native traditions, you should seek out Native elders. All students are highly recommended to the Elder's*

*conference held at Trent University in late February as well as the Elder's Conference held at the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto in mid-March... In this course we will not speak for anyone other than ourselves. There is no pretense of gaining a Native understanding; the only expectation is to gain an understanding of Native traditions from a comparative perspective. (2) (emphasis my own)*

I briefly interviewed the non-Native professor of this course, and he did not seem to find it particularly problematic that he was not Native, the majority of his students were not, and yet they were, as he described it, “analyzing primal cultures and early civilizations” together using “traditional” and “contemporary” Amerindian and Canadian examples.

Also, I found that the literature written by Aboriginal-centric writers was left off of the reading lists for courses dealing with current political Native issues. This writing was also generally omitted from courses dealing with “Canadian” literature. On one Canadian literature course description, it stated that one out of the nine Canadian authors listed would be Aboriginal, but no specific name was given, and one out of nine was generally an exception. In addition, through speaking to various faculty and staff members (although not Aboriginal faculty themselves), I discovered that not only were Aboriginal professors not generally present at this site, those that were, were hired on part-time and contractual agreements, with their offices shared, and located in the basements of buildings.

As a non-Native outsider researcher myself, I began to wonder how non-Native/outsider knowledge producers like university professors teaching courses on Aboriginal studies and appearing on reading lists, might confront the problem of doing research, teaching classes and producing knowledge on marginalized people without replicating old imperial structures with white people as ‘experts’ and Aboriginal peoples the ‘object’ of study. Having reviewed many of the course descriptions and reading lists, and having examined some of the recommended texts closely, I was concerned that many Euro-Canadians repeat an imperial gesture as they study Aboriginal peoples. I wondered how these white writers dealt with issues relating to their relative power and privilege in relation to the Native people they studied. I was interested in learning about how they saw their role and themselves in relation to Aboriginal people. Finally, I was interested in what it might mean to work in

solidarity with First Nations people as a Euro-Canadian. As a result of such questions, I decided to interview non-Native, Euro-Canadian knowledge producers from three major sites of contemporary knowledge production in Canada: the university, the media (television, journalism) and film. In this way, I hoped to learn more about those who were studying Aboriginal people and 'drawn' to this particular area of knowledge production.

I contacted the six participants of this project, who are Euro-Canadians currently writing primarily about Aboriginal issues, knowledge and experiences, by phone, in person, or by electronic mail. I had heard of the participants by word of mouth, and then contacted them directly. One participant was an acquaintance, but I did not know any of the other five participants. I contacted each potential participant by leaving a message for them, either by phone or by computer. In the message, I introduced myself, described the current research project, and then asked if they would be interested in taking part in the study. Each person I contacted returned my computer message or phone call and agreed to be in the study.

Approximately four to six weeks before my interviews with them, I forwarded a Participant Release Agreement (Appendix A), a series of possible interview questions (Appendix B), and a letter of introduction to each participant, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. In the letter, I again introduced myself and described the study. I also asked the participants to review the enclosed questions before the interview, and return their completed Release Agreements to me by mail. Five of the applicants mailed their completed release agreement to me before their interviews, while one of the participants brought this completed agreement to the interview. Although the participants were informed that they could choose their own pseudonym for this study if they wished to, five of the six participants did not write a chosen pseudonym on the participant release agreement, or give me one during the interview. I did not ask participants about a specific pseudonym. Since only one of the participants gave me a pseudonym voluntarily, I used this pseudonym for her, and assigned the other five pseudonyms to the participants myself. Before completing the project, I called the participants to inform them of the pseudonym I had chosen for them, and asked them to contact me if they would like to have it changed. No one has phoned me with concern about the pseudonyms chosen for them.

The last three interview questions (Numbers 17-19 in Appendix B) were not given to the participants before the interview, and were left off of the original list of questions sent to them before the interviewing began. This was not done intentionally. During and immediately after my first interview, I realized that these last three questions were important ones that I had neglected to ask in my first list of questions. Therefore, I asked one of them at the end of this first interview, and then asked Kate, who was the first interviewee, the remaining two questions a couple of days after the interview over electronic mail. For the remaining five interviews, I asked the three remaining questions at the end of the interview. Ironically, I found that the fact that number 17 and number 19 were asked “on the spot” most beneficial to the study, since, for example, participants could not have prepared a list of Native scholars or writers’ names in answer to Question 17 (“What Native scholars or writers have had an impact or influence on you, if any?”). In my interview with Helen, however, I came back to Question 17 since she needed time to think about her answer. Because it was not listed in the possible interview questions mailed to them beforehand, the answer to Question 19 (“Do you see any ways in which your work might further silence, oppress, or disempower Native people?”) could not be formally prepared beforehand, thus reflecting a more honest and accurate account of how participants’ viewed their own subject position and level of complicity.

In the fall of 1996, I conducted the interviews. The length of each interview was approximately one hour. I interviewed each participant once. One of the interviews was conducted at the participant’s home, two were conducted in my office at the university, and three were conducted at the workplace of the participants. I began each with a short talk with each participant, so we could get to know one another a little before the questioning. All interviews were quite structured and followed the list of interview questions which I had prepared quite closely. If a response elicited an additional question, however, I would ask it. All but two of the interviews were tape recorded on two tape recorders so that any questionable words could be deciphered. I transcribed each interview myself. The interview transcripts were read over by myself and my thesis supervisor. One of the participants, who was concerned about the content of her interview, asked to see a copy of her transcripts in order to make editorial changes. However, after seeing the transcripts, she did not make any changes to the content of

the interview. I made the small changes she did note in the final copy of the transcripts and gave her a copy of these.

Some of the participants seemed quite interested and curious about what I would do with the information I had gathered. Most indicated to me that they would like to see the completed study. I indicated to each person that I would send them a letter once the study was completed, letting them know where the thesis was located for viewing. After the interviews, one participant asked me how I felt about issues of appropriation, a query to which I responded vaguely at that time. Since I was hesitant that many participants would withdraw from the study if they knew my position on the topic, I did not often state many of my own opinions outright. Many of the issues related to this I will raise in the following section, entitled, "Ethical Considerations."

### Ethical Considerations

Ethically, I was faced with several concerns in this study. As a researcher using qualitative research methods with human subjects, I was afraid of the individuals in the study being identified, even with pseudonyms and other changes to the material. The participants interviewed for this thesis are elites who hold quite powerful positions within society. My fear of the individuals I interviewed being recognized as a certain professor, scholar, reporter, writer, film-maker or journalist and the possible negative implications of this in a critical study of this kind was a constant concern during every stage. I had to proceed carefully with the information I had gathered, and I had to think carefully about how I chose to present it - namely, how to include it as anonymously as possible, all the while making the important points that these individuals had made available for all to read and know.

Next, how my relationship with the participants of this study could affect the presentation of my findings was, obviously, crucial for me to examine. All six individuals are from a Euro-Canadian background, as I am. They are also elite knowledge producers, which I am not. Although I did not know five of them before this study began, it is obvious that bonds are formed during the course of a study of this nature. Information and reflections

shared with me were sometimes personal and confidential, and did not always relate to the official topic at hand. In addition, the participants treated me with kindness during my contact with them and allowed me into their lives so that I could do this study. For those reasons, I was and remain grateful to them. At the same time, it is not always easy to proceed in a study of this nature once those bonds are formed, particularly when the subjects being studied and spoken about are elites in society who can exercise a considerable amount of power. This became especially challenging in the current study since the theoretical framework of the research uses a critical perspective based on concepts of racism, domination and oppression. Because of the connections formed between myself and the participants during the course of the study, and the powerful positions they hold within society compared to me, presenting certain evaluative interpretations of the data became quite difficult at times, especially since many of the participants indicated their desire to see the final product and would have relatively easy access to the study. Therefore, I knew that they would see themselves in the lines of this thesis. Nevertheless, I felt that these interpretations were most necessary ones to make and educational for all involved.

At the same time, however, I was especially conscious throughout the analysis not to “blame” or “accuse” the participants for their involvement with Native issues and their obvious benefit from this type of work, especially for what could be seen as an attempt to absolve myself of any guilt or install my own ‘innocence’ on the topic. Rather, I intend this study to point out the way in which ones’ subject positions and investments personally, professionally, and socially, limit one’s ways of seeing hegemonic structures at work - constantly regulating our own lives and the lives of those around us. Spivak states that “we want to avoid the kind of simple reversal whereby the critic’s hands remain clean” (1990: 51). As noted in the preface to this work and in my statement of complicity, I myself am involved with work on Native issues as I study those who study Native people. For this reason, a series of parasitic-type relationships are formed in a study of this kind. This type of project is most effective when not considered to be within paradigms of guilt or innocence, therefore, but rather, on the basis of ethics such as personal accountability and social responsibility in efforts to interrupt systems of domination.



Another major concern I had during the course of this study was the possible withdrawal of participants from the research project itself. Although this is always a concern to researchers, it becomes more of one in a study of this nature. It is important to keep in mind that this study is being conducted in Ontario, Canada at a time when there is increasing social unrest with regard to racialized and racist policies related to immigration, social, educational and employment issues. As a result, confronting white elites individually and directly asking them about their knowledge production on a marginalized group can be unwelcomed. Noting this, I intentionally did not mention the words “race” and “racism” outright in my questions. I reasoned that including interview questions on racism and sending them to potential participants well before the interviews took place would seriously affect what participants said and how they spoke to me about their experiences, as well as perhaps prompting their withdrawal from the study. The choice to approach racism in this way - by not naming it outright initially in questions has its limitations. Participants in the study may feel that they did not speak of racism because they were not asked directly about it. In my view, this risk is minimized given that in raising issues of access and appropriation, as well as in asking questions regarding the benefits outsider researchers receive and the challenges Aboriginal knowledge producers face, I was, in fact, directly raising issues of inequality and the interaction between a dominant and subordinate group. This, I would maintain, gave participants ample opportunity to reflect on racial inequality as they saw it. Finally, racism is often coded in liberal democracies and it is the deconstruction of these codes with which this thesis is concerned (van Dijk, 1993).

Lastly, the greatest ethical concern I had during this study emerged *during* and *after* I interviewed participants. I found that the participants used many arguments and statements which were overtly as well as covertly racist in my interviews with them. How to present such data as an outsider researcher without further subjectifying First Nations people became a difficult and problematic exercise. However, I reasoned that only through calling attention to and attempting to deconstruct such arguments can racism and the implications of it be interrupted.

### Participants of This Study

As with most sampling in qualitative research, the number of people included in an interpretive-type of investigation may be very limited (Omery, 1983). The participants of this study include two females and four males, all of whom are non-Native (white), middle-aged (40 years of age or older) and living in urban areas of southern Ontario. To protect the anonymity of the subjects, I will not specify which cities the participants live in. All of the participants are university educated, with three having obtained at least one graduate degree. Two of the participants are scholars and teach as professors at the university level, two are film-makers, and two are journalists. At the same time, however, all of the participants are writers, and have written and published materials relating to Native issues. All of those who participated in this study are currently involved with producing extensive amounts of knowledge that directly deals with Native issues in some way, and have been involved with this type of knowledge production for at least ten years. All are currently employed to do work on Native issues, have been employed quite steadily to do this type of work for many years, and have travelled extensively across Canada for employment reasons.

For reasons such as these, it was my impression that the participants might have thought considerably more than those from the general Euro-Canadian population about issues such as: the appropriation of Native voices and experiences; the empowerment of Native people; the challenges facing Native knowledge producers within systems of domination in Canada; the desire of non-Native people that draws them to working with Native people; and finally, their complicity in the oppression of Native people with relation to their work as non-Natives on Native issues. Below are brief introductions to each participant in the study in the order in which they were interviewed. Please note that many details have been changed in order to protect the anonymity of the participants, which, as mentioned in the ethical considerations for this study, is crucial in a research project of this kind.

### Kate

Kate is approximately fifty-five years old is from a Euro-Canadian background. She is a university professor. She has been involved in Native issues for nearly thirty years. Kate began her work in Native issues as a teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL). She travelled abroad to teach ESL after completing university and then returned to Canada to teach ESL to immigrants. When Kate returned to graduate school and completed a Masters degree, she returned to work to find her position non-existent. In her words, "they kind of pushed me out." At this point, Kate saw an advertisement in the newspaper regarding a curriculum position teaching English as a Second Language for Native people. She states that she applied for the job because it was "one of the more interesting-looking ones that was in the newspaper." She was hired and since then has divided her interest between Native people and adult immigrants in Canada.

Besides just having "fell into" work with Native issues, Kate states that she was also interested in working with people in other cultures, and that is why she is involved in this field. She has produced a thesis on Native people, has worked for the Canadian government to produce materials regarding ESL learning for Natives, has produced papers on language policies, has edited a book regarding Native issues, and as a university professor, publishes papers regularly on this subject. Kate also facilitates and runs workshops to non-Natives and Native people on various Aboriginal issues.

### Ed

Ed is a male university professor who deals with Native issues. He is approximately 50 years old and is of a European background. He works with Native communities along with his duties as a university professor. Ed began his work with Native issues approximately 15 years ago. At that time, he had been very much involved with what he called the multi-cultural "scene" and was interested in multi-cultural issues in education. He then found myself drawn to the special needs of Native, Aboriginal peoples. Ed has published many articles and

conference papers on Native issues, and has organized conferences with Native people on various issues relating to them. In addition, he has written a book on the subject.

### Mark

Mark is 45 years old, is a film-maker, writer and broadcaster, and is from a Euro-Canadian background. Mark got involved with Native issues about twenty years ago through his involvement with canoeing and the outdoors, and through his meeting of some people near Temagami, although he does not specify whether these people were Native or not. Mark then took a job helping run a group home in the wilderness setting of Northwestern Ontario. At the group home, Mark worked primarily, but not exclusively, with Native youth, some of whom came from two Native communities that were located nearby. Since then, as a journalist, and a radio, television and film producer, Mark has been involved dealing “in one way or another” with Native and Northern issues and Native communities, and has travelled extensively to do this work. Mark writes, produces and directs television series and documentary films on Native issues, as well as writes magazine articles on this topic.

### Ron

Ron is a male journalist and writer who is Euro-Canadian but who writes on Native issues. He is 45 years old and has been involved with Native issues for approximately 20 years. When Ron was young, his mother worked at a hospital where many of the Native people would come and stay. He remembers visiting his mother at work and seeing Native people in the hospital as a young boy, and the crafts they would make and sell there in the gift shop. He came to write about Native issues “a little by accident,” and states that although it was something he chose to do, it was mainly circumstances that “threw [him] into it.” However, later in my interview with him, Ron states that one of the main reasons why he got involved with Native issues was because a non-Native university professor who had taught him wrote a book in which he appropriated Native voice. Although Ron saw this as justified, others (he mentions Native people particularly) did not.

Ron began working as a journalist for a news magazine in Eastern Canada soon after his graduation from university. He had to write and report on “everything under the sun,” one of those things being Native people and their situation. Ron’s writing on this subject greatly increased ten years ago, however, when he took a job in Northern Canada. Because of his posting in the far North of Canada at that time, writing on Native people “was just part of the job,” since he was in an area that is predominantly Native. Now, Ron is working as a journalist in an urban area of Ontario writing about Native issues. He has written extensively on Native issues and continues to do so as a journalist for a new magazine at the current time.

### Helen

Helen is a non-Native film-maker, journalist and educator on Native issues. She is 45 years old, is a Euro-Canadian, and has been involved with Native issues for about fifteen years. Helen’s interest in Native issues began when she returned to university as an undergraduate student studying art almost twenty years ago. She wanted to get to know the people behind the art forms and began studying Native peoples and northern environment along with Canadian literature and various other humanities and sociology subjects. Helen then began interviewing Native individuals and publishing articles about them, along with related topics in the field. She has also reported on Native issues as a journalist. Since then, Helen has educated both Natives and non-Natives on understanding the stereotyping of Native people in the media and elsewhere in society at conferences and in classrooms as a teacher. In addition to workshops, conference seminars and teaching, Helen has published many newspaper and magazine articles on Native issues, has produced educational kits on this topic, and has written and produced a documentary film on Native people.

### Alex

Alex, like Ron, is also a journalist and writer. He is approximately 45 years old and is of Euro-Canadian background. Alex remembers that when he was a young boy growing up, there were all kinds of children that

would play hockey with. Some of these children were Cree and Metis, so he states it wasn't particularly unusual to have a lot of urban Aboriginal people "playing hockey or whatever." Alex became a journalist over twenty years ago, and like Ron, lived and worked in Eastern Canada originally. During that time, Alex was employed to cover Native issues as a journalist and reporter, so he would spend four months of the year travelling "all over the country" to both urban areas and First Nations reserves to write on Native issues. Alex continued to write on Native issues as he changed to other newspapers. He is currently employed as a journalist in an urban area of Ontario and has written a very large number of newspaper and magazine articles on the subject. He has also written a book that deals with Native issues.

### Analysis of the Data

Using the data collected via interviews with the participants introduced in the previous section, I conducted an analysis of the overall discourse(s) being used to examine Native issues. I was most interested in investigating whether:

- 1) the predominant discourse used to study Indigenous issues is primarily one of anti-racism, or rather, one emphasizing cultural difference; and
- 2) the implications of using a discourse of difference rather than one of anti-racism.

Discourse analysis is a useful analytic tool since it can "provide insight into the ways people write or talk about ethnic [or Indigenous] affairs" (van Dijk, 1993, 30). In addition, "subtle text and content analyses often provide more or less direct access to *what people believe*" (32). For these reasons like these, I decided that the most useful method of analysis for this study was an *informal systematic discourse analysis* of the interviews I conducted informed by van Dijk's previous work on the enactment of elite racism. I *informally* examined elements such as the following:

- 1) The selection and variations of words used by participants in the interviews (lexicalization):

i.e., Is the word “racism” used or is this term avoided and/or replaced with less harsh renditions of it, such as “discrimination” or “prejudice”? What words are used to describe Indigenous people? How are Western/white people and their culture presented? When are Indigenous people called “Natives,” when are they called “Indians”? Are there any times when this system of naming is particularly relevant or takes on special significance?

2) The turns, moves, structures and strategies used by the participants to create certain effects within while speaking - various moves of innocence, semantic moves of positive self-representation, strategies of face-keeping for whites:

Is white negative agency often backgrounded or “explained away” to seem innocent, natural, necessary or expected? What does this allow to happen? Do the participants subtly or not so subtly blame the victim, deny racism, and/or show a lack of interest in remaining inequalities between the two groups? Do the authors describe the challenges Indigenous knowledge producers face in vague or general terms, relating to the whole Native population? Do they explain these problems as being caused by the cultural background of Native people (not as a result of the oppressive processes of the Canadian society, education, or the racist attitudes of Euro-Canadians)? Does the participant acknowledge his/her own complicity? Why are these moves of innocence particularly significant, especially considering the population usually being addressed in the knowledge produced by these participants?

3) Overall forms of speech used, including strategic uses of narrative, conversation, argumentation:

In other words, *how* are questions addressed and *why* might they be addressed in such a way? Does the author use first-person narrative, for example, to create certain effects such as the exoticizing of certain “encounters” with Native people? If so, how and where is the white person(s) situated and how is the Native person(s) described? What does this “we” and “them” portrayal allow to happen? Are previous conversations between the participants and Native people referred to? If so, what is said/not said, how is conversation framed, and why? Are there specific times when Native women are included/excluded? What tools does the writer use

to create a scenario or argue a point; how does s/he back up what s/he is trying to portray? Do the participants use certain discursive moves to distance themselves from the question being asked or the situation being referred to?

4) General discourse topics introduced and discussed:

i.e., Do the participants go into details of colonialism when discussing the history of Indigenous people in Canada and if so, do they present the position(s) of Indigenous and minority groups? Are the current-day experiences of Natives and their experiences with them separated from this historical past, or are they placed within historical, social and political contexts? Are historical “facts”/data used to remove the impact of colonialism, rather than portraying the actual lived experience of colonization, oppression, and racism? Are the experiences of Native women included or given adequate attention? Are certain historical facts left out? (Omissions may be evaluated as negative if, in a given context of discussion, the information is relevant to understanding the events or the situation). Is an attempt made, by any of the participants, to reconceptualize notions of racism, prejudice, discrimination and interlocking systems of oppression in a coherent framework that looks at relations of power and dominance, so that contemporary forms of white racism in Canada can be examined and put into question? Are Native people consistently associated with certain stereotypical topics/themes/tropes that also occur among White people (i.e., healing, deviance, alcoholism, abuse, the environment, tradition, tribes, hunting and gathering societies of the past and present)? Do the stereotypical ways in which Indigenous people may be religiously, culturally and behaviourally different receive more attention than their similarities or more than ethnic and racial inequalities in past and present-day Canadian society? Do authors mention discrimination and racism in their own institutions or explicitly discuss racist traditions in their field of study? Do they mention the resistance Indigenous groups have themselves been involved in (rather than merely the work of benevolent whites)? In other words, what topics are included, what are excluded/occluded, and more importantly, what do these specific inclusions and exclusions *allow to happen* in the discussion on Indigenous issues?



5) Relations between participants and Native people in the interviews - that is, between the author and those peoples being discussed, written about or commented on:

Have the insights and experiences of Indigenous scholars, writers, and other minorities been quoted or referred to? If so, are they scholars who are particularly popular to white scholars? Do they take a position that is more palatable to whites?

6) Possible cognitive processes, strategies, knowledge and belief structures of production, reproduction, comprehension and learning:

What can be inferred about the author's beliefs from what he/she has said? What do the writers appear to believe about Indigenous people? Why are the beliefs being propagated by white writers relating to Indigenous people important?

As van Dijk (1993) has pointed out, racism is not merely a "language or communication problem" (13). Racism manifests itself in many non-discursive practices and structures, such as discrimination and/or exploitation in education, employment, housing, health care and social services, or in overt acts of physical aggression. However, racism also manifests itself in discourse and communication, often in relation to other social practices of oppression and exclusion. In addition, according to van Dijk (1993), the social cognitions that underlie these practices are largely shaped through discursive communication within the dominant white group. Therefore, even though discourse is not the *only* form of racist practice, it nevertheless plays a substantial role "in the societal reproduction of the basic mechanisms of most other racist practices" (13). Thus, it is crucial that I use a discourse analytical approach to informally examine the words, thoughts and ideas of white participants in this study in order to determine whether the predominant discourse used to study Indigenous issues is primarily one of anti-subordination, or rather, one emphasizing difference, and the implications of using either of these approaches. I will now explain how I chose to present the data I analysed.

### Presentation of the Data

The data collected in this study was assembled into two major themes that emerged during the interviews. The themes were not only connected to one another but merged at times so that the physical separation between them was not a perfectly distinct one. Rather than use pre-determined categories into which to fit the information gathered in this study, I allowed the material that surfaced during my meetings with participants to determine the categories I used. In this way, I did not assume that participants would cover certain topics more extensively than others. As participants expanded on certain topics, this was noted, leading to the creation of themes. Using this method of data collection allows for participants to reflect to a greater degree on issues of most importance and relevance to them personally. In addition, it allows one to see the emergence of common thoughts and ideas expressed by participants as a group. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain the importance of this method of analyzing raw data:

Working with borrowed categories is more difficult since they are harder to find, fewer in number, and not as rich; since in the long run they may not be relevant, and are not exactly designed for the purpose, they must be respecified. In short, our focus on the emergence of categories solves the problems of fit, relevance, forcing, and richness. An effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas. Similarities and convergences with the literature can be established after the analytic core of categories has emerged. (37)

I took the above approach with respect to the present study. My intent was to explore various areas of the participants' thoughts and ideas and create categories according to what emerged in my interviews with them rather than force information into pre-determined themes or sections.

### Summary

It was the intent of this section to concentrate on aspects of the current study methodologically. I began by situating this current body of knowledge within present-day Canadian society in an effort to demonstrate the multiple forces impacting upon Native people in areas such as land issues. As we saw in chapter one, Native

people are significantly marginalized compared to their Euro-Canadian counterparts in areas such as the publishing industry. In the above section, I attempted to demonstrate that this occurs as a result of the contemporary racist policies and procedures of a greater nation-state that directly relate to access to land and resources. In this section, I also situated myself and identified my own complicity in the oppression of First Nations people. Then, I specifically explored the methodology of this study: how I proceeded to conduct it, the ethical concerns I had in relation to it, and who I included as part of the study. I introduced the participants: Kate, Ed, Mark, Ron, Helen, and Alex, who are Euro-Canadian scholars, film-makers, and journalists. All six produce knowledge on Native issues, and have all written on the subject. In the final two parts of this section, I outlined how I proceeded to analyse and present the data I collected for the study. I will now proceed to insert this thesis into a larger theoretical framework which specifically deals with racism, anti-racism and difference.

#### Introduction to the Theoretical Framework

In this study, as I discuss outsider research, I will draw primarily from the theories of Goldberg (1993) and van Dijk (1993) to define racisms; Morrison (1992), duCille (1994), Monture-Angus (1995), Razack (1994) and Said (1979, 1989) to understand the use of cultural difference in contemporary Western society; and Dei (1995) and Frankenberg (1993) on anti-racism, in an effort to establish a broader discursive framework into which this current work may be inserted. I will begin by identifying the anti-racist approach to be utilized in the current research project. Next, I will examine the concepts of race and racism and the implications of these in relation to power and dominance. Finally, I will proceed to outline more thoroughly, the theoretical notions of modern racism within a contemporary (post)colonial and (post)modern context. More specifically, I explore how a discourse of difference rather than one of anti-racism informs much work done by privileged members of society on marginalized groups, and the implications of this. To illustrate, I will trace the importance of race and difference in African-Americanism (Morrison, 1992), the challenges facing African-American and Aboriginal women in scholarship (duCille, 1994 and Monture-Angus, 1995), cultural difference and how it is used in sexual

assault judicial cases involving Aboriginal people in Canada (Razack, 1994), and Orientalism (Said, 1979, 1989) in an effort to describe the broader discursive framework which informs the current work. Let us begin with a look at the anti-racist approach I intend to use in this study.

### Attempting an Anti-Racist Endeavour

Dei (1995) maintains that an anti-racist political project which

challenges definitions of what is valid knowledge, and how such knowledge should be produced and distributed, both nationally and internationally, is oppositional to established hegemonic social, economic, and political interests and forces. (181)

He states that research projects that call into question established hegemonic systems and processes of control through their examination of knowledge - how it is organized, how it is produced, how it is managed, and how it is distributed are both useful and necessary. An anti-racist project ultimately questions the oppressive structures which order the knowledge production within society - privileging knowledge produced by members of dominant groups while silencing or discounting the knowledge produced and distributed by those belonging to marginalized groups.

In defining an anti-racist approach to combatting racism, Dei (1995) establishes anti-racism as “an action-oriented educational strategy for institutional and systemic change which serves to address issues of racism and interlocking systems of social oppression” (195). He states that anti-racism “acknowledges the reality of racism and other forms of social oppression (class, sexual orientation, gender oppression),” and just as importantly, acknowledges “the potential for change” (180). Furthermore, Dei states that

Anti-racism moves *beyond* [an] acknowledgement of the material conditions that structure societal inequality [in order] to question White power and privilege and its accompanying rationale for dominance... [Anti-racism] questions the marginalization of certain voices in society and the delegitimation of the knowledge and experience of subordinate groups... (180).

It is within such an anti-racist discursive framework that I wish to position the current thesis. I intend to question White power and privilege by examining the thoughts and arguments made by non-Native knowledge producers

in an attempt to trace how the domination of marginalized groups within society continues. In addition, I wish to demonstrate the ways in which the discourse of First Nations people is allocated a subordinate position within Canadian society.

Ruth Frankenberg, in *white women, race matters The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993) argues that race shapes white women's lives (1). In her extensive study of white women in the U.S. during the mid-eighties, Frankenberg examines and illustrates how what she calls "whiteness," structures the lives of the women she interviewed (1). Frankenberg defines whiteness as a location of structural advantage or race privilege, a "standpoint," from which white people look at themselves, others and society, and a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (1). She states that examining the construction of whiteness is important and useful since it may help lead away from 'old' discursive elements into 'new' strategies (242). As she argues,

we need to displace the colonial construction of whiteness as an 'empty' cultural space, in part by refiguring it as constructed and dominant rather than as norm... Analysis of the place of whiteness in the racial order can and should be, rather than an end in itself, only one part of a much broader process of social change levelled both at the material relations of race and at discursive repertoires. It is not, in any case, realistic or meaningful to reconceptualize whiteness outside of racial domination when, in practical terms, whiteness still confers race privilege. (243)

In this thesis, I intend to look at the role of whiteness and racism within colonial and postcolonial contexts to trace how it has impacted upon and informed various forms of knowledge production by dominant groups on marginalized individuals in society. It is hoped that through an interrogation of racist knowledge, racialized knowledge distribution and white knowledge producers themselves - elements that influence, inform and structure colonial and post-colonial societies which have previously gone unquestioned in various ways - this project will somehow contribute to a more equitable society. Thus, it is hoped that this current endeavour is considered to be an anti-racist one.

### Defining Racism

The importance of race in the orderings of society throughout the ages and still today is central to Goldberg's work *Racist Culture: philosophy and the politics of meaning* (1993). Goldberg states that in modernity, race, in itself, is irrelevant, and yet, all is race (6). That is, race is a constitutive feature of modernity, and is responsible for "ordering conceptions of self and other," as well as "sociopolitical membership and exclusion" (148). Through framing concepts of self and other, of membership and exclusion, race has "identified exploitable individuals and populations for subjection, and... has been used to rationalize and legitimate domination, subjugation, even extermination" of these so-called "other" individuals and populations (148). Furthermore, according to Goldberg, concepts of race have informed knowledge production in the past and continue to do so through reinvigorating racialized categories or subtly launching new ones so that certain populations can be exploited (149).

Notwithstanding the constitutive role of race, the beginning point of liberal thought is that all human beings are equal. I examine ways in which the outsider research of non-Natives on Native peoples occurs within a racist society which has identified exploitable individuals and those who profit from the subjugation or even extermination of those they write about but which functions officially according to a notion of equality. What is particularly relevant, insightful, even disturbing about Goldberg's definition of race is that the ways in which race is used or expressed by the dominant society to subjugate non-white others are forever-changing. New ways of maintaining racial hierarchies emerge. The result is that the same populations that were exploited in centuries past continue to be oppressed, but the new forms of their oppression are naturalized. I shall examine this phenomenon further in this chapter as I look at the discourse of "cultural difference," and how it is used to justify the marginalization of Native people and people of colour in Canada and the United States today.

In a society structured by racial inequalities, racism is a group rather than an individual phenomenon. As Teun van Dijk explains, the privileges and interests of the white *group's* members are protected through manifestations of racism. Thus, "whites who have ethnic prejudices or engage in discrimination... do so as group

members” (20-21). Moreover, they do so to protect the resources on which their white group power rests, which are socioeconomic as well as cultural and ideological resources - defined in terms of status, privileges, income, and access to better jobs, better housing, or better education (21). Using van Dijk’s theoretical framework, manifestations of racism are not tied to individual personality structures, but rather to social and cultural norms, values, or ideologies of dominant groups (20). Individuals and their discourses may not always appear racist at all - they may even exhibit tolerant or humanitarian values. Meanwhile, these same individuals, when they are employed or are rewarded by elite power structures which are founded upon racist ideologies, sustain these structures. Van Dijk reminds us, also, that “racism does not consist of only white supremacist ideologies of race, or only of aggressive overt or blatant discriminatory acts” (5). These are examples of racism that are picked up on and most often referred to in mainstream conversations, the media, and in much of the social sciences. However, in addition to these forms of racism, there are

the everyday, mundane, negative opinions, attitudes, and ideologies and the seemingly subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities, namely, those social cognitions and social acts, processes, structures, or institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to the dominance of the white group and the subordinate position of minorities [or Indigenous peoples]. (5)

In this way, van Dijk’s views on racism and the everyday significance and influence of it parallels those of Philomena Essed, who has looked extensively at the phenomenon of everyday racism in an effort to better understand it (Essed, 1991). Everyday racism does not necessarily get played out in white supremacist acts of violence. It is present in the everyday workings of society and in the sometimes subtle ways that societal institutions and processes maintain the subordination of minorities. When we read “minorities” in van Dijk’s and Essed’s work, it is important to include Indigenous peoples in this definition, since they also experience much racism and domination in society by the white group and yet do not usually consider themselves to be minorities.

Since Van Dijk argues that it is no longer blatantly racist ideas of small extremist parties on the Right (however serious their attitudes and practices may be) that make up the mainstream of scholarly research, he finds

it less relevant to focus on the obviously racist forms of modern scholarship or pseudo-scholarship. Instead, van Dijk is interested, as we are

in the respectable mainstream, in the ideas that are widely accepted, that is in the contemporary consensus regarding ethnic relations and minorities. Here we find opinions and ideologies that seem acceptable if not even liberal and mostly far from what is commonly called racist. The more subtle and indirectly ethnocentrist ideology of such contemporary scholarship needs the more sophisticated approach of discourse analysis, combined with a more critical look at relations of ethnic dominance as it defines intergroup relations in Western societies today. (164).

For this reason, as pointed out in the last section, van Dijk's critical work focuses primarily on the more subtle discursive dimensions of modern elite racism (1993). It is using such a critical theoretical and discursive framework that I have attempted to analyse the racist knowledge production and views of non-Natives in this study, all of whom engage in the production of knowledge at key sites: the university, the media, and film.

Since we are investigating the impact of the knowledge production and beliefs of non-Native elites such as writers, scholars, film-makers and journalists within Canadian society, it is important to analyse how these elites see racism and how they enact it. Van Dijk's definition of elites in society is particularly relevant here. He defines elites as "white politicians, philosophers, historians, social scientists, psychologists, journalists, writers, the military, the clergy, [and] managers" within Western society (1993: x). Thus, the participants included in my own study are considered to be elites according to van Dijk's definition.

Van Dijk notes that even though it might appear, on the surface, that most scholars only have relative power in their academic domain of teaching and research, further analysis shows that in present-day societies the indirect influence and power of scholars are, in actuality, tremendous (1993). That is, their ideologies, students, research, results, reports, and advice play a fundamental role in technological advances and the management of corporations and the State, the management of social and political affairs, and an increasingly powerful role in the support of other elites such as politicians, corporate managers, bureaucrats, and the media (Aronowitz, 1988; Bourdieu, 1984, 1989 as in van Dijk, 1993). Scholars, as producers, managers and brokers of knowledge within society are among the most prominent symbolic elites of contemporary society.



The findings of van Dijk's extensive study of the knowledge production of white elites such as scholars, journalists, writers, and film-makers within modern society illustrate the contours of elite racism. The dominance of elites in their re-enactment of racism is a direct result of the great influence they have through what they say, write and do (or do not do) about manifestations of racism within society, as van Dijk explains:

Many of both the subtly and the blatantly racist events that define the system of everyday racism are enacted, controlled, or condoned by white elites, that is, by leading politicians, professors, editors, judges, officials, bureaucrats, and managers. If whites are not themselves actively involved in these modern forms of segregation, exclusion, aggression, inferiorization, or marginalization, then their involvement in the problem of racism consists in their passivity, their acquiescence, their ignorance, and their indifference regarding ethnic or racial inequality... Much elite text and talk about minorities may occasionally seem to express tolerance, understanding, acceptance, or humanitarian world views, although such discourse is contradicted by a situation of structured inequality largely *caused or condoned* by these elites. (6) (emphasis my own)

The ideas presented here are particularly important. What van Dijk states are two crucial things about elites within society. One is that even when elites are not actively involved in modern forms of racism, such as the segregation, exclusion, aggression, inferiorization, or marginalization of minorities such as Native people, then their involvement in the problem of racism and racial inequality is evident through their passivity, their ignorance, and their indifference towards it. In fact, and this is van Dijk's second point - much of what elites write and say about minorities may occasionally seem to express tolerance, understanding, acceptance, or humanitarian world views. At the same time, however, such discourse occurs within a situation of structured inequality largely *caused or condoned* by these elites in this way, and therefore, what they say directly conflicts with how they live and what they really are all about (6).

Perhaps the most important element of van Dijk's study is his examination of how these elites see racism and themselves in contemporary society. Most elites, according to van Dijk's study, understand racism as only the overt forms of racism (ie., the explicitly, intentionally, or blatantly racist ideologies and practices of the extreme right) and perceive themselves to be somehow above or disassociated with such racist acts. Conveniently, their definition of racism includes everyone *but themselves* as part of the problem and in this way,

modern forms of racism that they enact are denied. Van Dijk writes that when their interests are challenged, however, as in the domain of ethnic affairs,

such elites will quickly forget the norms of tolerance and the values of equality that they supposedly espoused. This is not only true for politicians or corporate managers, but also for the cultural or symbolic elites, for example, in education, scholarship, the arts, and the media. (8)

The ways in which this occurs in the current study with non-Native elites will be of central importance.

The power of elites is primarily defined by their privileged access to various forms of public discourse to which minorities are, for the most part, denied. Various forms of public discourse used by elites, such as reports, conference papers, documentary films, and books are used to subtly control the consensus that sustains white, European dominance over ethnic minorities (11). Van Dijk writes since most children and adults will learn about other ethnic and Indigenous groups or Third World peoples first and sometimes only through the media, through textbooks, through scholarship and through politics, their knowledge acquisition is greatly influenced by such forms of elite-controlled discourse and communication (11).

### Modern Racism: Using a Discourse of Difference

As we have seen, one of the most important features of modern-day racism is the way in which it is often denied or assumed to have disappeared even as it “orders social formations anew” (Goldberg, 1993: 6). Goldberg (1993) states that the denial of racism in contemporary society can be seen most readily in the celebration of multicultural diversity, which continues to simultaneously rationalize and mask “the hegemonic control of difference, access, and prevailing power” (7). That is, although out-dated or traditional definitions of racism more or less presuppose the inherent superiority of the white race, current, more sophisticated forms of racism, emphasize the cultural difference of other groups (Barker, 1981 in Van Dijk, 1993: 23). In accordance with this, George Dei (1995) has remarked that the current time in Canada is “an era marked by cultural fragmentation and a celebration of difference” (194), while Toni Morrison (1992), in an American context, has noted that racial difference provides a huge material and financial pay out in the process of organizing, separating, and

consolidating identity along culturally valuable lines of interest (39). Said (1979, 1989), Razack (1994), Morrison (1992), duCille (1994) and Monture-Angus (1995) are some scholars among many who have addressed the various ways in which racism gets taken up as cultural and racial difference in contemporary society and presents challenges to those subjugated as a result of such a racist discourse. I shall now examine the ways in which they have done so.

### Africanism

Toni Morrison has investigated notions of race and knowledge production by tracing what happens when white writers work in a highly and historically racialized society. More specifically, Morrison notes how a Black, African “other” has informed much of the American literature written and political policies enacted by whites. She investigates notions of race, knowledge production, and the discourse of difference using social, cultural, and historical levels of analysis. In her study, Morrison looks at what makes intellectual domination possible, how knowledge is transformed from invasion and conquest to revelation and choice, what ignites and informs the literary imagination, what forces help establish the parameters of criticism, and how agendas in criticism have disguised themselves and impoverished the literature it studies (Morrison, 1992). Although Morrison’s work does not include a First Nations or Asian perspective, and is situated in the United States rather than Canada, it is relevant, nevertheless, to the current study as it provides valuable insight into the workings of culture, politics and the knowledge production of white writers and scholars on minorities.

In the work, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), Morrison begins within an American historical and literary context, looking particularly at how a Black, African “other” has informed much of the American literature written by whites. Morrison found that “the culture [and] the imaginative and historical terrain upon which early American writers journeyed is in large measure shaped by the presence of the racial other” (46). White Americans constructed the racial other so that they could see themselves a certain way. Morrison writes:

Deep within the word “American” is its association to race... American means white... The Africanist other became the means of thinking about body, mind, chaos, kindness and love; provided the occasion for exercises in the absence of restraint, the presence of restraint, the contemplation of freedom and of aggression; permitted opportunities for the exploration of ethics and morality, for meeting the obligations of the social contract, for bearing the cross of religion and following out the ramifications of power... It was not simply that [the] slave population had a distinction color; it was that this color meant something. (48, 49)

Thus, White American people used Blacks to think about and see themselves. The colour of Black African Americans came to identify them as an exploitable population in white, dominant society. This was then reflected in the literature produced by White Americans. In much the same way, the term “Canadian,” in many ways, means white in Canada. Terms like Euro-Canadian or White Canadian are seldom used. For example, in the media, when someone is white, this is often treated as a neutral category as if “true” Canadians are those people whose skin is white. This concept is also reflected in much Euro-Canadian literature, where Aboriginal people have served as tools to re-centre the whiteness of the hero. It is also evident in the federal and provincial political policies of the Canadian nation-state.

At the same time, however, Morrison states that “in matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse” (9). She adds that the dominant group’s habit of ignoring race is understood to be “a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture” (9). However, Morrison notes the inherent dangers in the continued dismissal of the relevance of race informing of white American literary mind, and even more importantly, states that the removal of the literary mind from political contexts has negative repercussions. She writes that “excising the political from the life of the mind is a sacrifice that has proven costly... A criticism that needs to insist that literature is not only “universal” but also “race-free” risks lobotomizing that literature, and diminishes both the art and the artist” (12). Furthermore, Morrison argues that statements made that indicate the “meaninglessness of race to the U.S. identity, are themselves full of meaning,” and that the act of enforcing racelessness in literary discourse and elsewhere is in itself a racial act, which has a direct impact on political decision-making (46). According to Morrison, the world does not become raceless or will not become unracialized by assertion” (46). Rather, the attempt to do so is a political act by white writers meant to oppress.

Morrison's work is pertinent as it examines the marked silence around issues involving race and literary, political and social discourses. Her analysis can help us think about how the identity of white Canadians was and continues to be founded up the identity of First Nations people in Canada - the racial Other in this context. As we will see in the next two sections, race is not only an important feature of American literature, it is also extremely relevant in the experience of First Nations and African American woman scholars, like Ann duCille and Patricia Monture-Angus.

### African-American Women in Scholarship

"I once introduced myself at a poetry reading in this way - a Caucasianist. A stab at the constant imposition of the white Western expert on the rest of the world's peoples." (Philip, 1992: 69)

Ann duCille, in "The Occult of True Black Womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist Studies" (1994), has investigated the ways in which African American women and their literature are recently being taken up in academe, and the impact that this has had on her as an African American feminist scholar. In the 1990s, according to duCille, the principal sites of the exploitation of the black female body are not only the cabaret, the speakeasy, the music video, or the glamour magazine. Black women are also exploited in the academy, the publishing industry, and the intellectual community (592). As one can well imagine, such exploitation presents particular problems for African American women in general, but it has a particular impact on those who are scholars themselves.

Although duCille's work, like Morrison's, occurs within an American context and refers to African Americans, it is relevant to the current thesis because it provides insight into what may occur or is occurring in Canada as Native women's literature and studies become increasingly popular as an academic pursuit. As Morrison has mentioned, literature cannot be separated from political and historical realities. Therefore, even though the American situation involving Black women scholars is obviously not parallel to the Canadian situation involving First Nations women scholars, it provides insight into the dynamics between those minorities being

studied, the outsiders from dominant society studying them, and those caught in the middle, who belong to both worlds. In this way, then, duCille's reflections are useful in understanding what actually occurs when this takes place.

"Within and around the modern academy," writes duCille, "racial and gender alterity has become a hot commodity that has claimed black women as its principal signifier" (591). As a Black Feminist scholar herself, duCille writes that the commodification of black women in the academy, both in literature and in history, has taken its toll on her. She writes:

I am alternately pleased, puzzled, and perturbed - bewitched, bothered and bewildered - by this, by the alterity that is perpetually thrust upon African American women, by the production of black women as infinitely deconstructable 'othered' matter. Why are black women always already Other? I wonder. To myself, of course, I am not Other; to me it is the white women and men so intent on theorizing my difference who are the Other. Why are they so interested in me and people who look like me (metaphorically speaking)? Why have we - black women - become the subjected subjects of so much contemporary scholarly investigation, the peasants under glass of intellectual inquiry in the 1990s? (591-2)

Here, duCille mentions the process of othering that occurs when she and other black women are studied by white scholars. She mentions that as subjects of scholarly investigation, Blacks have become "the peasants under glass of intellectual inquiry" (592). DuCille's thoughts on this othering are similar to Marcia Crosby's insights about how Aboriginal people have been studied in the Canadian academy. Crosby (1991) notes:

The Indian was neatly contained within the institutional glass case, carefully locked away as a repository for the unthinkable or unspeakable parts of those who created it. I began to understand that studying the Indian was rarely reciprocal. The academics get the M.A.s and the Ph.D.s - they are the ones whose prestige increases with their degrees in their own communities. Their research and publications, however, often only produce another Imaginary Indian. (287)

In this way, then, duCille's reflections on how Black women are studied in the U.S. are not entirely different from Crosby's insights about the studies of Native peoples by whites in Canadian society.

Although duCille notes that the attention given to Black women in scholarship is not altogether unpleasant, especially after the neglect of Black women in academe for generations, she notes that the reasons for this study are also not altogether commendable. Instead of acknowledging Black women's accomplishments

and contributions to American civilization, the overwhelming interest in black women seems to have centred around their difference as the most oppressed, most marginalized and most deviant group in a pluralistic society like the U.S. (592). Therefore, by virtue of their race and gender, Black women remain what she calls “the *Other*,” in postmodern areas such as “deconstruction, feminism, cultural studies, multiculturalism, and contemporary commodity culture” (592). Similarly, in a Canadian context, Aboriginal woman scholar Janice Acoose asks: “I often wonder why our very real contemporary lives as professors, doctors, lawyers, politicians, artists, university students, and nurturing responsible mothers are excluded from the pages of contemporary literary texts authored by many non-Indigenous writers” (1995: 52). DuCille notes that although there have been various contributions to Black feminist scholarship by those who have been neither Black nor female, she states:

The most important questions, I have begun to suspect, may not be about the essentialism and territoriality, the biology, sociology, or even the ideology about which we hear so much but, rather, about professionalism and disciplinarity; about cultural literacy and intellectual competence; about taking ourselves seriously and insisting that we be taken seriously not as objectified subjects in someone else’s histories - as native informants - but as critics and as scholars reading and writing our own literature and history. (603)

DuCille finds the study of Black women in the academy especially problematic because there is growing evidence that suggests the presence of a kind of “colour line” and “intellectual passing” with respect to who gets to speak for whom (600) and who is listened to. More specifically, she notes that Black culture seems to be “more easily intellectualized (and canonized) when transferred from the danger of lived black experience to the safety of white metaphor, when you can have that ‘signifying black difference’ without the ‘difference of significant blackness’” (600). As evidence of this colour line, duCille refers to a text by a white feminist scholar named Gerda Lerner, who stated in her text that she was “allowing black women to speak” (601). To this, duCille responds in saying that “black women had been speaking for themselves and on behalf of each other long before Gerda Lerner endeavoured ‘to let’ them do so” (601). Because of statements like Lerner’s referring to white scholars “allowing” Black women to speak, duCille notes that the question of who speaks for her or who can write what

she refers to as her “sacred text” is a very emotionally and politically charged issue as well as an enduring and controversial one (601).

DuCille takes careful note not only of who speaks for whom, but who gets heard and who receives credit for ground-breaking work done in such fields as Afro-American women’s literature. She suggests that a recent explosion of interest in the lives and literature of black women among male scholars and white feminists, for example, has left whites once again reaping the rewards of black women critics of the 1970s who plowed the neglected field of Afro-American women’s literature when such an act was academically dangerous (Christian et al. 1990, 61 in duCille, 1994: 601). In cases like these when White privileged academics become major commentators on this literature and neglect the work done before them, they display a bad case of “historical amnesia” which she states seems to be a feature of American society in general, as well as its intellectual life (Christian et al. 1990, 61 in duCille, 1994: 601).

#### Aboriginal Women in the Canadian Academy

The obstacles Aboriginal woman scholars in Canada face have been explored by several of the Aboriginal scholars themselves - LaRocque, Acoose, Monture-Angus and Armstrong, among them. Emma LaRocque, for example, published an article for the Aboriginal Women’s Symposium from the University of Lethbridge entitled “The Colonization of a Native Woman Scholar.” In reference to the article, she writes, “How else can one put these things? I am a writer, a poet, a historian, I must tell about these things, about all the abnormal ‘obstacles’ we, the Natives, face in our land. Intellectual colonization cannot be spared” (LaRocque and Lutz, 1991: 190). According to LaRocque, Native writers have been creating new genres in Canadian English literature, but this fact has been largely missed by readers and critics (LaRocque, 1990: xviii). She writes that Native writers and intellectuals have been shunned by the mainstream public and by Euro-Canadian intellectuals, and thus, have been speaking primarily in a vacuum - unheard, if not ignored by the white, dominant society.



Patricia Monture-Angus in her work, *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (1995), has explored the challenges she faces as an Aboriginal woman scholar in Canada. She writes that the underrepresentation of subjugated group members within Canadian universities has particular consequences for the first few members of these groups who are given access to previously forbidden positions, and to a great degree, ironically, in those institutions that have a commitment to equity (56). Monture-Angus states that a great demand is placed on Aboriginal and other scholars of colour who must do incredible amounts of work in addition to scholarly duties simply because they are not from a dominant, white group. These include sitting on countless committees, being available to all students, staff and professors personally and professionally, and speaking as an expert on all things relating to their ethnic or cultural background. Such demands on these few professors, writes Monture-Angus, “sends our quality of life into an irreversible tailspin” (56).

Monture-Angus writes that naively, she used to believe that even as an Aboriginal woman, she would be accepted by white people as an equal once she had enough letters after her name. However, this did not happen. Instead, she writes, “As I climbed that ladder of success I never understood that I could not climb to a safer place. I now understand that the ladder I was climbing was not my ladder and it cannot ever take me to a safe place. The ladder, the higher I climbed, led to the source of my oppression” (69). Monture-Angus then realized it was much more than academic achievements that separated her from the others. She writes that it was always amazing to her that she ended up in the academy in Kingston rather than the penitentiary down the road from her university where many Native women are institutionalized, being quick to add that the world of academe is not in any way more superior than the street-life from which she escaped. This being the case, however, Monture-Angus writes that she does not share a common personal history or a common view of the world with her non-Aboriginal colleagues. Even though they may often choose not to recognize that this is the case, this does not change the reality of her situation (69). As an Aboriginal woman, Monture-Angus knows that she is an outsider to the academic world in which she works, and that this experience of being an outsider is intensified by her attempt

to maintain herself within competitive, hierarchical structures and relationships. All the while, non-Natives around her are employed to study her and her people:

The great majority of Aboriginal law courses are offered by non-Aboriginal scholars who have developed an expertise in the area of Aboriginal rights as they are understood in Canadian law. I have often wondered how women professors would respond to the suggestion that men can, could, and should teach courses about law and feminism. It is so apparent that this would create quite a controversy. But when non-Aboriginal people teach courses on Aboriginal people and how Canadian law is applied to our lives, this is somehow an unrecognizable controversy. This speaks volumes to the power that women have secured within law faculties or more importantly the degree that Aboriginal people have not. (60)

Further, writes Monture-Angus, “curricula at all levels of education are grounded within a White, patriarchal, middle-class system of values. This reflects the understanding that educational philosophy was and still remains grounded in the idealism of the ‘missionary’ approach. This value system bears little or no relation to local Aboriginal concerns” (98).

Monture-Angus was an undergraduate at the University of Western Ontario. She describes her experience as an Aboriginal student taking a general survey, anthropology course on the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. Until some Aboriginal students in the class protested, all of the materials presented in the course were written by non-Native people. In addition, all of the guest speakers were non-Aboriginal people. When the students confronted the non-Native professor about their concerns, she told them that she had no access to materials other than the ones she had presented. Writes Monture-Angus, “this thin excuse (which seems to be closely related to arguments about academic freedom) completely missed the point being made. The offering of only non-Aboriginal authorities delegitimized Aboriginal ways of knowing and being. Even after expressing our concerns we were excluded, denied and marginalized” (61)

After becoming a professor herself, Monture-Angus’ problems with the academic curriculum (or the lack thereof) did not disappear. When she attempted to make materials inclusive of the Aboriginal perspective, especially for subjects that deal directly with Aboriginal law, for example, this approach usually backfired on her and the Aboriginal students in her class. Non-Native students became angry at Monture-Angus for “forcing them

to study materials that they [felt were] irrelevant,” and took out their hostility on the Aboriginal students in the class, who were “not only more accessible but they also [had] little power within the institutional hierarchy” (63). This type of reaction by non-Native students in Monture-Angus’s classes reflects the racist dominant view that the Aboriginal population of the school is seen “as one conglomerate,” as “that single Aboriginal ‘thing’ over there,” rather than as individuals (63). This being the case, Monture-Angus writes that it is always difficult for her to decide whether it is better to include or exclude Aboriginal perspectives in her teaching to the dominant group, especially when an Aboriginal law course on the same topic is being taught by a non-Native consecutively (63). She writes:

I knew from experience that when I am teaching one section of a course and a non-Aboriginal person teaches another section, the non-Aboriginal teacher and class becomes the accepted norm. I am expected to conform to that norm. If I do not, then the way I am teaching is seen as inferior. This is true (amazing as it seems) even when the substance of the course is Aboriginal people. (61)

Thus, white university students perceive the non-Native professor to be less biased and more objective, neutral and professional than the Aboriginal professor, even when the course is technically an Aboriginal one.

Patricia Monture-Angus’s experiences within the Euro-Canadian university structure illustrate the degree to which the dominance of Aboriginal students and scholars gets played out materially, socially, personally and professionally. In her attempt to change and resist such a structure, Monture-Angus stresses the importance of all races beginning to collectively define social relations, institutions, and values in an inclusive as opposed to exclusive way (27). White scholars must recognize their complicity and cease their habitual “clinging to the processes which establish traditional power” (27) because this is not only dangerous, but anti-democratic. Thus, Monture-Angus’s purpose as an Aboriginal scholar in Canada is to challenge the ways in which these scholars think and process so that inclusive and just legal and educational institutions can be created within society (27).

### Cultural Difference and Sexual Assault Judicial Cases in Canada

Directly along the lines of how a racist discourse of culture and difference continues to inform other social discourses, Razack (1994) has studied the implications of using notions of cultural difference outside of a context of oppression and domination in judicial cases involving Canadian Native peoples and sexual assault. In the article, "What Is to Be Gained by Looking White People in the Eye? Culture Race, and Gender in Cases of Sexual Violence," Razack (1994) writes:

It continues to be primarily white male judges and lawyers with little or no knowledge of history or anthropology who interpret Aboriginal culture and its relevance to the court. Wrapped in a cloak of sensitivity to cultural differences and recognition of the consequences of colonization, the anthropologizing of sexual assault continues to have gendered overtones and *to maintain white supremacy as securely as in days of more overt racism and sexism.* ( 903) (emphasis added)

According to Razack, when elites who are primarily white and primarily male interpret Aboriginal culture outside of historical and anthropological contexts of white domination in Canadian court rooms, culture soon becomes the discursive framework used to preempt and to justify both racism and sexism (897).

Not only are cultural and ethnic differences spoken of to a much greater extent than race and class exploitation and oppression (896), but the notion of culture is often taken to mean "values, beliefs, knowledge, and customs that exist in a timeless and unchangeable vacuum outside of patriarchy, racism, imperialism, and colonialism" (869). In examining the importance and influence of culture and difference in the contemporary workings of society, Razack (1994) warns against the dangers of accepting or propagating a belief that culture is merely something that exists in a timeless vacuum (869). As soon as culture is placed into this "timeless and unchangeable vacuum," she states, the effect is that the seriousness of oppression is "reduced to a symbolic construction in which there are no real live oppressors who benefit materially and no real oppressed people to liberate" (Bittan and Maynard 1984: 19; as cited in Razack, 1994: 898).

The process of concentrating on the cultural differences of minorities and First Nations people rather than interrogating the continued white domination of marginalized groups within society is one which Razack refers to as the culturalization of racism (897). The culturalization of racism occurs in contemporary Canadian society

when cultural and ethnic differences are consistently taken up to a greater degree than issues involving race, class exploitation and oppression. Razack writes that it is in this way that “cultural differences are used to explain oppression; if these differences could somehow be taken into account, oppression would disappear” (897, 898). The danger of this approach, however, is that the question of domination which group members profit from it once again gets left out of the picture when one looks only at the cultural differences of marginalized groups like Aboriginal people. Furthermore, the subjugation of Aboriginal people is again neglected in a discussion of group cultural difference.

Instead of explaining away differences in this manner, Razack writes that it is important to examine the ways in which culturalized racism gets played out within a hegemonic society like Canada. In doing this, one is better able to see and understand a major feature of how modern racism works: acting out racism primarily covertly through a seemingly innocent discussion of difference rather than overtly through blatantly racist acts. In this way, Razack’s (1994) discussion on modern forms of racism closely parallels that of van Dijk (1993), Lauren (1988) and Ryan (1990). For example, Razack (1994) states that “in its modern form, overt racism, which rests on the notion of biologically based inferiority, coexists with a more covert practice of domination encoded in the assumption of cultural or acquired inferiority” (896), while Lauren (1988) and Ryan (1990) state that:

In more respectable, mainstream thinking where white supremacy has largely been declared obsolete... we find similar ideological orientations, formulated in the less crude terms of “cultural difference,” which is the seemingly neutral facade of what is usually meant: *cultural incompatibility if not white/Western superiority*. International politics and diplomacy, as well as national ethnic policies are thus imbued with ideological and cultural frameworks of which the elements continue to be supplied by academics. (Lauren, 1988; S. Ryan, 1990 as cited in van Dijk, 1993: 163) (emphasis my own)

Razack’s interrogation of racism, however, differs from Lauren, Ryan and van Dijk’s in that it is informed by a series of interlocking oppressions, including notions of gender and class and how they are relevant to an understanding of racism, especially with specific reference to sexual assault in the First Nations context. Thus, Razack’s work is most invaluable when attempting to trace the implications of using the currently dominant

discourse of culture and difference versus an effectively anti-racist one which examines oppression, dominance, and privilege in sexual assault cases involving First Nations men and women in Canadian courtrooms.

### Orientalism

Orientalism is a mode of discourse that is used by Western society to express and represent the Orient, both culturally as well as ideologically for material gain. It is comprised of vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, bureaucracies and institutions that support a colonial approach to study of the Other (Said, 1979: 2). Although, on the surface, it may seem irrelevant to discuss the prolific study of the Orient in relation to the study of First Nations people in Canada, the two are actually linked in several ways.

Said's work, *Orientalism* (1979), shows how European culture increased tremendously in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient using the East "as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3). Without the examination of Orientalism as a discourse, "one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient" (3). However, Orientalism does not only inform us of how European culture was able to produce and manage knowledge about the Orient, it also indicates what European culture proceeded to do to other societies it colonized, including Native peoples in North America.

Orientalism is several things, all of which are interdependent on one another. One is that Orientalism is an academic doctrine, involving the teaching, writing about, or researching of the Orient by anthropologists, sociologist, historians, or philologists. This, according to Said, is the one definition of Orientalism that is most readily accepted (2). However, Orientalism is much more than just another academic doctrine. It is an entire style of thought, which is primarily based upon a clear distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident' and a reflection between the two based on unequal power, domination, and varying degrees of hegemony (5). It is out of such a relationship of unequal power coupled with a fascination with the East that a very large mass of white writers, including poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and administrators,

produced an extensive body of knowledge on the East. These writers constructed an accepted grid through which almost all knowledge about the East was filtered into Western consciousness and culture (6). The knowledge includes elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' and destiny (3). In effect, these knowledge producers have been dealing with the Orient not only by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, or describing it, but also by teaching it, settling it, and ruling over it ( 2, 3). In addition, and perhaps most important to note is that through such extensive knowledge production on the Orient, Orientalism manifested itself into a powerful corporate structure with vast material resources and authority for white knowledge producers over the Orient, and as such, was involved in the dominating and restructuring of it (3).

Orientalism and the study of the East by the West is of particular importance to the current study as it reflects, in crucial ways, the outsider knowledge production related to extensive investments politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively into First Nations people in Canada by Euro-Canadians for the past five hundred years. In reflecting on the ways in which the Orient was and continues to be dominated by colonial expansion, we can note parallel endeavours within North America. As we have seen in Razack's work, Said states that "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without [examining] their force, or more precisely, their configurations of power" (5). Thus, it is not merely knowledge on the Orient that is to be studied, but the domination, hegemonic control and submission of the Other that are enabled through the production of this knowledge by Europeans.

Perhaps the most relevant and important point in Said's argument on Orientalism as it applied to the current thesis is that Orientalism is much more than "a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away" (6). Instead, Orientalism, as with any knowledge produced by a dominant group on a subjugated one, is a sign of European power over another. Knowledge produced, therefore, has very close ties to the enabling of hegemonic socio-economic and political institutions (6). Similarly, in a Canadian context, knowledge produced on Aboriginal people constitutes much more than Euro-Canadian

fantasies about these individuals, communities, and their cultures. Rather, non-Native knowledge production is a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment and in which the control of Aboriginal people has been a central goal. Using a basic structure based on a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans, the idea of European identity once again manifests itself as "a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7). Furthermore, according to Said, "the general liberal consensus that 'true knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not 'true knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced" (10).

Julie Emberley (1993), in taking up Said's *Orientalism* with reference to a Canadian context, explains how Europeans violated not only Eastern and 'Third World' peoples, but also Indigenous peoples around the globe. The West's ideologies of so-called civilization justified a mission of imperial expansion and colonial controls, so that the ruling nation could set about to dominant Indigenous peoples economically, politically, culturally, religiously, and legally. All the while, the subject position allotted to the Indigenous populations by the imperial nations was that of 'colonial other' (6). Thus, the imperialising Western epistemology responsible for "forging the 'Third Worlding' of countries in Africa, the Middle East, Latin American and Asia in order to legitimate the continued economic exploitation of these countries [known as post-colonialism]," also occurred in North America with respect to Aboriginal peoples (5). Native peoples face historically and socially-specific conditions, however, as they are forced to live as minorities on their own land within the structures of a dominant society that has colonized, exploited and oppressed them.

In reflecting on the ways in which the Orient was and continues to be dominated by colonial expansion, we can note parallel endeavours within North America. As we have seen in Razack's work, Said states that "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without [examining] their force, or more precisely, their configurations of power" (5). Thus, it is not merely knowledge on the Orient that is to be studied,



but the domination, hegemonic control and submission of the Other that are enabled through the production of this knowledge by Europeans.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that liberal modernity, through its insistence on progress from past forms of racism, blinds itself to contemporary forms of racist expressions that celebrate culture and difference, for example, but that do so within a racist culture with little or no benefit to oppressed groups of society (Goldberg, 1993: 7). As Homi Bhabha writes, “minorities are invited to keep their culture but enjoy no greater access to power and resources” (Bhabha, 1992: 232 as cited in Razack, 1994: 898). Thus, theoretical work that begins to “formulate the relationship between empire and culture” is necessary to create a rupture in or resistance to hegemonic structures (Said, 1993: 60). It is evident that van Dijk (1993), Said (1993), Goldberg (1993), Razack (1994), Morrison (1992) all agree on the great importance of including “the history of Western expansion, conquest, colonialism, and imperialism” in any anti-racist endeavour so that the concepts of culture, race, difference and contemporary white racism can be fully understood (van Dijk, 1993: 174).

The ways in which changing concepts of racial and cultural difference get taken up are particularly relevant to this thesis since, as we have seen, First Nations people and their culture, like African-Americans and Asians, are often constructed as different or foreign, leading to the enactment of policies that contribute to their on-going oppression. The above examples are particularly relevant to the current study, since they provide insight into how to identify modern forms of racism within contemporary Western society. More specifically, they provide the groundwork on which to examine the issue at hand - that of the discourse of difference which informs much outsider research on Native peoples in Canada.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Analysis and Presentation of the Data

#### Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, an emphasis on cultural difference often displaces past and present racial subordination. This chapter, which is divided into two main themes, continues to use such an argument. The first theme describes what a discourse of difference within the contexts of present-day Canadian society looks like, how it operates, and the implications of using this discourse, one of difference, versus using one of anti-racism. Section one begins with a look at the benefits participants cited for working with Native people, their culture and their communities - a major theme that emerged from my interviews with them. Next, the ways in which participants in this study view Native knowledge producers compared to non-Native writers, scholars and film-makers like themselves, are explored. Third, the participants' levels of awareness with respect to the racism and inequity present in contemporary Canadian society is examined.

I argue that participants find their work on 'Native issues' beneficial in ways that are often described using a colonial paradigm in which Aboriginal people, their culture and society serve as a resource for outsider researchers to tap into through personal contact with them. A continual emphasis on these differences allows the material gains of outsider research in this area to go unexamined, obscuring issues of privilege and unequal material relations between Euro-Canadian knowledge producers and those they study. In addition, such a focus aids in reproducing the overall structure where Native people are the 'object' of study to be known, examined, and enjoyed, while non-Native people remain the investigators and 'experts.' As a result, most participants do not see Native people as writers and scholars in and of themselves, and generally do not emphasize the importance of Aboriginal-centric writing. Instead, participants see the conversations and interactions they have with Aboriginal people in their communities of central importance. Furthermore, Native people are seen as

needing 'help' in telling their stories and experiences. It is argued that Euro-Canadian knowledge producers generally espouse such views because the existence of Aboriginal writers and scholars directly challenges the work they do as outsider researchers. That is, the presence of Native knowledge producers upsets the role white knowledge producers play in the imperialist paradigm in which white writers, scholars, journalists or film-makers are 'bridges' between the 'Native' and 'mainstream' cultures and societies, with Aboriginal people no longer simply 'native' informants for white 'experts.'

The second major section of this chapter presents the theme of responsibility and the outsider researcher. I investigate participants' views on the effects of outsider research, including their own work, and how the participants envision themselves and their roles as outsider researchers. I argue that although these six knowledge producers see some of the detrimental effects of outsider research, their views centre around the 'accuracy' of representation, rather than an overall system of dominance and subordination. Furthermore, they see themselves and their own work positively and not only justify but remain seemingly untroubled about the problematic work that they do in this area. Concluding remarks on the thesis are found at the end of this chapter.

### Theme One: A Discourse of Difference

#### The Benefits of Working with a "Different" Culture

I asked all six participants directly about the ways in which non-Natives themselves might benefit from their involvement with the Native movement/individuals/communities. I also asked if there might be any disadvantages to their work with Native issues for them. According to Ed, with respect to the benefits of outsider research, "there's something to be gained by Native people, and there's a heck of a lot to be gained by non-Natives." Seeing how non-Natives benefit from this exchange is common-sense in his view, because "in any interaction, if there's good will, there's increased understanding." Since the non-Native knowledge producers

I interviewed are all employed and seem to be living well above the poverty line,<sup>1</sup> I expected that some of the benefits mentioned by the participants might be related to the actual material rewards or prestige they receive for the work they do in this area. However, this was not the case. For most of the participants, the benefits mentioned nearly all dealt with how Native culture and exposure to Aboriginal peoples enhanced their lives as non-Natives. The ways in which they profit from this type of work financially or professionally was not explored by participants.

Kate, who travelled to Thailand many years ago before returning to Canada to work with Native people and immigrants, notes that she was always interested in working with people from other cultures. Near the beginning of the interview, she explains how working with people in other cultures “allows you to get to understand yourself” :

My reason for going to Thailand was I wanted to be outside of Canada and see it from outside looking in. Since then, working with immigrants and working with Native people have also been a way of looking in at the way in which life in my sort-of natural setting is organized... I mean it gives you different parameters for analysing your own culture. When you're inside your own culture it's like the fish in the water, you are not aware that it is there. But when you are in another culture, and you run into ways in which they do things differently from you, it makes you be analytical of how people do things, how it's possible to do things differently.

According to Kate, non-Native people could benefit from being involved with Native issues “in any way - from just personal friendship down to being very involved with [practical or political] projects.” Kate mentioned that when you “spend some time with Native people and watch them,” you can see a lot of how Native cultures do things. She points to story telling, for example, and how Native people teach each other by telling stories, and how “they don't get told in the end what the moral of the story is. They draw from the teaching at the level that's appropriate for them.” Kate explained how this difference makes it challenging for some Native people like a student she supervised who had to “spell” things out in a graduate thesis. This gave the student a double-problem

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<sup>1</sup> I did not specifically ask participants what their income was. However, I would believe that the participants, all of whom are employed, university-educated (three out of the six holding graduate degrees), Euro-Canadian professionals, earn more than the great majority of Native people in Canada. I would also think that the independent film-makers in the study might make considerably less than the tenured university professors and well-established journalists I interviewed, but are still living well above the poverty line.

to solve - “she wanted to express herself in a Native way and still had to jump through the academic hoops.” Kate stated that “it’s still almost always the case that Native people have to learn the white people’s way of doing it is order to break through those barriers,” but added: “Fortunately there’s plenty of people with that kind of capacity to do that.”

Kate stated that differences in the Native culture are also challenging to white people, who keep waiting, in the story-telling instance, for Native people to make themselves explicit and when they don’t, “you’re left to sort-of puzzle out what they’re telling you.” Kate stated: “If I’m going to train, I’m going to educate Native people, it’s not just a matter of just telling them that this is the way white people do it, and you’d better learn how to do that. It’s also to appreciate that they do things differently and I’d better learn how to do it their way, in the same way.” Kate gave other examples of how Native people are different:

Or another one is this business about chastising you through a third party. How it is that when you’ve broken some kind of rule, that rather than telling you to your face that you’ve been offensive, that they’ll get a third party to do that and it’s up to you to then sort-of negotiate how you fix that up. Or another one is to criticized by humour, which is, again, a way a lot of Native cultures do things. And, you know, I’ve been terribly hurt until I’ve realized what it was that happened. Or another thing I raised earlier was remember I mentioned that I had got bawled out for something or I got myself into a scrape, and that somebody had come and saved me but I wasn’t very sure. In one case I got saved in a situation that I was *very* frightened in. It was actually, sort-of a physical confrontation, and somebody came and saved me and at that point, I actually saw it happen, but normally, I wouldn’t have seen myself getting saved. Somebody would have just come in and sort-of handled this in a much more subtle way. But you’ve got to see that happen to you in some kind of way in order for you to then really appreciate what people say... are really saying, when they’re saying, “I’m going to talk to you through both sides at the same time.”

Kate stated that even if Native people are speaking English, their communication patterns are different, and if “people don’t get in there” and really see such things, experience them and be confused by them, they can never really learn.

Like the other participants, Kate, whom I interviewed in her own home, did not mention any material or financial benefits or prestige she gains as a result of her being a non-Native university professor involved with Native issues. Instead, Kate saw the enriching aspect of her involvement with “other” cultures and people “who

are culturally and experientially different” from her as a major benefit of her participation with Natives, and strongly and enthusiastically advocated this position for others:

Oh, absolutely everybody needs to be involved with people who are culturally and experientially different from them, and I happen to have chosen Native people or I don't know, sort-of, fate kind of chose it for me, but I think that anybody's life is impoverished if they don't have some kind of real contact, I don't mean superficial contact with people who are different from them in all kinds of different ways - you know - racially different, ethnically different, linguistically different, different in abilities - all that kind of stuff. Now, this is not to be negative about the kinds of qualities that Native people have - I mean, they've just got a fascinating, they have many fascinating ways of understanding the world and that sort of thing, as a group and then, of course, as individuals.

Kate sees Native people as very different from Euro-Canadians “in all kinds of different ways”- racially, ethnically, linguistically, and different in abilities - “and all that kind of stuff.” She states that there are many fascinating ways that Native people as a group and as individuals have of understanding the world that enhance her own life as a non-Native. Without them, she feels her own life and any else's would be “impoverished.”

Helen also states that she has benefitted from her involvement with Aboriginal people. The primary gift she has received from Native people is a spiritual one. She has learned to understand spirituality as different from religion. Native people gave her an understanding of what spirituality really means, which she states gives her “more grounding and more of a clear purpose.” The second benefit Helen explained for being involved with Native people paralleled one of Kate's. According to Helen, “You can learn a lot about your own society when you really start to take the time to explore and investigate the situation of Native people.” Being involved with Native people is beneficial, says Helen, “because it helps you to kind-of look into your own life and yourself and your own identity.” Like Kate, Helen uses Native society, culture, and people as a type of mirror in which to see and define her own self and her own society.

Helen also explains how she, before getting involved with Native people, saw how her own society had fallen, in many ways. She saw many broken up relationships by those who “just wanted to make money,” for example, and claims that it had occurred in her own life. She explains what she calls a “motivating force” for becoming involved with Native issues: “Before I got involved with Native people, I was challenging materialism,

and the greed of our society, and looking at relationships falling like bowling pins... so I was questioning my own society before I got involved in Native culture.” When asked about the disadvantages of working in this field, Helen stated: “The disadvantage is that you never come to terms with your own stuff because you’re always kind-of out there trying to be a White Knight or whatever. (Laughter) And you don’t ever figure out about what motivates you.”

Working as a reporter on Native issues gave Ron “some sort-of insight into a culture that’s very different from ours.” Non-Natives “can learn from Native people,” and Ron asserts that there is “something poignant” about seeing the way Native groups like the Inuit have had to adjust to tremendous change in a very short period of time. According to Ron, when one works in this field, one can also see how some Native groups have adapted “better” than others, and some have been able to retain their culture “better” and their language “better” than others. In addition, Ron says:

I just think it’s a fascinating area because you’re seeing... I mean the cliché in the North was the Inuit have gone from the Stone Age to the Space Age in a matter of 30 to 40 years, and it’s true. When you talk to, even, people who aren’t that much older than me, their childhood memories are of living on the land and dog-sledding everywhere and it’s a completely sort-of life that their own children, or, in that case because they marry so young, grandchildren, are living today.

Although he mentioned having “some mildly negative experiences with Inuit people,” in general Ron found the Inuit to be tremendously open, generous and patriotic, even “given some of the past experiences they’ve had with our government.” As he put it, “It’s not just with Native people, but the more exposure people have, non-Natives with, I don’t want to categorize them, but people of other cultures, I think the better off they are.” When explaining how this might enrich his own life, Ron stated that it provided him a view of a “different way of life” and “a different way of looking at things.” However, “not everybody has that opportunity of just getting to know some Native people to begin with. You can’t just sort-of walk up on the street and say, listen, I want to know you,” but “if you’re lucky enough, then you might get some insight that way.”

Mark states that as a non-Native knowledge producer, and as someone who has “always managed to get access” to Native communities, he has benefitted in many ways. Through his work with Native issues, Mark has

got to know people, seen parts of the country that are “off the beaten track” and “gotten into” communities that he might otherwise never have visited. Mark also states: “I might not even have known [the Native communities] existed to the extent that they penetrate the Canadian collective consciousness, so that’s been a tremendous opportunity for me.” Mark described his work visiting Native communities as “incredibly rewarding” and “the most fulfilling aspect” of his professional life:

Whether it’s in Old Crow in the Yukon or in Temagami, I’ve just been privileged to visit people in these rather remote places at all times of the year and been welcomed and that has been very, very rewarding. I’m grateful and humbled by the, by having had that opportunity, for sure.

Travelling to various Native communities and meeting Native people is rewarding because “you’re meeting people, you’re getting introduced to their culture” which “are always good things.” Mark also noted the great sense of humour Native people have:

When you are in the Native community, and it doesn’t matter what story you are doing or how despairing the situation may be, the amount of time that you would spend laughing or that people spend laughing is really quite extraordinary. And if you’ve experienced it, you’ll know what I’m talking about, but you have to sort-of experience it and there’s a whole sort-of almost code of laughter or taking the piss out of each other and of other people, but, it’s just... it seems... it’s quite, it’s quite amazing.

There is also, according to Mark, “a lot of wisdom about this particular part of the planet present in the Native communities around Canada that one can get in touch with.”

In addition to their wisdom and humour, however, First Nations communities show Mark something that he sees Euro-Canadians as having “lost”:

I think that [long pause] the sense of community that one finds still at the reserve level is something that, in the sense of identity... You know, Native people, as you’ve probably realized, have a powerful attachment to these places. A lot of people will work in a place like Toronto or London or Montreal or Ottawa and still, on the week-ends, it’s back to the Rez. And I think that’s something that we, at this point in Canadian, in so-called mainstream society have really lost. We don’t... we are immigrants to begin with, but not only are we immigrants from Europe or Asia or wherever, often we’re, we may be here, our parents may be on the West coast, our siblings may be on the East coast, whereas the one thing you see in the Native communities, that incredible attachment to family and community and that people have that sense of home. And certainly that’s been a powerful thing for me to witness.

Mark’s description of the attachment Native people have to their family and community as something we Euro-



Canadians have “lost” evokes a kind of imperialist nostalgia here (hooks, 1992: 189). He sees that something important to him has been destroyed in his own society and in mourning its loss, has found it again in the Native communities he visits which have somehow managed to escape the ravages of “so-called mainstream,” “Canadian” society.

Alex was the only participant in the study who stated that he did not benefit from the “different” culture of Native people:

So, implicit in your question is the idea is there some kind of cultural thing<sup>2</sup> or as a researcher, as an individual hanging around with Aboriginal issues or people - what's that do for you? I don't know. I'd rather talk about the other side of it... Because as an individual, I don't know - it's just hanging around with interesting people. But I never think of it as an area of pursuit for some kind of personal growth or whatever. It's my job, it's my craft. And I just find it very interesting. If you can do interesting things with people you find interesting, that's a pretty good life, it seems to me, so, in that sense, I guess, it's fulfilling.

Even though Alex saw his work as very interesting and fulfilling - involving “just hanging around with interesting people,” he stated that he never thinks of it as “an area of pursuit for some kind of personal growth or whatever.” However, at another point in the interview, Alex states that his interactions with Elders in communities are not only “very different” from his own culture's way of looking at the world, but they are “terribly exhilarating.” After giving an example of such an exchange, he then stated: “You talk to a grandmother or a grandfather for an afternoon when they're actually trying to teach you something and it's a very interesting world-view. And they're all different... It's just very different from my own culture's way of looking at the world and I find it terribly exhilarating.”

It became very apparent in my interviews with participants for this study that interacting with Aboriginal people and ‘encountering’ their culture as a non-Native person was highly beneficial for outsider researchers. Every participant felt they had benefitted from their work with or on Aboriginal people. They described their experiences using words like “fulfilling,” “interesting,” and “terribly exhilarating” (Alex), as well as “incredibly

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<sup>2</sup> Mark assumes this, but I was actually thinking of the material benefits participants might gain from their involvement in this area of study, research, and knowledge production.

rewarding" (Mark) and "fascinating" (Kate). Furthermore, they considered themselves fortunate to be working with Native people, using words like "lucky," "grateful," "humbled," and "privileged" to describe themselves. Also, participants mentioned specific benefits they received from their work with Aboriginal people, such as obtaining "more grounding and more of a clear purpose" (Helen), as well as learning "different parameters for analysing [one's] own culture" (Kate). Some participants claimed that they could find certain positive elements in Aboriginal communities that their own society had lost or was lacking, such as a sense of humour, spirituality, and a sense of family and community, versus the materialism, greed, organized religion, and family and relationship break-up they saw around them in 'mainstream' society. As a result, participants recommended that other non-Native people also get involved with Aboriginal, as well as 'other' cultures. Without this exposure, they claimed, the lives of Euro-Canadians would be, among other things, less grounded and more "impoverished" (Kate).

One of the main reasons participants recommended "exposure" (Ron) and "real" versus "superficial contact" (Kate) with Native people related to the *difference* that participants perceived Native people and their culture embodying. At the same time, material rewards were generally not mentioned by any of the participants as a benefit of this type of work. For example, Mark was the only participant who mentioned "making a living" as one of the goals of his knowledge production. And all of the participants, including Mark, asserted that Native people had a 'different' view of the world, a 'different' way of doing things, a 'different' manner of expressing themselves, and/or possessing 'different' abilities. In Kate's words, they are "racially different, ethnically different, linguistically different, different in abilities - all that kind of stuff." With such a focus on difference, the participants of this study clearly reflected an anthropological view of the Native people they study. "Anthropology," Edward Said writes, "is predicated on the fact of otherness and difference, on the lively, informative thrust supplied to it by what is strange or foreign" (1989: 213). It involves an unexamined view of the investigator with a detailed look at the object of study. Furthermore, anthropology is intimately tied to imperialism. That is, it is both informed by and serves to reproduce a dominant global power which radiates out

from the great metropolitan center (213). Thus, it is not possible to examine difference *outside* of such imperialist contexts.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) states that even though Canada may enjoy the reputation of being a “special place” where human rights and dignity are guaranteed, where the rules of liberal democracy are respected, and where diversity among peoples is celebrated, “this reputation represents, at best, a half-truth” (Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1). In fact, Marcia Crosby writes that many depictions of First Nations people in Canada parallel Spivak’s description of the ‘Third World other’ - “exploited, but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted and circularized in English” (Spivak, 1990 as in Crosby, 1991). Although difference can be used to join forces and rise up against the hegemony, she states, difference, “in the face of popular culture and an ever-shrinking globe” can also be “a saleable commodity” (267). Moreover, the Euro-Canadian desire to embrace the “difference” of First Nations people is neither a recent phenomenon, nor a necessarily positive one:

Historically, Western interest in aboriginal peoples has really been self-interest, and this Eurocentric approach to natives - in all its forms - takes up a considerable amount of space within academic discourse... Despite the West’s recent self-critique of its historical depiction of “the other,” I am not entirely convinced that this is not just another form of the West’s curious interest in its other; or more specifically, the ultimate colonization of “the Indian” into the spaces of the West’s postmodern centre/margin cartography. (267)

Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) has argued that in the twentieth-century, it is culture that is the essential tool for enforcing inequality (143). By making subjects under study “other,” the concept of culture operates much like its predecessor race by retaining some of the tendencies to freeze difference in order to oppress (144). Similarly, Sherene Razack (1994) has written that this twentieth form of racism distinguishes itself from its nineteenth-century counterpart “by the vigor with which it is consistently denied” through what she calls culturalized racism - the discussion of the cultural differences of minorities *outside* of contexts of domination (896). This allows for racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression to continue (896).

When the participants of this study continually focussed on the cultural differences of First Nations

people outside of systems of domination, it became difficult, if not impossible, to then speak about the substantial material differences between the outsider researchers themselves and the Aboriginal people they study. The direct relationship between outsider research and the larger hegemonic and imperialist structure it aids in reproducing was also obscured. And, as participants took the focus off of themselves, the object of their gaze continued to be on Aboriginal people, who were described as, among other things, story-tellers, healers, humorous, cheerful, fascinating and family-centred people, people who have recently 'progressed' from a Stone Age of dog sledding and living off the land to the Space Age, people who 'chastise' through a third party, and students struggling to preserve their culture and express themselves explicitly on paper while preferring to do it a 'Native' way. If this set of characteristics defines those belonging to the category 'Native people,' then the question becomes: who are the Aboriginal people who do *not* do things in this way? Are they not Aboriginal people also? Or are those who are *not* these things or who do not behave this way not "real" or "authentic" Native people [sic], a dangerous question which, as we have seen in chapter one of this thesis, has made its way into Canadian government policy and has resulted in specific material and violent consequences for First Nations people (Crosby, 1991: 279).

As Bhabha (1990) argues:

It is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed... To recognize the stereotype as an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power demands a theoretical and political response that challenges deterministic or functionalist modes of conceiving of the relationship between discourse and politics, and questions dogmatic and moralistic positions on the meaning of oppression and discrimination. (71)

The point of intervention in such colonial discourse, writes Bhabha "should shift from the *identification* of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse" of this kind (71).

By itself, a language of difference does not conclusively indicate colonialism. However, it is not only that the participants of this study see Native people as different, it is what this difference means. In this study,

difference apparently means that participants, as non-Natives, can effectively extract both themselves along with Native people from existing systems of domination and proceed to use them as a resource to be sought out, known and enjoyed personally, professionally, even spiritually. The contact between Native people and the non-Native participants of this study is often described in ways that run perilously close to Marcia Crosby's view of colonialism - that there remains, in contemporary Canadian society, a continuation of the West's assumed right to use Native people and society for various purposes - including the colonization of Native culture - in a search for its own "roots" (272). Foster describes this phenomenon in an American context with white youth:

Masses of young people dissatisfied by US imperialism, unemployment, lack of economic opportunity, afflicted by the postmodern malaise of alienation, no sense of grounding, no redemptive identity, can be manipulated by cultural strategies that offer Otherness as appeasement, particularly through commodification. The contemporary crises of identity in the west... are eased when the "primitive" is recouped *via* a focus on diversity and pluralism which suggests the Other can provide life-sustaining alternatives. (Foster, 1985 as in hooks, 1992: 25)

It is apparent that in the current study, although in a Canadian context, and although not dealing with white youth but middle-aged Euro-Canadians, the perceived difference Native culture offers is something comforting and intriguing which participants do not see as available within their own culture. As one listens to the benefits of outsider research described in the previous section and the disenchantment of some of the participants with the materialism, greed, and family/relationship break-down of 'their own' society, one wonders if the Euro-Canadian people here are feeling that their culture is "so stained and depleted that [they] long to escape it, or at least mitigate it with the newness of another culture" (Warland, 1990: 64). If this is, in fact, the case, Warland writes, "we must be vigilant about the possible connection of this urge with colonialism" (64).

### Views of Native Knowledge Producers

As we have seen in chapter one, cultural decolonization through the written word of Native peoples is a highly effective method for their resistance as a marginalized and oppressed group within a racist society like

Canada. Adams (1993) writes, "Who will write aboriginal centric history and culture? Those Metis, Indian and Inuit persons with an authentic aboriginal consciousness and sense of nationhood" (252). He cites writers such as Ron Bourque, Maria Campbell, Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Maracle, Emma LaRocque, and Duke Redbird as some examples of those who have produced such culturally decolonizing work (254). In addition to the liberation of Native people as a group, Janice Acoose has stated many contemporary Indigenous writers "write from culturally distinct positions that challenge non-Indigenous writers' stereotypical images of Indigenous women" (1993: 29). She names Jeannette Armstrong, Beth Cuthand, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Daniel David Moses, Jordan Wheeler, Emma LaRocque, Beatrice Culleton, Thomas King, Lee Maracle, Tomson Highway, Basil Johnson, Ruby Slipperjack and Marie Annharte Baker as some of the Indigenous writers who do so (29). Other crucial scholarship done by Indigenous writers and scholars such as Marcia Crosby, Janice Acoose, Patricia Monture-Angus, Skyros/Mary Bruce, Deo Poonwassie, Connie Fife, Kateri Damm, Ardith Walkem, Greg Young-Ing, D.L. Birchfield, Ward Churchill, Howard Adams and others on various critical issues relevant to the current thesis topic has been indispensable.<sup>3</sup>

In this section, I investigate the degree to which non-Native knowledge producers acknowledge the work of contemporary Indigenous writers and scholars who, as we have seen, have not only contributed substantially to the field of Native studies, but have empowered many Native people through their writing. My reason for doing so is to demonstrate that along with seeing Native culture, language, food, communication patterns, history, race, ethnicity and abilities as decidedly different, participants of this study also saw Native people as different in another revealing way: Aboriginal people were generally not seen as valuable writers, scholars or film-makers. Unlike the work of non-Native knowledge producers, the written work of Native writers and scholars was much less emphasized and thereby seemed to be of considerable less importance than actual personal contact with

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<sup>3</sup> These are but a few of the Aboriginal knowledge producers currently creating culturally decolonizing work in Canada. Please see *Looking at the Words of our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*, edited by Jeannette Armstrong (1993) and various volumes of *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples* (Theytus Books Ltd.) for a more in-depth look at the influential and liberating work of numerous contemporary Indigenous writers, scholars and film-makers.

Native people, especially with those Native people who are not considered to produce knowledge themselves in the way that the participants of the study do (ie., in universities, through films, in news magazines). In this way, the participants' desire to be directly 'exposed' to 'authentic' Native culture and people, which I demonstrated in the last section, continued to be a central theme in the interviews and as such, reinforced the colonial paradigm between Euro-Canadian knowledge producers and the Aboriginal people they study.

During my interview with Kate, she spoke extensively about the work of W.P. Kinsella, which she appeared to be very familiar with. When Kate was then asked what Native writers and scholars had influenced her work<sup>4</sup>, she answered: "Real stuff wasn't happening on paper; it was in schools and committee rooms." Although Kate states she has read "all the Native reports like Indian Control and the Red Paper, and stuff like that as well as Harold Cardinal, etc.," she says her influences from Native people that really made a difference to her came from her personal contact with them, not through their written work. She adds, "I could try to list some names, but I think that the point is that we were working together." Kate mentioned no Native woman writers or scholars who had influenced her work when asked to do so.<sup>5</sup>

When speaking about ways she saw as the most effective in which Native people could empower themselves, along with the political strategies they should take, Kate stated that Native people have "got to get the nerve" to do humorous things in public "so it's not all just being tear-jerkers." She mentioned jokes like preferring to eat Kool-aid and Kraft dinner, even when offered something else, or actually liking to wear one's pants 'out at the knees.' Again citing the work of W.P. Kinsella as an excellent portrayal of Native humour, she said: "I think that they (Native people) have to write the way they see those kinds of things and put it out and

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<sup>4</sup> Unlike the other participants, Kate answered this question a couple of days after the interview took place. She was the first person I interviewed in the study and I neglected to ask her this and the remaining two questions (numbers 17-19 in Appendix B) during my visit with her. I asked her these over electronic mail and she responded to all three also over the computer.

<sup>5</sup> At another point in the interview, Kate mentioned the Native woman scholar, JoAnne Archibald, who, along with Terry DaFoya, wrote about a "traditional Native" way of learning in the way they write in non-Native journals. However, Kate then stated, "But I don't think you really appreciate that unless you spend some time with Native people and watch them actually do that."

people are just going to have to cope with it.” “People” referred to the Native population. She said, “One of the things, is, of course, [Native] people aren’t used to seeing those things in another medium, so they may be seeing those jokes in the community, but they wouldn’t see them on television, or they aren’t used to seeing them in print, or something like that.” In response to my question on the most beneficial way I could contribute to the social justice of Native people as a non-Native, Kate stated:

I think the most important thing is for non-Native people to inform themselves. And this means reading and otherwise getting information about Native issues both from materials produced by people like myself, who’s inclined to write it in sort of descriptive documentary types of ways. But needless to say, I put my own slant on things. But also, from Native people who are putting forth information about that. And also getting actually personally involved.

When I asked Ed about any Native literature that he had read and which had influenced him in some way, he pointed to a textbook on the book case near me which he uses for a course he teaches. The text is a collaboration of Native and non-Native authors. He also stated that he liked to read the poetry of Art Solomon, and that Joe Couture is his major influence. He mentioned no individual Native women authors, however. In addition, throughout my interview with him, Ed reiterated the fact that “there’s no substitution for... that personal contact with Native people and Native communities... there is no, no substitution for that.” Ed also stated in his final comments at the end of the interview, “I guess I would just have to reiterate the need for relationship, involvement that goes beyond the academic - personalizing, even better.”

Ron, when asked which Native authors or scholars have influenced him, stated, “I have to admit that’s one area where I’m weak on” and could not name any Native writers or scholars. He attempted to name one Native woman author he had read “back in [his] university days,” but was unable to remember her name. He stated that he knew that she is a well-known Metis writer in the West, but her name slipped his mind. In Ron’s words: “I don’t have a lot to contribute there.”

Ron speaks about how he learned from Inuit people at another point in the interview, however:

A lot of the Elders I talked to when I was up North, I mean, they were just interesting to begin with, had a lot of interesting stories, but they were very thoughtful, they had thought a lot about where they came from and they had a lot of concerns about where the young people were going,



and so I just found it a learning experience.

In the interview, Ron also spoke at length about the benefits of appropriation and described how the non-Native writer Rudy Wiebe had inspired him to start writing on Native issues:

Actually, now that I think of it, one other way I ended up getting interested in Native issues is through a professor I had at university who was a novelist. I was taking a creative writing course from him. His name is Rudy Wiebe. And he wrote things like, "The Temptations of Big Bear." It was a novel that he got the Governor-General's award for, and it's, it's an incredible attempt to try to tell the story of Big Bear and the, the... I'm trying to remember the names of the... there's a battle of... Well, anyways, Big Bear was involved with the whole Riel Rebellion, and there was this Chief who had a lot of dignity and was standing up to the white people at the time.

Ron continued:

And Wiebe himself, over the years, has been criticized by some Native leaders for appropriating Native stories, appropriating Native voice, and I think it's a, I personally think it's a totally misguided argument. I think that he's somebody who spent years researching these stories and I think what he does through those stories is, if anything, open up people's eyes to Native issues.

When asked if he believed if Native writers, scholars, and film-producers face special challenges compared to their non-Native colleagues, Ron responded, "I can't honestly say that I can think of specific examples of people I know who have faced special challenges as writers or directors or whatever." Then he mentioned the residential school experience of an Aboriginal person who he had spoken to about it and added: "But he's overcome that and he's moved on." Asked if he saw how the challenges facing Native knowledge producers might be remedied or eased, he responded, "I don't know exactly. I haven't really thought about that too much."

I skipped the question asking to name the Native knowledge producers that influenced Helen the first time it was asked of her so that she could have the time she requested to think more about this question. When asked again at the end of interview, Helen did not name the written work of any Indigenous writers or scholars who had influenced her or her work. Like the majority of participants in this study, Helen emphasized that it had not been Native writers and scholars that have influenced her, but "just the regular people" she had interviewed:

I can probably think of more<sup>6</sup> if I thought about this for a while, because I sort-of have to bring

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<sup>6</sup> She had not actually named or described anyone at this point.

to my memory some of the numerous conversations I've had because I've often spoken to people for hours on end, sometimes all night long. Sometimes this is for an interview, and we do one hour or so on a tape recorder and all the rest is off the record, and I've been taught so much by many Native individuals, but some of them, and I must say, more often than not, it's not been the scholars and the writers, it's been just the regular people that I've learned from. And I think I've learned much more from people who are not the known professionals than the people who are.

Helen named one of the Native women she had interviewed, and described in detail what this woman had told her.

When asked if she had any additional comments she would like to make at the end of the interview, she once again reiterated the theme of personal contact with Aboriginal people:

I guess it's just to say that it's really the, so many of the off-the-record conversations I've had where people have poured out their hearts - I mean, I have just been so humbled, so often, over the years of what, how personal people will be with me, and my learning experience has been those Elders and those young people telling me about the things that happened to them in their lives which have just touched me to the core and which continue to teach me and motivate me to look at the big picture of why this is important, for the future of our children. So, it's all of those stories. Now that's how, that's what's influenced me and made the impact on me.

Similarly, when Alex was asked to name any Native scholars or writers that have had an impact or influence on him, he stated it was not Indigenous scholars who had influenced him, but people "in the school of the world":

(Long pause) The only... (Pause) I would define scholars including a lot of Elders in Native communities - Grannies, Grandpas. And you talk to a grandmother or a grandfather for an afternoon where they're actually trying to teach you something and it's a very interesting world-view. And they're all different. A Tshimsham Grannie will have a worldly different view of the universe than a Quebec Cree. I mean that's part of our mythology, that there's a sameness to these things and, of course, there isn't, but it's just very different from my own culture's way of looking at the world and I find it terribly exhilarating. So, you'd say what scholars, I'd say those people. They don't have parchments after their names or anything, but in the school of the world, I think they're triple Ph.D.'s.

Thus, Alex, like most of the other participants in this study, stated that Aboriginal people in the communities who were not schooled as writers or scholars were the ones who had influenced him - not those who had written material on the issues. Alex then cited one Native journalist/writer as having influenced him: Brian Maracle.

At another point in the interview, Alex explained at great length that most Native journalists face an "additional burden," because "the pool of stuff they'll report on is so small in terms of the size of the

communities.” He stated that:

If you want to promote home-grown journalism, it’s very hard for me, with my big-city attitudes anyways, to see how they’d overcome all the accusations of bias and conflict of interest because of the reach of which these public policy issues get into everybody’s pocket and bedroom and doorstep because of the Indian Act and all it’s evil works.

Alex went on to explain in great detail an example of this: one Native woman journalist who “works about a hundred hours a week,” and who was previously employed by “a big paper” to write on her home town, which Alex referred to as “a common journalistic goal.” However, he found her to be “conflicted as hell just because of the facts of her life,” which Alex stated included being romantically involved with someone in a position of power in her home community. In addition, the other problem, according to Alex, is that in small Native communities, there is an incredible amount of political power invested in a very small group of people, which he describes in the following example:

So, it took a very bold bunch of budding Native journalists to run a series on the graft and corruption of the three families that run the band council. This is the Band Council that hires and fires their ass. In a direct way, they wouldn’t be tolerated outside of Native Canada. Again, the differences between that world and the broader world. So, the problem again of any objective journalism being done that might take a critical look at some of the institutions being built by the small group of what passes for power in Native Canada is a very difficult thing to turn the media into an effective watchdog in any of that - never mind as an effective communicator. We tend to get a fair bit of propaganda and stuff filmed, and those who tried had quite hellish fights, very tough time. So, it’s another reality that we don’t think about in the broader community.

Mark, on the other hand, although he cited only one Aboriginal woman knowledge-producer by name as someone who had influenced him,<sup>7</sup> showed a greater knowledge and respect of Native writers. He also, however, spoke very highly and at much greater length than other participants about *outsider researchers* and their work, even though not specifically asked to do so. With respect to influential Native knowledge producers, Mark cited Gill Cardinal and his documentary, *Foster Child* as having influenced him tremendously. He also mentioned Tomson Highway - “one of the few bonafide geniuses staying in right now,” Drew Hayden Taylor - “an extremely funny man, good writer,” John Kim Bell - “I don’t know his work that much as an artist, but that’s

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<sup>7</sup> He was the only participant to do so.

the sort-of impresario, certainly someone who is quite amazing,” and Brian Maracle - “a wonderful writer, was a great radio host, good journalist, good teacher of journalism.” At another point in the interview, Mark also stated that he has not been able to do justice to the “incredible humour” that some writers like Tom Cane and Drew Taylor have done in their fiction. As already mentioned, and although he does not describe her when he briefly describes the Native male knowledge producers, Mark was the only participant out of the six to mention a Native woman knowledge producer - Loretta Todd, as having been an influence to him.<sup>8</sup>

Even though listing and complimenting Native knowledge producers when asked directly about them, which other participants could not or did not do, Mark, like many others in the study, also spoke positively and at much greater length about the non-Natives in these capacities - even when not explicitly asked to do so. For example, he described Duncan Campbell Scott, his life and experiences, and referred to him as “an extraordinary, complex, and controversial figure” and “allegedly one of our first great poets, but also, the effective Head of the Indian Department for close to 30 years... a non-Native Canadian confronting Native life and Native people and gaging what it was that the government had done.” Mark also spoke at length and in great detail on numerous occasions during the interview about other non-Native knowledge producers besides Scott and the positive aspects of their work, as is evident in the following examples:

In the 1970s, there was one journalist in Canada interested in telling the story of the James Bay Cree to the rest of Canada - Boyce Richardson, originally from New Zealand, who left the Montreal Star so he could make films for the National Film Board of Canada about the Crees. I mean, ask the Crees what they think of Boyce Richardson. He's a folk hero in the Nanaimo, Cree communities of James Bay.

A gentleman... [whose] work I love immensely - Hugh Brody, who's written a fabulous book about the Indians of North Eastern British Columbia called, “Maps and Dreams,” and has made a film about the Indians of Nipkasound called, “A Washing of Tears,” and a film about the Nisga'a called, “Time Immemorial,” among others. I know for a fact he's moved around the country and whether its the higher Arctic or whether it's British Columbia, he and his work have been embraced by the communities where he's worked.

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<sup>8</sup> At another point in the interview, Mark also mentions and describes the “wonderful” work of a young Native woman director who he does not name.

And even that film, “Where the Spirit Lives.” There was the scene of the ceremony with the children that some people found offensive, but there were a lot of other people who defended the film, and the fact is, up until that time, no other film-makers in Canada had the wherewithal, be they Native or non-Native, to get a film about the residential school experience financed. So my hat is off to those people at the Film Works, I believe it is called, for having had the courage to make the film, because as we know now, what happened in the residential schools was horrifying... and that film took a few big bricks out of the wall of officialese that the government and the churches have been able to keep up for decades. So I think that film did tremendous service to the Native community in Canada.

Thus, difference within the context of this study also ultimately means that Native knowledge producers -particularly Aboriginal women and Aboriginal-centric writers and the knowledge they produce - continue to be extremely marginalized and discounted by Euro-Canadian intellectuals like those interviewed here. When asked to name Native writers who have influenced them and their work, if able to do so at all,<sup>9</sup> five out of the six participants stressed that it was not the *writing* of Aboriginal people that had had its greatest impact on them or their work, but personal *contact* with them - especially women,<sup>10</sup> children, and Elders in communities who they had interviewed, watched, or with whom they had otherwise spoken and/or been involved. They used words like having been “touched,” “motivated,” and “taught” by Native people. Four out of the five participants who stated that conversations and encounters they had had with the Native people influenced them, however, did not or could not name those to whom they had spoken. Although he also spoke about meeting, getting to know, working with and managing to “gain access” to Native people in their communities at different points in the interview, Mark was the only participant out of the six that concentrated on naming Native knowledge producers when directly asked to do so without explicitly re-emphasizing at this point in the interview that making “real, personal contact” with Native people in general was more important than acknowledging them or their work.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Some participants were not able to name anyone or simply did not do so.

<sup>10</sup> One participant spoke about the stories of strength he heard from Native women who “just weren’t going to take it anymore.” However, I cannot remember which of the participants this was. I believe it was one of the journalists - either Ron or Alex.

<sup>11</sup> This does not necessarily conclude that Mark believes the work of Native knowledge producers to be more important than personal contact with Native people, however. Two things implicitly indicate that this may actually be quite the opposite. First, not only when asked to name Native knowledge producers but also at other times during the interview, Mark often refers to Native

Since the participants in this study continually emphasized personal, actual contact with Native people, it seemed to them that a non-Native person could 'gain' only by being in close proximity to Aboriginal people. The value of Native people was not in their written work or the knowledge they produced in scholarship, in the media or film, but in their role as teachers, story-tellers, and 'native' informants. Participants, in their descriptions of 'gaining access' to Native communities and 'making contact' with Aboriginal people, appeared to be similar to anthropologists:

The anthropologist-nativist who seeks to perforate meaning by forcing his entry into the Other's personal realm undertakes the desperate task of filling in all the fissures that would reveal the emptiness of knowledge. On the lookout for "messages" that might be wrested from the object of study, in spite of its opacity or its reticence in sharing its intimacy with a stranger, this knowledgeable man [sic] spends his time spying on the natives, in fear of missing any of these precious moments where the latter would be caught unaware, are still living. (Trinh, 1989: 68)

Trinh refers to the phenomenon in which outsider researchers seek out and gaze upon those they study as "legal voyeurism" (69).

It also appeared that the 'shared intimacy' between the outsider researchers and those they studied generally occurred with a 'specific type' of Aboriginal person: one who was living within a First Nations community and not considered to be a knowledge producer at the site of the university, media (television, news magazines, newspapers), or in film. Kate described these three sites as "non-Aboriginal ways of expressing yourself." Therefore, Aboriginal people who did not produce knowledge at these "mainstream" sites appeared to be sought out by participants perhaps because they did not suffer of a "loss of authenticity" (Trinh, 1989: 88). That is, when speaking but not writing, when observed in the 'natural environments' of their communities and the 'wilderness' versus in the "mainstream" sites of knowledge production, when not expressing 'intellectual' thought themselves but acting as story-tellers speaking through myth and thereby 'preserving' their culture, these Native people were seen as "authentic" and "natural," and were deemed somehow more 'acceptable' by

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people, communities and knowledge producers he has personally worked with, spoken to, met or "gotten to know." Second, in the previous section, *The Benefits of Working with a "Different" Culture*, Mark describes meeting Native people in their communities, especially those in remote places as "very, very" and "incredibly" rewarding and the "most fulfilling" aspect of his professional life.

participants (Crosby, 1991: 268). They were “‘real’ Indians” [sic] legitimized inside an academic framework and a colonial paradigm (268).

Kateri Damm writes that such stereotypes continue to pervade the consciousness of those who have been ‘educated’ through Western institutions, and have had negative consequences for Aboriginal knowledge producers. She argues that

Historically, [Western] institutions have acted as tools of the State, often in concert with the Church, to civilize and control Indigenous peoples while nurturing and preserving the righteousness of imperialist attitudes. Consequently, stereotypes, maintained through the education system, are the points of reference for many readers who make numerous faulty and at times damaging assumptions about “Native” writers and the types of literature we produce or ought to produce. Too often, the image of the Indigenous writer which comes to mind will be one of a “storyteller,” “traditional” in appearance and dress, dark skinned, raven haired, who uses “legends” or “myths” to teach the audience about his or her culture. This highly romanticized image discounts those who do not fit easily within it. (13)

Damm writes that many Indigenous writers have had the “unpleasant experience” of not meeting a non-Native person’s stereotype, and cites one example of this:

Metis writer and professor Emma LaRocque tells of her experience with a CBC radio journalist who after an hour long interview during which she regaled him with “cultural sorts of information” suddenly realizes that she is a professor and ends the interview asking, “Could you tell me where I could find a *real* Metis storyteller?” (LaRocque, 1990 in Damm, 1993)

A similar phenomenon occurred in my interviews with the non-Native participants of this study.

This being so, the scholarship of Indigenous knowledge producers appeared to be, in many cases, of considerable less importance to the participants of this study than the work of outsider researchers. This could be seen by the amount of time and the detail with which participants spent discussing the work of non-Native knowledge producers compared to their Indigenous counterparts, even though, unlike Native knowledge producers, I did not directly ask them to do so. Mark and Ron did this especially. In addition to the length and detail to which they described them, the participants’ positive view of Euro-Canadian writers and researchers was also evident by the manner in which they described them, using words like “folk hero,” “courageous” enough to tell the story, and someone with whom they have felt “honoured” to work. No participant other than Mark used

such words to describe Native writers, scholars or film-makers. In addition, participants referred to the actual work produced by outsider researchers often in great detail which, again, was not done in reference to Native people. They used words and phrases like “an incredible attempt to tell the story,” a “tremendous service to the Native community,” and work that “I just love immensely” to describe outsider research and knowledge. In contrast, when one Native journalist was mentioned, she was described as being extremely biased and “conflicted as hell” (Alex).<sup>12</sup> Fellows and Razack (1994) remind us that in the context of “First World/Third World” academe, privileged academics’ responses to the work of scholars who are women of colour or to women from the “Third World” have been characterized by opposition in order to ensure that these white people and others like them can maintain their “First World position of dominance” (1071). They write:

How do some voices come to be constructed as illegitimate? [We]... see an important relationship between those who can speak and those who cannot. The striking feature of this relationship is that it is symbiotic: those who can speak can do so only on the condition that suppressed voices stay suppressed. Third World narratives would invalidate the stories that are told in white, Western academe... Because uncomplicated others do not exist and so cannot speak, the space must be filled - and it is filled by those who have set the standards. (1070-1071)

Fellows and Razack state that it is crucial to remember that “a solid material base - political and economic power - underlies the practices of exclusion and inclusion. What is increasingly at issue is livelihood” (1971).

It could be argued that participants of this study, as knowledge producers themselves on Native issues, cannot acknowledge the written work and films done solely by Aboriginal people because to do so would seriously question the participants’ own personal and professional involvement with Native issues and perhaps jeopardize the material benefits they derive from this type of work. The existence of influential knowledge production by Aboriginal writers, scholars and film-makers inherently challenges the role and function of the ‘outsider researcher.’ If Native people are writing and speaking, no one is needed to write and speak *for* them or *on their behalf*. In addition, the presence of Aboriginal-centric knowledge producers not only challenges the

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<sup>12</sup> Mark, as I pointed out, was an exception to this - he mentioned Aboriginal knowledge producers and referred to them positively, for the most part.



assumed necessity of non-Native's input on this topic, it raises the standards of the stories being told. Materials written by outsiders like currently best-selling writer Rupert Ross (1992) which he himself describes as "unsophisticated guesswork" on his part must suddenly stand beside the story of an Aboriginal person's lived testimony. This, in turn, not only leads to the possible re-evaluation of the accuracy and efficacy of outsider research and writing, but effectively puts non-Native writers 'out of business.' In other words, for non-Native knowledge producers like those in this study, such a shift could seriously jeopardize the material benefits they presently derive from such work. Thus, the possible negative implications of acknowledging the influential work of Aboriginal-centric scholars in particular proves to be far too great for participants. They therefore use an oppressive move to deny its very existence and influence. Spivak calls such inarbitrary oversights as "sanctioned ignorances" or "blind spots" (Spivak, 1988 in John, 1989: 55). John describes this process as one which occurs in education, whereby "we learn to avow and remember certain knowledges and devalue and forget others" (55). This occurs "within an intellectual field that by no means arbitrarily creates disinterest and oversight in some areas while directing desire elsewhere" (55). In other words, we reject knowing certain things in favour of "what will get us ahead" (55).

Jeanette Armstrong (1992) in the article, "The Disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and Empowerment Through Their Writing," writes that "the so-called 'social problems' of Native peoples are caused by domination, disempowerment and aggression wrought by foreign peoples who sought to damage and destroy them" (209, as cited in Damm, 1993: 95). Native people, she writes, can dispel the "lies and the telling of what really happened until *everyone*, including [Indigenous] people understands that this condition did not happen through choice or some cultural defect on our part" (95). However, she argues, Native writers who attempt to do so through examining the past and culturally affirming themselves and other Native people must arise out of "powerful and positive support structures that are inherent in the principles of co-operation" (210, as in Damm, 1993: 95). As we have seen here and in other chapters of this thesis, however, there appears to be very little spirit of co-operation, to put it mildly, or more accurately, the presence of a spirit of antagonism

between Native and non-Native knowledge producers in Canada at the current time. We are reminded of the words of Aboriginal-centric writer Emma LaRocque who described this “colonial phenomenon” seven years ago:

The lonely echoes of our own words have been amplified by a strange but perhaps predictable colonial phenomenon: white intellectual judgement and shunning of Native intellectuals. The dearth of Native intellectual voices and artists in the media and in Canadian creative pursuits makes one wonder if the media is aware of our existence. Or are they avoiding us? Or is our invisibility an indication of the extent to which we are ghettoized? (LaRocque, 1990: xxiii)

As I have argued, much of the influential (and independent) work of Native knowledge producers is denied by the majority of participants in this study. This denial serves in the interest of participants themselves as, to not do so, ultimately challenges their role as outsider researchers and the purpose, effectiveness and accuracy of their own work on Native issues. At the same time, ignoring or diminishing the scholarship of contemporary Aboriginal writers, scholars and film-makers results in highly stereotypical and inaccurate portrayals of Native people that serve to further marginalize them.

#### Awareness of Racism/Inequality

Four out of the six participants in the study spoke to a considerable degree about racism and injustice as they viewed it within contemporary Canadian society. The words “racism” and “racist,” were seldomly, if ever, used by any of the participants except for Helen and Kate, however. For most participants, including Helen and Kate at times, racism and the racist acts of others are often implied, but not named outright. This indicates that their views are informed by a liberal standard in which “nondiscrimination necessarily entails a commitment to nonracialism, to ignoring race” (Goldberg, 1993: 217).

Alex acknowledged the paternalistic approach of many non-Native people who exoticize Native people:

I find some of the most infuriating lobbyists on this stuff is little Quaker ladies, or United church men or people who ask you, “That’s a lovely sweater. Did you dye the wool yourself?” Because I find they, too often, tend to fall into the same cliché of, “Ah, there’s a brown-faced person - a woodsy savant, my guru to my roots, my definition as a Canadian living on top of the world.” So, again, some of these hangers-on around this stuff I think are worthy and well-intentioned, but they’re a bit twee, and as a result, I don’t think they’re effective agents for change.

According to Alex, the detrimental effects of outsider research include “the misimpressions and just fuzzy bullshit of movies,” and German authors who build up a notion of “the noble savage that the Swiss and them flock over here to eat up.” He states that such images build into an overall idea of “poor little Indians, need more government trough money.”

With respect to the disadvantages there might be to him working with Native people as a non-Native.

Alex responded:

Personally? No possible downside for me... I get to have fun and it's interesting, so I think that's pretty rewarding. I don't think the question really applies to me. I will continue to get paid handsomely, whether I do it well or badly, etc., etc., etc., so, compared to the people I'm reporting about in Native Canada [laughter], it's almost a laugh to ponder if there's any losses for me in the equation. I'll remain a comparatively rich White guy who's well off with all the benefits of the world, no matter what happens.

Hence, Alex was able to see and state that he is privileged compared to the Native people he writes about.

Helen, who, as we saw earlier, felt that she has benefitted spiritually from Native people, stated that many non-Natives “feel a certain emptiness” in their lives and they “go running after Native people to fill it up.” She stated that some of these people in mainstream culture are “so hungry, searching for something,” that they will believe “all kinds of crap”, and they won't “take the time to really find out.” She also comments that some of these people are ones that aren't informed enough themselves, and others are only after what is going to sell and be marketable, and added that Native issues “is trendy stuff.” Even though Helen sees the benefits that she has obtained from working with or getting to know Native people, she states that she is concerned about other non-Native people, not herself:

What I worry about is I think some non-Native people are very wrong-headed because they'll go running, and I've seen this so much over the years when I see some people at Native gatherings and these non-Native individuals want to totally disown their own identity. One of the classic kind of labels are “wanna-be.” For sure that's something I never was, I can say that honestly. And I was never seen as that, or nobody would ever have spoken to me, believe me...

Helen recalls a radio show where non-Native writers were saying that they were so boring and Native people were so interesting. This upset Helen, who thought this was “ridiculous” and stated, “our lives are what we make of

them.”

Helen also saw that romanticizing or setting Native people up “as a somehow more perfect as a group of human people” is detrimental and a disservice to everyone, and explains why:

First of all, it’s not healthy, and it doesn’t solve your personal, healing stuff that you have to deal with in your life, and number two, there is a lot of brokenness and confusion among a lot of Native people, too. They have a lot of things that they have to work through, so it’s really an unfair burden to put on them. And this whole romantic illusion of putting them on a pedestal - that doesn’t serve anyone well. And it’s so convenient when we put them up there, then they fall off, and then we can ridicule them and say, “Oh well, they’re not really Indian anymore.” Because the romantic notion that we have in our imaginations doesn’t fit with the reality.

Helen states that the motivations of non-Native people who work with Indigenous people must be very clear. According to her, non-Natives must ask themselves questions about why they are working with Native people, who will benefit, and they “have to have their own integrity in these issues.”

Helen also spoke about the damage caused by systemic racism within North American society, especially the media. Helen discovered systemic racism after reading “Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee.” before returning to university and realized that many things related to Native people and injustice she did not know about or learn about in school. In this way, Helen, as a privileged non-Native person, experienced an “awakening or coming to” to the injustice facing Native people well into adult-hood, unlike Native people who have the lived experience of racism since their birth (Frankenberg, 1993: 161). Then, Helen stated that she learned about the challenges affecting Native people at various film festivals and conferences:

Definitely, systemic racism exists, and I would say that because I think too often, and for too long, Native creators have been pushed to the margins and as they’ve said, at this one film festival I was at, that they are used as scouts. Now, they are today’s scouts. In a similar way, analogical way to the nineteenth-century, with the Indian scout helping the US calvary. And so, they’re tired to being used as scouts by white producers and other white people whose credits are going to be the ones and they are the ones who are going to be making the money, and getting the name and the profile. The time has come for them to have their particular abilities and their particular experiences and their particular knowledges to be given respect, and for them to be hired in those capacities, but not just as props, and not just as back-up people, that validate the white man’s, I mean, using that quote, unquote, story.

In describing the issue of access for Native knowledge producers, Helen again reiterated the point that the

fundamental challenge for Native writers and journalists is that there is still that systemic racism in society:

Because the other one that comes up is, the other excuse they [Native knowledge producers] are given by mainstream media is that, oh well, a Native writer is going to be biased in reporting on a Native issue for a newspaper story. I mean, excuse me? As if non-Natives are not? I mean, I have deconstructed in many workshops and in many media analyses that I have done, the incredible bias and racism in non-Native reporters writing on certain issues, and it's so hidden and so invisible and so un-named and this is part of the work that I do to expose that. So, it's that insidious kind-of denial and racism that's there. It's just so pervasive throughout media and throughout our institutions that they're going to be biased, but we're not. It's such a contradiction.

Helen says that everyone has "to understand we're all on this planet together and we all are affected by the same forces, but some people are affected differently from others because we're not equal players in the playing field of this planet." However, Helen also stated that Native people should not always try to blame racism on not getting the skills and the training needed to meet "that special challenge" in order to be able to function as a professional, which she often sees. Many Native people she has met "want the knowledge instantly" but they should be willing to invest the time, says Helen, "to train properly in something." She states that too many Native people, in her view, are having success coming "too soon" and it's not good for them. She cited a Native writer she knows who is afraid that Native professionals in the creative arts are too protective of themselves and can't take any criticism, so they can't grow. Helen stated that even news reporters will not touch certain issues "with a barge pole" because they are afraid of being accused of racism and so, according to Helen, "some stories are not being told that need to be told."

Mark referred to the challenges of limited access to education, funding resources and professional contacts that would further one's career that Native people faced. He saw not only Native people, but any "disfavoured marginalized group in society" facing those types of challenges. Mark also cited residential schools as a cause of family breakdown, social problems and alcohol and drug use. At another point in the interview, he states, "what happened in the residential schools was horrifying." He mentioned that being restricted to the English language was also a "huge barrier" for Native people and then stated that it would be very difficult to get a Native language program funded and broadcast on prime-time Canadian television.

Mark was also able to articulate the impact of genocide on Native people. Although he tends to mix nostalgia, romanticizing and respect about the attachment of Native people to their families and communities, it is clear that Mark is able to see that First Nations communities have arisen out of historically unfair circumstances in Canada as is evident in this statement: "The reserves were very confining and were the end result of a massive rip-off of land and resources and often extremely forced relocations." When asked what drew him to this area of involvement, Mark again demonstrated that he saw clearly saw the injustice facing Native people in Canada:

It seemed to me and it seems to me that Aboriginal people still present Canada with its number one human rights challenge. That, if we want to see ourselves as an active democracy that puts our actions where our words are, then there is a huge issue still out there. I mean, the Native peoples of Canada were under assault for the first hundred years, at least, of this country's history, post-conferation history. Very clearly, we had and still have laws on the books that were adversarial to them, and whether it's education or resource policy or language or health, to this day, there are still, all across the country, a huge amount of work to be done to have a situation in which Native people can be fully part of Canada while being fully Native.

When he worked in a government-run group home in Northwestern Ontario nearly twenty years ago, Mark found the experience to be "an incredible eye opener" for him as far as Native issues were concerned. For example, many of the Native youth at the group home came from two nearby communities which were "in a lot of difficulty at the time" and suffering the effects of mercury contamination in the river system. Mark was expected to agree with the attitude of group home administrators that it would be inappropriate for the Native youth to speak Ojibway at the group home, and that links between the Native youth with the Native communities were not a good thing and were not to be encouraged - things that seemed to Mark and to some of the other people with whom he was working as "very obviously the things that would be positive for the children." Like Helen, Mark learned some things about Native issues as a young Euro-Canadian adult that he states "no one at highschool or university had ever introduced me to." His experience working in a government-run group home with primarily Native youth in Northwestern Ontario was, in his words, "a big awakening" for him politically and socially.

When Kate, who as we saw earlier named numerous benefits of difference, was asked what challenges she saw Native knowledge producers as having to face, she stated that she believed Canada to be profoundly racist. She said that racism was one of her biggest worries about Canada, and stated that “we are getting more and more strongly divided among those of us who think that the racial and cultural complexity in this country is the best thing that’s ever happened to us, and those of us who think it’s a big threat.” When I asked Kate how the racism she had previously mentioned might get played out in Canadian society with respect to Native knowledge producers, Kate responded referring to the environmental conditions facing Native people which leads to their ‘underdevelopment,’ rather than to actual racism in Canadian society:

I just think that people haven’t been, haven’t had the opportunity to live in the kinds of conditions that would give them the freedom to develop that aspect of themselves. In terms of Maslowe’s hierarchy of needs, you’ve got to work out some of the more basic things before you can get at some of these personally-creative kinds of things, and if people have been uneducated, not only towards these kinds of creative things, but towards things that would help them make a living or any of those kinds of things, then it just makes it harder.

According to Kate, another major challenge for Native knowledge producers is the fact that

... if you look at writer, scholar, and film-producer, what you see are three non-Aboriginal ways of expressing yourself, right? In that Aboriginal languages, for example, have only been written for a maximum of several hundred years, right? And so, it’s the case that any Native person that wants to be a writer, a scholar or a film-producer, has to come into a non-Native medium and in general, non-Native culture and particularly, non-Native education has been a real barrier to Native people.

Kate also saw that Canada had progressed as far as “paternalistic” attitudes were concerned:

In fact, Canada has changed from this very much “we Anglos are in control here” and “we don’t see any need to introspect about the way we understand things and so our job in dealing with you immigrants and you Native people is just to give you a nice sort-of blue print of how to be like us and we’ll develop a few teaching techniques to do this and then we’ll fix you.” And I think that our approach to those kind of things has changed radically.

When asked for ways in which Canadian society has changed to become “less paternalistic,” Kate tried to work through aloud how she saw Canada’s societal climate becoming this way:

I’m trying to decide how much it is that I think our own culture became prepared to listen and how much other cultures got more assertive. I do think that, I guess I never thought about this, so I couldn’t say why, but I do think in some ways in the 70s, that Anglo main-stream

Canadians were somehow disposed to listen. Now maybe it was because of the 60s and all of that kind of rebellion against the sort-of mainstream values, if you will, and the youth culture, and the drug culture, and those kinds of things... For example, I graduated from university in 1969. And a very large proportion of my colleagues went overseas for CUSO. And I think that that whole generation - there was money for travel for the first time. There was that kind of facility for travel - I mean, you could get on an airplane and fly to Thailand. Whereas in previous generations, that was impossible. I mean, just literally wasn't physically possible. You got on a slow boat to China or something like that under very heavy duty circumstances. But the money was there, the economies were booming, and the transportation had improved. There was the flower-child generation, and all of this enthusiasm about India and other Eastern religion and that sort of thing, and so young people were travelling like crazy and then I think they came back to North America with some of these mind-opening experiences.

When asked how Native knowledge producers facing special challenges might have barriers broken down, Kate responded: "Well, I think the more exposure that Canadians as a whole have to Native products, Native cultural products like this (referring to a Native comedy "spoof" on the Morningside radio show), the less they're going to seem marked or as part of, Canadian life." On the hand, she stated, Native people "want themselves to continue to be marked to some extent."

There is an awareness among some of the participants like Alex and Helen that running to Native culture and people in an effort to "fill up" one's own life as a Euro-Canadian occurs in some relationships between Native and non-Native people and is racist. There are also varying degrees of recognition by the participants of the systemic racism and inequality operating within Canadian society to the detriment of Native people which the participants' testimonies indicate. However, the Euro-Canadian elites in this study clearly distanced themselves from such acts of injustice using definitions of racism which excluded them as part of the problem, even while continuing to use racist expressions and ideologies themselves, which are woven throughout their dialogue and which denigrate First Nations people. As seen in chapter two, this allows the modern forms of racism which participants themselves enact to be denied or go uninterrupted. In using limited, traditional, and liberal definitions of racism, not only can elites like these continue to see themselves as moral leaders within society, they can "generally dissociate themselves from anything that has to do with racism as *they* define it" (van Dijk, 1993: 8). This type of liberalism, writes Goldberg:



is idealized in the sense that it refuses to acknowledge, let alone confront, the exclusionary practices and concerns that in a variety of fashions will continue to be racialized by social subjects, though now less formally than before. Further, it idealistically presupposes that racism assumes a single form that may be constitutionally legislated out of existence, here one day, gone the next. (216, 217)

“For the liberal,” argues Goldberg, “the standard of nondiscrimination necessarily entails a commitment to nonracialism, to ignoring race” (217). However, the concern of anti-racism is to end racist exclusions and the conditions that give rise to and sustain them, however and whenever they manifest. Therefore, one must not only call attention to race, but one must

recognize the possibilities of multiple manifestations of racist exclusions, of exclusionary resurgences and redefinitions, of newly emergent racisms or expressive recurrences, of different discursive impositions or terminological transformations... so ideals for the antiracist are nothing else than the best available, the most warranted, guiding principles for social action and transformation. (217)

I explore, in the next section of this chapter, how the participants interviewed see their role as outsider researchers studying First Nations people in Canada and the possible effects of their work.

### Responsibility and the Outsider Researcher

#### Seeing the Effects of Outsider Research

Participants were directly asked to comment on whether or not they could see any ways in which publishing or film producing by outsiders could be detrimental to the empowerment of Native people, even by those who “mean well.” Participants were also asked if they saw producing, publishing or making films as an outsider on Native issues as an effective way of empowering Native peoples. Their comments and reflections in response to these questions are outlined in this section.

Kate, like many of the participants, was aware of the risks of outsider research. Kate’s view of the detriment of outsider research and knowledge production dealt with a specific evaluation of an individual piece of work, rather than the overall unequal and racist power structures around employment and access to funding and publishing for Native writers and film-makers in comparison with their non-Native colleagues in Canada.

She answered the question about the possible negative implications of outsider work stating: "Absolutely, absolutely. For one thing, it's highly possible that non-Natives could do a bad job, in the sense that they wouldn't understand Native perspective and consult Native perspective and that sort of thing." She again referred to W.P. Kinsella's stories like "Scars" and "Dance Me Outside," and said she "got very mixed feelings" reading them because she did not like the language the author uses. In her words: "I think it's very inauthentic. You've got this cutesy language that he has that guy writing in." She also stated, however, that Kinsella's use of humour was accurate: "one of the things where W.P. Kinsella is quite good, is he's very good at portraying Native jokes, the sort-of tricks that Tom Fencepost plays and things like that are... resonate with my experience anyhow about the kind of jokes that people play." Kate continued to focus on different evaluations of the work of non-Native writers and indicated that she was quite familiar with non-Native literature:

I've read a lot of that stuff, and I've got two minds about it. One, quite a long time ago, called "I Heard the Owl Call my Name," which isn't exactly speaking through a Native person's voice, but it's kind of romanticizing, if you will, B.C. West Coast culture and that. And I hate in several of these cases, the fact that they're taking basic human stories and romanticizing them by putting them in a Native setting - that bothers me a lot.

But Kate also stated that publishing by non-Natives could be positive:

On the other hand, I think that if the only way that you are going to break down some barriers is to start by slightly smarmy kind-of stories like this, if that would lead for somebody to go beyond that and get into the more authentic stuff, then it's not the worse thing... if it does mean that they're raising any kind of respect for Native culture and Native experience, yes, it probably does some good. But then, I'm the kind of person who doesn't see things in black and white, anyhow.

Kate saw non-Native literature as a kind of 'stepping-stone' to someone exploring Native culture "from a more authentic point-of-view." She added, however, that if non-Native or appropriated literature is all that people read, then that would be "dangerous." Kate also noted that publishing or film-producing by Outsiders could contribute to a view of Native people "that they can't do it themselves":

You know, if Native people are seen to be doing all of these different things, then that's very important... I mean, White people have done it for Native people for so long that it's just time that in some ways we go a little overboard, I think, and make the most of opportunities in

celebration of Native production of knowledge and art and all those kinds of things.<sup>13</sup>

Kate describes the support of Native knowledge production as a “celebration” and going “a little overboard.” It is then ‘thrown in’ with art and “all those kinds of things.”

Ed also viewed the detrimental aspect of Outsider work as a question of how accurately an individual person could depict what he referred to as the “foreign” and “different” culture of Native people. Ed, like Kate, referred to singular and specific cases of accurate representation, not the overall racist system of domination that regulates who can study whom and the impact of this work on Native people. In addition, when Ed, who is a scholar, answered the question, he referred to film-makers being the ones unable to do outsider research properly as opposed to scholars:

So, if I’m a film-maker then the issue is obvious: How do I capture the essence or the sense of that really foreign, different, that culture that I don’t know anything about, really. For me, presumptuously? To believe that I understand some things on the basis of what I see on the surface, not knowing the language, not knowing the history, not knowing the food, it’s absurd, it just doesn’t make any sense.

It is noteworthy that Ed, like the other participants in this study, saw the risk of ‘getting it wrong’ as an individual failing which implicitly declares that one can ‘get it right’ and that outsiders do, in fact, have something to contribute. Once one pursues this approach, the systemic issues of access and colonial subjugation through knowledge production tend to get lost.

When Mark, a white film-maker, was asked about the possible detrimental implications of Outsider research on marginalized populations, he responded by saying that Outsider research would be harmful “when the work sucks” or “if the work is bad and untruthful and/or is done in a way that’s disrespectful or harmful to the subjects.” He also stated: “I know that there’s a lot of work out there which has offended the Native community, and if the work is truly offensive and it’s a stereotypical or ahistorical or sexist or racist portrayal

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<sup>13</sup> Note Kate’s usage of the structure “for” Native people rather than “to” Native people with respect to outsider research involving Aboriginal people here. In stating this, Kate implicitly declares that research and writing on Native people is, in itself, a useful, necessary, and justified endeavour. Moreover, the problem then moves from one of Aboriginal people being studied, gazed upon, denied agency and access, to one where Aboriginal people having *allowed* non-Native people to do all the work *for* them “for so long” instead of doing it themselves.

of Native people then that's awful." But when asked what he thought about non-Natives being asked by several people to stop writing about Native people's experience, Mark said:

If I've made a film and people don't think it's any good, and it's distorted the truth, they disagree with it, please tell me and hopefully we can have a mutually respectful discussion about it, but don't tell me I can't do something because of the colour of my skin or my gender because I wouldn't make those prohibitions and I think that we're getting on really, really scary ground here.

Mark then cited Tomson Highway, a Native writer and playwright who, according to Mark, in the middle of the appropriation debate stated, "The only judge is - is it any fucking good? Is it any fucking good?" and said he agreed with Highway's position. Mark said, "you have to have an expectation that people will make their best effort to tell the truth and be respectful," but then, once a film is made, it is really is a question of whether it is a "good film" or not. In Mark's words: "I don't think anyone, including the Native audience, gives a shit who made it. If it rings true, it doesn't matter if I made it or Gill Cardinal or Loretta Todd made it." Mark thus reiterated other participants' views that a key risk in outsider research is 'getting it wrong' - that is, the accuracy of the representation of Native people is more important than the racist structure that supports outsider knowledge production on Indigenous peoples and people of colour within Western society.

Mark also went on to say that he is not any more or less likely to misrepresent Native people than anybody else. Referring to another discipline besides his own, Mark stated that not only film-makers but other "cultural workers" such as anthropologists could do damaging work - sharing the view of several other participants like Ed that disciplines other than their own are just as or perhaps even more implicated in the detrimental aspects of outsider research. Ed, a scholar, referred to film-makers doing detrimental research, and Mark, a film-maker, referred back to scholars doing so.<sup>14</sup> It seemed much easier for outsider researchers to look to others than to look to themselves here. In addition, Mark stated that not only Euro-Canadian "cultural

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<sup>14</sup> Since the impact of outsider researchers like these are silencing and seriously damaging, it is incredible that the participants, supposedly responsible researchers, both figuratively pointed a finger of blame back at one another at this point, as if to say, "He did it" - thus superficially absolving them of any responsibility for the effects of their own scholarship and knowledge production.

workers” but Native people themselves could do damaging work. He stated: “I don’t think that being Native or non-Native makes you more immune to doing that,” and added, “You could be a Native director and be an insensitive son-of-a-bitch, right?” Here, Native and non-Native knowledge producers briefly become similar in Mark’s eyes. However, they are described as such only when the negative implications of outsider researchers’ involvement is being interrogated. This redirects the focus away from the question being asked - the possible harmful effects of outsider research by *non-Native* knowledge producers - and focuses instead, on the personality of a fictional Native director. Such a move also obscures the fact that in the overall hegemonic system regulating and managing who will film who, the great majority of films on Aboriginal people are by written, produced, directed and funded by non-Natives.

When asked whether or not he saw publishing or putting out films as an ‘outsider’ on Native issues as an effective way of empowering Native peoples, Mark responded:

(Long pause) Well, I think it can be empowering for those communities who have participated in the making of a film, and people when they allow you into their community, they know why you’re there. They do approve of your being there. I’ve certainly seen communities use those films later on and show them and feel that, “Hey, this is our story. This is our... you know,” so yes, in that sense, it’s important for those people, it can be empowering. Hopefully, if the films are used in Native education, it would be empowering. I think it’s empowering in the film-making community in that I have worked with lots of different, well, with a Native director on a couple of occasions, with a Native camera-person on many occasions, and with various people from trainees to interpreters, to different people helping at the community-level: anything from helping us move the equipment to boat operators to instant set-construction. You name it. So, yes, it’s empowering. Is it as empowering as the Native people making the films themselves? I think it depends on how the film was made and who’s making it. I can’t do what I do well without close collaboration with the communities where I’m making the film. So, it becomes, by definition, sort-of, there’s mutual consent there. And at the community level, I have never heard, “Why are you here, why are you doing this?” And once the word is out that you are there and that you’re doing it, then, people are incredibly helpful.

When I pointed out the difference in power there exists between a boat operator and a film director and asked Mark how that power might get played out, Mark stated that this was only one example, that “the beast” - meaning the film industry - was collaborative to begin with, and that the debate over appropriation was one relating to authorship. At the same time, however, Mark then compared the difference between someone like

himself making a film versus a Native person making the film, and saw the potentially empowering aspect of having Native directors making films themselves:

In the making of the film, and you know, I have produced Native directors making films, but I've never been on location with them. I've always been in my office. I think at that moment, in the communities, and in terms of for young people to see... You know, I've worked in the past, on a couple of occasions with a wonderful director by the name of Loretta Todd, a Metis woman originally from Edmonton now living in Vancouver. And I can imagine it would be very, very powerful at the community level to see this younger, Native woman behind the camera. And that's great, you know. But once again, I support Loretta in her work and others, and she's supported me in my work, I would hope. I think it would also be extraordinarily empowering for Loretta to make a film about Jean Chretien, or for her to do a film about something non-Native, you know. But I think that at the community level, that could be very powerful, for sure.

When Ron, a non-Native journalist, was asked about the possible detrimental aspects of outsider research on Native people, he began by answering: "Well, yeah, I suppose there is. I mean, there's this whole argument made over the idea of, I think it's called appropriation of voice, right?" At this point, instead of naming any of the possible detrimental effects of Outsider research or appropriation on Native people, Ron reframed the issues to speak at length about his rights and the rights of other non-Native knowledge producers writing on Native issues. Ron saw Native people as the ones responsible for the exploitation that occurs through outsider research. He stated: "You always take a risk, people always take this risk when they invite either documentary film-makers or journalists or whoever to listen to their stories." To this, I responded, "When the Native people invite them, sorry?" and Ron then replied:

Yeah, yeah, or permit them to or whatever. I mean, I think that there are good journalists and there are bad journalists, there are good documentarians, there are bad ones, there are good people and there are bad people, and you can't, you know, spend your whole life making these rules because some people burn you and some people do. I think on the whole, the risks of that are worth it if you want your story to be told and you want some, it's not sympathy, but it's empathy, I guess. You want people to understand where you're coming from.

Here, Ron implicitly states that in order for Native people to get the empathy of others, they must take risks and let "good" or "bad" non-Native journalists, documentarians and people listen to and then attempt to re-tell their stories. Only this type of telling will allow "people to understand where [they're] coming from," but it is not

guaranteed. Such a structure conveniently places someone like Ron, a non-Native journalist, in the role as storyteller. If Native people are seen as not being able to tell their own stories themselves, Ron becomes indispensable to the process. He effectively (or ineffectively as the case may be) becomes their voice or, in his words, “a messenger.”

Ron also stated that: “You have to show some respect for your subjects and your material.” Here, Ron’s argument parallels that of Ed and Mark’s, in which they refer to “being sensitive” as important to knowledge production on Native people. At the end of his interview, Ron reiterated another view also held by Ed and Mark: the importance of accurate representations of Native people:

Oh yeah. I think that one of the things and I’m sure I’ve been guilty of it as much as anybody, that people do, and it’s not got to do with Native people, but there’s this great tradition in Northern Canada of the journalist who comes up from Toronto or whatever and in a couple of days, decides that they’re an expert on Northern Canada and northern communities and Native people and this sort-of thing. I think the real danger is presuming that you know too much and I think there is the danger of misinterpreting and giving a false impression of what life is like or stereotypical impression or a superficial impression. And part of journalism is unfortunately, a superficiality. We deal with things to a certain degree on the surface and if you’re an outsider to the community, you can go in there and you can end of talking to the, you know, the Chief and the Band Council and getting one side of the story, and if you don’t spend long enough digging around, you might be getting deceived about what the real story is. So, I think that’s a real concern, and I think that’s, where you’re talking earlier about Native people being upset or feeling that their story hasn’t been told properly, I think there’s been a lot, a lot of cases where that’s been justified because people either are, presume too much, or don’t do enough research.

Here, although mentioning the danger of “misinterpreting” and “giving a false impression of what life is like” as things he is sure he has been “guilty” of as much as anybody, Ron appears to be relatively untroubled by the prospect that he produces such detrimental outsider research.

When asked if he could see any ways in which publishing or film producing by outsiders could be detrimental to the empowerment of Native people, even by those who ‘mean well’, Alex, who is a journalist like Ron, answered, “Yeah, well, sure. Cuz we screw it up.” When asked who the “we” meant, Alex responded:

Anybody who doesn’t know in their bones and their genes what it is to grow up in Native Canada in the 90s and the 80s. What the hell do we know? We’re voyeurs. We can safely go back to our whatever we came from with none of the baggage or restrictions, either culturally, socially, with all the strange social engineering results of the past hundred years or financially,

etc. So, it's almost like being a tourist in your own land. And that's what's wrong with us. Because we don't live on a reserve. Well, some of us do, but the point is, it's not something that our families done for a hundred years. And its, what the hell do we know?

Here, Alex sees that non-Native knowledge producers have certain privileges. He refers to outsider researchers as "voyeurs" and "tourist(s)," who are able to "safely go back to our whatever we came from," with none of the cultural or social "baggage or restrictions" [sic] that Native people carry. Later in the interview, when again asked what disadvantages Native people might experience as a result of outsider research, Alex stated:

The disadvantages to the Native side is that I might screw it up, get it wrong, do damage, all the other things the media does all the time. But that's true for anybody who's unfortunate enough to get under our little microscope. Good, bad, or indifferent, it's a bit of a... it's a bit of playing a roulette wheel to know what the bloody media is going to do with you.

Again, like nearly all of the other participants, Alex saw the potentially destructive aspect of Outsider research as a question of 'right' and 'wrong' portrayals of Native people, and did not go beyond such a focus.

Helen, like Alex, was able to see how privileged whites assumed that they could study, write about, and film Native people when and wherever they wished to through outsider research. In this way, she possessed a more heightened awareness of the dangers of white scholars appropriating Native voice and culture and blocking access for Native people:

First of all, there's the arrogance of just assuming that just because you want to do a film on somebody else that they're immediately going to welcome you. It's very patronizing and arrogant - as if they're not able to kind-of do it themselves, because there are a growing number of Native creators in film and writers and all of the arts, all cultural productions.

At the same time, however, as we saw in a previous section, Helen did not mention any of these "Native creators" by name.

Helen's other focus, like all of the other participants of this study, was one of accurate representation, individual motivations, and how Native and non-Native people were equally responsible for the detrimental effects of outsider research:

So, again, it gets down to the attitude and the motivation behind why are you choosing Native people. Because sometimes I've seen films, even in recent years, done by non-Natives that, I think, again still romanticize them. And they go to people who are some of these high-profile



Native people and it's partly the responsibility of Native individuals as well, right? It's not only the fault or the weakness of the non-Native, but it's Native people catering to that out of their own egos and out of their ego wanting to be in the limelight.

Arguments presented by participants throughout this section, in response to what, if any, detrimental effects they could see as a result of outsider research on Aboriginal people invariably concentrated on the accuracy of representation. As we saw, participants all agreed that 'getting it right' - that is, trying one's best to tell 'the truth' about Aboriginal people was crucial to research in this area. However, Trinh Minh-ha (1989) argues that outsider knowledge production on or about Native people, whether it be done by a non-Native photographer, filmmaker, choreographer, musician, speaker, writer, or academic, can never relay 'the truth' (56). Instead, and as I have noted earlier in the chapter, outsider research is unvaryingly "stained with anthropological discourse, the only discourse in power when it is a question of the (native) society" (56). According to Trinh, outsider representations are less about fact, and more about fiction. This is not to say that they are fictitious, but that they are largely influenced by the one doing the describing, rather than the one being described:

The dilemma lies in the fact that descriptions of native life, although not necessarily false or unfactual, are "actor-oriented," that is to say, reconstructed or fashioned according to an individual's imagination. It also, however, lies in the fact that descriptions are actor-oriented by their very nature... They assume, through a system of signs, a possibility as a fact, irrespective of its actuality as a sign... Descriptions or clinical inventories, whatever the chosen mode of utterance, are fictional because language itself is fictional. (70, 71)

Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha (1990) writes that:

Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an "other" and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative in which the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism. (76)

Outsider research is eminently flawed because it is embedded within colonial paradigms that allow dominant group members to paint portraits of marginalized 'others' that are then seen as photographs. As a result, Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) and Pratt (1986) argue that it is crucial to go beyond the so-called 'accuracy' or 'inaccuracy' of ethnographical representations into investigating the "larger agenda of European expansion in which the ethnographer, regardless of his or her own attitudes to it, is caught up, and that determines the ethnographer's

own material relationship to the group under study” (Pratt, 1986 in Abu-Lughod 1991). Furthermore, Abu-Lughod, in reference to her own responsibility as an outsider researcher argues:

We need to ask questions about the historical processes by which it came to pass that people like ourselves could be engaged in anthropological studies of people like those, about the current world situation that enables [outsider researchers] to engage in this sort of work in this particular place, and about who has preceded us and is even now there with us (tourists, travellers, missionaries, AID consultants, Peace Corps workers). We need to ask what this ‘will to knowledge’ about the Other is connected to in the world. (148)

Abu-Lughod also asserts that such questions cannot be asked in general; they should be asked about and answered by tracing through specific situations, configurations, and histories (148). Again, close parallels are drawn between outsider research and the imperial quest for knowledge on and about ‘the other’ - knowledge that has been and continues to be used to further oppress, marginalize and exploit those people deemed ‘different’ or ‘other’.

#### Envisioning Oneself and One’s Work as an Outsider Researcher

As non-Native knowledge producers writing about Native people, how did those in this study see themselves? The participants were asked several questions in relation to this including: How would you describe your involvement in this field? For example, in what, if any, aspects of your involvement changed? In what ways have you and/or your ways of thinking about it changed/remained the same?; If you have produced knowledge in this area, what do you see as the goal of this knowledge production?; Is the empowerment of Native people the ultimate aim of the knowledge you have produced in this area?; Have you attempted to encourage, in any way, Native people themselves to write/produce knowledge about their or their people’s experience? If so, could you please outline these for me?; Do you see any ways in which your work might further silence, oppress, or disempower Native people? These questions, which at times, overlapped one another, were asked at different points during the interview so that I was able to see if and how participants’ views of themselves and their work remained consistent. These questions also indicated whether or not the non-Native participants of this study

found themselves to be similar to or different from the outsider researchers which they had described in the previous section.

In my interview with her, Kate stated that she has “tried to be a focal-point, I don’t mean a focal point, I mean, a facilitator of Native people talking to each other about issues.” She sees her work as “trying to raise some awareness” and sees the knowledge she produces as empowering to Native people. Kate develops curriculum material for Aboriginal studies, supervises students, and writes, edits and publishes articles and books on Native issues. She states that it is important for her to “work together” with Native people and that she is comfortable with that kind of arrangement. Kate gave several examples of how she and Native people have worked together to produce knowledge. One was that she gathered quite a few articles together on a book she was editing and in several cases, approached Aboriginal people who “weren’t particularly comfortable as writers,” interviewed them and then “wrote it up as an article to put into the book, as well.” Kate stated that she “just facilitated getting it down on paper”<sup>15</sup> and added: “I would like to use the position I’m in to help facilitate conversation on these kinds of things,” especially as a professor at a university. The book she edited, which contained a majority of articles by non-Natives also served a dual purpose:

It was there to get some of my academic colleagues, my White academic colleagues, to put something practical down on paper that would be useful for Native and non-Native people who were working on the writing systems. But it was also a place to help Native people put down their own views, and put those things in the same book, so that it wasn’t a matter of white people always having access to being published academically with their viewpoints, and Native people never being able to voice their perspectives on these issues which are hotly debated in a lot of Native communities about the writing systems. the use of them.

Also in her role as a university professor, Kate supervises the work of Native students, and states that while this is not different from working with anybody else, it is special in some ways:

... because in some cases, some of our Native students have had perhaps less contact with middle-class sort-of language and power structures and that sort-of thing. In other cases, the students are particularly interested that, although they have to jump through the thesis hoop, they also want to do it their own way. And so, we have to sit down and negotiate how it is that

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<sup>15</sup> Here, Kate, like Ron did earlier, implies that she is merely the ‘vehicle’ for Aboriginal people to tell their story - undermining the impact of her whiteness and privilege on those she sees herself as “helping.”

they are going to succeed in jumping through that hoop and do it their way, which means that they've got an extra burden and I consider it my job to try to help them do it that way.

Kate added that this being the case, she again serves as a resource, this time for her students:

I was having quite a talk with my research students yesterday, about writing for academic purposes and how that was a very special skill and how people had to learn how to do it... In addition to what I've learned about language teaching, I've learned how to be an academic and a professor, and so I would like to make those skills available to anybody who wants to use them.

Continuing with the theme of "working together" with Native people, Kate, who has been hired as a "facilitator" on several different occasions, talked at length about the importance of this role to her:

I've been a facilitator in a couple of places - in workshops where I've just been there to sort-of facilitate the conversation<sup>16</sup> and I've been very flattered to be asked to play that role where. I guess it's I'm curious as an adult educator to help people come to decisions and that sort of a thing, and in some cases, I would be asked for my own input in terms of the content, but otherwise it was just facilitating people making decisions with other people.

When I asked if she "facilitated" the conversation between Native and non-Native people, between Native people themselves or between only non-Native people, Kate responded that in the one case that she was "always thinking of," it was just Native people.

In another instance, Kate was employed as an evaluator working with Native people, but stated that she was much more comfortable seeing herself as not evaluating:

What I wanted to be was a conduit for the Native teachers and the Native community to talk about their position on this teacher training program, their experience with it. And I do, I really like doing evaluation work that way. And actually, I've done a number of evaluations of Native programs of various sorts and again, it's your job to go in and listen to them and perhaps put their viewpoints, organize their viewpoints in a way that that then relates to the white people who are organizing something like teaching training program or running a school or doing something.

Here, Kate envisions herself as not an evaluator but a bridge between what she considers to be two different cultures, with the white people as organizers and the Native people as those will who have their viewpoints "organized" by her. On this particular occasion, when hired by a non-Native organization to train teachers and

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<sup>16</sup> "Just" being there to "sort-of" facilitate the conversation does not accurately describe Kate's actual role in this scenario. She uses "just" in conjunction with "facilitating" once again later on in the same sentence.

evaluate Native teaching-training programs, Kate was paired with a Native person from the Native community, which she stated was an arrangement she much preferred. She stated “it was clear that I was there for my expertise in teacher-training, and he was there because he has links with the community... what I was doing there was very clear.”

Kate states that she “started off” with very patronizing attitudes and had been taught by Native people that she worked with that she “had no right to patronize.” On several occasions when involved with Native people, Kate mentioned having been “told off” or “told to stand down” by Aboriginal people. I asked how Kate dealt with that - if she remembered the certain incidences, thought back to them and was “horrified that you said or did that.” I referred to an article I had read on “liberal, white guilt” (Ellison, 1996), and said: “Because you’re still working in the field, you still remember how you’ve changed, does that affect you at all - remembering back?” to which Kate responded:

Oh, I was terribly hurt several times by people really telling me to stand down. In most cases, I didn’t, because I was in a very complex situation the various times that I can think of. And I just sort-of hung in there, and what surprised me was that I expected then for there to be a negative follow-through and there wasn’t. So, I’d sort-of get bawled out and then that would be the end of it. But it still was a very solid reminder that whatever I was doing I was taking a highly political stance and that I’d better be aware of what that political stance was and who the stakeholders in that stance were. And I had been very naive about that before. And that in a lot of cases, some of the things I had gone into, I had been not very knowledgeable about whose stakes were there and was it any of my business being there doing those things. I think in a lot of cases, I got protected and often, I don’t think I know who protected me... somebody had been aware of the fact that we’d be told to stand down and that somebody unbeknownst to us had gone and stuck up for us. Because that’s the way a lot of Native things work is that a lot of the negative stuff is run through third parties rather than is directed face-to-face... [It was] a Native person (who protected me). Only a Native person could have done that.

When I asked if it was a Native person who said, “Look, I don’t appreciate you doing this or that,” Kate responded:

Well, I think that if this happened, the person that stuck up for me would have said that I was bringing some kind of value to the situation, and they had stuck up for the value I was bringing rather than the, perhaps, the power that I was leaking away from Native control. See if I was in there, then it would diminish Native control. And I think if people would have stuck up for me, it would have been because they thought that I was bringing some kind of value added and that that was worth whatever risk I was to this Native control situation.

I then asked Kate:

So you think that... personally, you think it was worth the risk then? Like, power to Native people in this... Before you go into the work, you think about that risk? That it isn't total Native control, perhaps, once you step in as a professor or a linguist but that risk outweighs... that the fact that you come in outweighs the fact that you're not Native?

To which she simply answered, "That's right." Now, Kate's policy is, and this has been since the mid- or late 80s, that she would never propose to do a piece of Native education work. She waits for it to come to her. In Kate's words, "A lot of people know me, and if they want my help, they can ask for it. This is especially the case," she states, for anything that's got funding attached to it. In addition, Kate explains another way in which she is careful about her knowledge production in this area:

I would like to say at this point, that I wouldn't undertake anything that I thought was producing knowledge about Native stuff, I would only facilitate other people expressing the knowledge that they were developing. If the kinds of things that I know about can be useful, I wouldn't make statements about things myself. Now, one of the things I've been writing about quite a lot recently is government policy. And in that case, I'm not producing knowledge, I'm commenting on policies that people have created, and mostly, I'm just trying to raise these things because again, most of the policy is kind-of local, and most people don't know about it.

At another point in the interview, when asked if she sees the knowledge she produces as empowering to Native people, Kate answers, "Yes, I would say so."

Ed publishes articles in the field of Native issues, supervises graduate students, and has also organized, or "helped to organize" with his Native "friends,"<sup>17</sup> conferences across Canada that deal with educational issues. These conferences, according to Ed, are typically attended by Natives primarily, but many are attended by non-Native teachers. He describes the conferences he organizes as "an opportunity to bring people again to try to get closer to solving some of the very real problems that face educators in Native communities." In reference to who initiates his involvement with the conferences he has organized or "helped" to organize, Ed stated:

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<sup>17</sup> At many times throughout the interview, Ed exchanges the word, "colleagues" when referring to Native people with the word "friends."

In the Indian country<sup>18</sup> [sic], things are done more on a basis of reputation and who knows who, so it's not so much that you present your resume (laughter) to a Native community to describe what you do. They would have to hear about you from a relative, from a friend, someone they respect and trust, so it's very much an inside sort-of network in that respect - who you let into your community is a very sensitive issue.

This method of hiring might explain why Ed consistently reiterates the importance of "establishing a relationship of trust" as a non-Native with Native people. In a Euro-Canadian context, he is letting me know that that is how 'to beef up my resume.'

Shortly before beginning to work with Native people, Ed describes himself as having been "very much involved" with the multicultural "scene" and multicultural issues in education. However, he then stated that he found himself "drawn to the special needs of Native, Aboriginal peoples." As a newcomer to the area, Ed stated that was naive in certain respects. In particular, he thought Native people were "more passive" because he "sort-of bought into some of the stereotypes that are still prevalent."<sup>19</sup>

Ed, even though he is employed to do assessments in relation to Native students, states that, like Kate, he tries to "sort-of act as a facilitator,"<sup>20</sup> especially in "negotiating a better deal for [Native] kids." Since Ed is involved with assessing Native children with special needs, I asked him if racism is one of the special challenges facing Native children. He responded:

It's kind of a mixed picture.<sup>21</sup> There's a lot of interaction between those things, those variables many times. For example, fetal alcoholism can affect a child's ability to learn, so there can be sometimes a physical determinant of the dysfunction in learning, but many times, and probably most times, it is the environment that produces problems for the kid in school. So that might involve, can involve sometimes the school-based curriculum itself that may be perceived to be involvement to the child, so they turn off being interested in learning. Or it could be

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<sup>18</sup> Ed refers to "Indian Country" often in my visit with him. Mark also does so. When Mark is asked to define it, he states that it means "all the conglomeration of Native communities across Canada." Goldberg (1993) warns against the use of such tropes, which, when not invoked critically, are used to define and order racial others (163).

<sup>19</sup> Note that Ed describes this as "naivety," not racism. Kate also refers to herself as having been naive.

<sup>20</sup> Also like Kate, Ed consistently uses the word "sort-of" when referring to his role of "facilitator." One either facilitates or does not. There are no degrees to this word.

<sup>21</sup> My question is about racism. Ed's answer, although beginning with "It's kind of a mixed picture," does not address issues of racism facing Native children with special needs.

community-related, and that the parents of the child may not support the child in respect to, say, to getting homework done or that sort of thing... There are a lot of possible, a lot of environmental reasons. In the Northern communities that I work in, for example, the kids, many times, will stay out quite late at night, so they arrive at school tired in the morning - but that's a culturally-sanctioned activity.

Ed's goal, therefore, is to provide "direct service" to Native communities so as to act as a bridge to "try to help the community understand something of the mainstream expectations and try to help the school system personally try to understand some of the cultural determinants here." Ed again emphasized that it was the different "cultural milieu" of the students that caused the student's problems:

So again, the issue of culture and our expectations - I say "our" as, in respect to a mainstream expectation, are often on a collision course, so we have to be very careful not to categorize problems using mainstream expectations and categories because many times the reasons why a kid's having problems have to do with the cultural milieu that the kids are a part of.

Ed stated that non-Natives must try to understand that the Native way of doing things is "a different style" and "a different belief structure that you are functioning from." Instead of the poverty and oppression of Native people and their children, Ed cites their cultural differences and values as the problem for Native children/students at school. For Ed, the problem is not one related to racist policies at present and in the past at various institutional levels - ie., socially and educationally - enforced by the state and having led to a situation where marginalized Native students are not succeeding at school. Instead, the "problems for the kid in school," according to Ed, is the result of Native youth performing "culturally-sanctioned activities" like staying out late or "the parents of the child not supporting the child in respect to, say, to getting homework done or that sort of thing."

As Dei (1994) has pointed out, however, it is crucial that anti-racist work see the achievement of students of colour including First Nations children, not in pathological terms with reference to cultural differences, but rather, within the current contexts of their marginalized positions as visible minorities within a socially unjust and racist nation-state like Canada (1). Furthermore, Dei (1994) states that pathological explanations of the "family" or "home environment" as the source of school problems must be seriously questioned in anti-racist



work. He states that, "such explanations tend to divert attention away from the institutional structures of schooling which treat children and youth unequally and which justify the status quo by attributing causal priority to the victims themselves" (1,2). In referring to the cultural differences of special needs Native students in the previous examples, Ed uses specific incidences that tend to blame the victims, rather than depicting an over-all structure which has oppressed the Native population and continues to have negative effects on them - extreme poverty being one of these.

With respect to his knowledge production on Native issues as an outsider researcher, Ed stated that his goal is "putting education in the hands of Aboriginal people" but that "you can't have control over Native education unless you've got control over the funds that come to the community to educative Natives [sic]," and "that requires management skills." When asked at another point in the interview if the empowerment of Native people was the ultimate aim of the knowledge he has produced in this area, Ed responded:

Sure. Without, again, sounding presumptuous, like, I can do it? Like I can give power to Native people? (Laughing) No, I can't do that. But I think that's, sure, in terms of, sort-of an over-all objective the kind of work that I would do would hopefully lead to Native people assuming power, maybe that's better way of putting it. If I was going to concrete here, and I can be, I would say working closely with my Native colleagues initially, might be a collaborative, cooperative activity that eventually is taken over by my Native colleagues... As our Native students acquire doctorates and the publication record that goes with that, then they can assume positions in centres of Indigenous studies in universities, so I don't want the image to be one of a helping hand here, but again, back to working together to achieve that goal. It's a tricky one to put into words, but it's what I'm trying to do.

I asked Ed the following question at one point during the interview to investigate how he reconciles the fact that he is not Native but works with Native issues:

Is it a sensitive issue in that, when we speak of Native control, and you are not Native, how does that either get played out or how do you reconcile that? When we talk about Native control, and then, if we [Euro-Canadians] write or publish, I'm saying "we," like if I wrote, how... you've done it, so how could someone come to terms with that, or is it a coming to terms with? Or is it all of a joining towards this goal?

To which Ed responded:

I would say it's an on-going issue for non-Natives. My personal response has been to work with Native colleagues - not to attempt to print, do or say anything until it has been vetted by Native

colleagues so that I'm very conscious of trying to work in a different culture and would never make statements that implied that I knew something of that culture that was exclusively my perception, for example, because that would be presumptuous. So my personal response has been to work closer to Native colleagues... So, it's, I guess I like to see it as a positive problem working in Native communities.

Asked if he saw publishing or producing knowledge as an Outsider on Native issues as an effective way of empowering Native people, Ed answered:

I think if Native people did the publishing, it empowers Native peoples. Or, if Native people published in collaboration with non-Natives, I see it as empowering. But definitely, in the sense of acting as role model, a non-Native publishing comments about Native issues, whatever they may be is, like, that's the old model. Not to say that you should be excluded from having opinions and stating them somewhere, but with a good deal of caution.

He stated, "This whole idea of cooperative learning is key... Think cooperatively, think working consensually."

When asked if he saw any ways in which his own work as a non-Native knowledge producer might disempower or further contribute to the oppression of Native people, Ed again saw an individual scenario as the only way in which oppression could happen. He stated: "Sure, if I am presumptuous, if I am not willing to relinquish control, if I always have to be right, if I am perceived to be the final authority - *perceived* to be the final authority - and not my Native colleague, and the beat goes on." Ed uses the conditional structure "if" followed by various activities that he appears to not partake in when describing how he might oppress Native people through his work, and in this way, attempts to directly absolve himself of any complicity in the subjugation of First Nations people. He does not appear to see writing on, about, or even with marginalized others and being published for it as a privileged middle-class Euro-Canadian male as being presumptuous.

Like Ed, Mark stated that he hopes that the debate over appropriation will soon move to a dialogue of collaboration, to one of "how can we collaborate, how can we support each other effectively so that a greater number of stories are told better to serve an ever larger community." With respect to outsider researchers, Mark stated:

there was a conviction of those people who had travelled to the North, who had met with Native people, these were extraordinary stories, many of which had not been told, and were deserving of telling, and one hoped that when people saw or heard or read the stories, they might have a

clearer idea of the background of these situations and they might be more understanding of the aspirations of Native people.

Here, Mark describes the voyage of “those people who had travelled to the North.” Like other participants, he describes his own travels to northern and western Canada, into the wilderness, and to remote areas of the country. He mentions canoeing and the outdoors. In addition, Ed and Mark both allude to “Indian Country,” describing it as a place where different rules are followed and things are done differently. They go on to provide specific examples to support their claims. Within these references, there are definite images evoked about the “North” in Canada and what it means to these participants, all of whom live in the southern, central, urbanized area of the country. Rob Shields (1991), in the article, “The True North Strong and Free,” has investigated such myths about ‘The North’ and the implications they have had - both for those living in northern climes, as well as the northern environment. Shields writes that “the North is less a real region signified by a name and more a name, a signifier, with a historically-variable, socially-defined content” (165). In addition, he writes, “an ‘official’, social mythology appears to overlies the palimpsest of personal images and experiences: subscription to this social mythology will be seen to define central Canadian identity” (165). Because the ‘South’ is the land of daily life for most Euro-Canadians, “the North is the land of the extraordinary, a land of dreams and *rites de passage*” (James, 1985, in Shields, 1991: 174). Travel to the ‘True North,’ therefore, “has historically been the space of pilgrimages - to the Pacific, to the Orient, to the Pole, and so on. It has been the space of pilgrimage moment of ‘between-ness’, of travelling and of the quest, between home and goal” (174). Furthermore, Shields writes:

‘The True North Strong and Free’, a phrase from the English version of the Canadian national anthem, summarises many aspects of southern central Canadian myths of the North: truth or honesty to an autochthonous spirit of the land, a ‘strength’ that defies human incursion, and freedom from conquest by those with imperial ambitions. The notions around the imaginary geography of this ‘True North Strong and Free’ provide an example of the discursive power in spatialisation, especially when it involves nationalistic ‘representations of space’. The concepts harnessed to the physical datum of the ‘North’ - truth, purity, freedom, power - serve in the establishment of a particular ‘social spatialisation’ as an order of the world and cosmos; a specification of priorities and threats, friends and foes, and helps to reinforce the cultural solidarity of individuals and communities. There are, of course, competing spatial mythologies, but the ‘True North Strong and Free’ has a striking preeminence amongst English-speaking, central, southern Canadians and in the dominant political rhetoric this majority generates. (164)

Development in northern Canada is limited. Shields states, because the cultural heartland that 'the North' supposedly embodies is seen as something that must be preserved. Therefore, government policies on development informed by such notions have been paternalistic ones - serving to 'civilise' the Inuit (Milne et al., 1982) and allocating little power to Northern inhabitants (Shields, 1991: 165). For example, "[t]he Territories lack any power or self-government in the way that Provinces (with as few as Prince Edward Island's 128, 000 inhabitants: Statistics Canada, 1985) have - control over energy and resources, judiciary, health, education, housing and land use policies, taxation power, constitutional veto, and the use of coordinated interprovincial pressure on the Federal Government (Shields, 1991: 165).

Out of this perceived "cultural heartland" of "the North," Mark, like Kate and Ron, sees non-Natives as unproblematic travellers, gatherers, and story-tellers about "the North" and "Native" people. Along with myths of what northern Canada represents, he implicitly declares many things here. First, that these stories, when told amongst Aboriginal people themselves "had not [actually] been told." Second, that these "extraordinary" stories were meant to be told to non-Natives by non-Natives - in other words, that non-Native listeners of these tales had the inherent right to appropriate Native voice. Third, in stating that this telling is done so that non-Natives "might have be more understanding of the aspirations of Native people," Mark makes two additional false assumptions: that the re-telling of these stories is beneficial to Native people; and that the racism and injustice they experience is the result of "misunderstanding." These are all inaccurate and extremely dangerous claims to make.

Mark also stated that he thinks he believes that films can raise consciousness, and hopes that the work he has done "has illuminated some issues that otherwise would have remained in the dark":

Hopefully, they are being seen by people who otherwise might not wonder about those issues. And then it's up to them to draw whatever conclusions they want to. Hopefully, at the end of the day, people do see the work I've done. The Native people that are portrayed will be recognized for their humanity, for the full spectrum of their humanity, and it would increase understanding between the races. That's what I hope.

When asked what ways he saw that Native people could effectively empower themselves, Mark stated that Native

politicians who are capable of the same “scum-bag” behaviour as any other group of politicians should not talk about independence from Canada because “they alienate many of the people who would otherwise be their allies.”

Mark then added:

Culturally, I think the same thing. I don't believe that the people who are saying, “Don't tell our stories, we'll tell them, to ourselves,”<sup>22</sup> I think that's... I don't think it's an intellectually honest thing to say. And, I think if more energy was spent in striking effective collaborations and seeing that more people were better illuminating the Native experience in Canada, everybody would be further ahead. And I think that would be more empowering than any sort-of restrictive shutting of doors.

Asked directly if he saw any ways in which his own work might contribute to the oppression of Native people.

Mark paused for a long time and answered:

I can't see how it would, unless it was interpreted by an overwhelming number of people as being either too soft in conveying the impression that all is well in Indian country or so despairing and depressing that there's just really nothing to be done. But I don't think the work leaves any significant portion of the audience that's seen it feeling either of those ways. So, my work, particularly? No, I don't think that's possible. No.

Ron stated that the goal of all good journalism is “to inform and to some extent entertain the reader and so in the context of Native stuff, it's hopefully to give them some glimpses or some insight into maybe a people and a culture they don't always encounter.” Asked if he saw publishing or producing knowledge as an outsider on Native issues as an effective way of empowering Native peoples, Ron answered: “I suppose it helps,” and stated how it might do so:

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<sup>22</sup> Note how Mark makes the assumption here that when Native people say “Don't tell our stories, we'll tell them,” this then necessarily implies that they will tell them only to themselves. Ron also makes this assumption, as evident in this statement by him when referring to what he calls the “misguided argument” of appropriation: “If that means that the only people Native people are going to talk to are other Native people, I think it's, in the end, going to hurt them.” Even though it is still problematic, one fact that is startlingly clear, but dismissed by Ron and Mark is that they can *always* have access to the stories of Native people because they can buy the published works of a continually-increasing number of Native writers and scholars in Canada. Furthermore, as employed professionals, they enjoy access to an even *larger* number of these works because they have more funds than a majority of marginalized people in society including Native people themselves, with which to buy them. Hence, no matter what the outcome of the “appropriation” or “self-government” debate Ron and Mark refer to, as privileged Euro-Canadian professionals within a racist society like Canada's, Ron and Mark are actually granted *tremendous* access to the stories of Native people. However, since reading the written work of Indigenous people is also once removed from any “actual” or “real” contact with them, which they report as enjoying to a much greater degree, the scholarship of Native people thus proves to be a considerably less ‘desirable’ site of knowledge for them. By once again negating the written work of Native knowledge producers in this argument, Mark and Ron seem to be saying ‘If we can't have them (meaning Native people) all to ourselves in any and every way we wish to, then we don't want (to support them) at all.’ Their warnings also seem to imply this.

It gives them [Native people], it obviously gives them publicity in a public venue, which hopefully allows their concerns to be heard. That's about as far as a journalist can go. It's not our job to advocate.<sup>23</sup> Well, I mean, I suppose some people think it is, but it's, I think you do, you give them some sort of voice but I mean, they're perfectly capable of speaking for themselves, so you're more like the messenger, if anything.

When asked about if he saw any ways in which he personally might further disempower or oppress Native people through the work that he does, Ron paused and then responded, "Well, I'd certainly hope not, no I... honestly I don't, I don't see how it would."

Helen stated that the question asking her if she saw any ways in which her own work might further silence, oppress, or disempower Native people was a good one. After pausing and reflecting on it, she answered using the word, "honestly," like Ron:

Um, I don't honestly think so, in regard to everything I've said up to now. Because fundamental to my work from the beginning was trying to build respect and understanding across cultures, just being a helper, that's always how I see myself, or just as a tool. When I say I answer to the Creator, to me, I'm just a tool. I mean, honestly, that's how I see myself and so, so that's why I don't see how whatever I'm doing is silencing, oppressing or disempowering anyone.

Helen, who has been writing for over fifteen years, saw herself as a "helper" who could also help dispel myths and stereotypes about Native peoples in the media and elsewhere and stated that she would still "stand by" anything she wrote in the past. As a "helper," she stressed the urgent need for Natives and non-Natives alike to work together to access Native knowledge from those Native Elders still alive "before they leave this world":

Yes, again, because there's so many stories to be told, so much work to do, there's so many stories, for example, to be gathered from Elders before they leave this world, and again, there's just more work than there are people to do it... So, again, it's an issue of there being so many stories that need to be told and not enough people, so, if everyone can do that in a way, to empower Native people. But it's also human empowerment, it's not just for Native people.

Here, Helen demonstrated her belief in the value of gathering Native stories which we also saw Mark allude to. However, here, the stories are gathered from apparently "dying" Native people. Ed also stated something similar to this - stressing the importance of work between non-Native people and those "who are still with us." Marcia

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<sup>23</sup> Note that supporting a Native point-of-view as a journalist is depicted as "advocating." This implies that supporting a non-Native position is not advocating anything but is neutral and objective.

Crosby warns against such a move. She states of Aboriginal people: "We are still here - altered however, and without the 'authenticity' that some, nostalgically would like to impose" (1991: 270). Crosby stresses that conceiving of the Native culture and/or people as dead or dying creates a destructive salvage paradigm with extremely negative consequences for First Nations people: "The concept of the inevitable death of a primitive people within a progressive, industrial society... has provided the rationale for denying aboriginal rights" (275).

Alex, who at times referred to outsider researchers as "filters," also called himself "a professional communicator and a pretty good one at that." He explained how he is able to take what he thinks "is the public mythology" about Native people and replace it with "an attempt at least to explain that reality." He added: "So, all I try to do with what I'm doing is demystify some of this crap." According to Alex, ignorance is one of the things that stops the empowerment of Native people. Therefore, he states: "Whatever modest contribution I can make to reduce some of that ignorance, then I would presume that that would help some eventual empowering of Native people."<sup>24</sup> When asked if he saw any way he might further oppress Native people through his own writing or research, Alex simply responded, "No."

The non-Native writers, scholars and journalists I interviewed for this study were able to see and articulate the detrimental effects of outsider research, but seemed to have very little struggle with the fact that they, too, are outsider researchers working on Native issues. There were two main detrimental aspects of outsider research every participant referred to: getting representations of Native people 'wrong,' and being insensitive or disrespectful to Native people. Participants all agreed that Native *and* non-Native knowledge producers could do both. But, as Mark stated, everyone was only expected to "make their best efforts to tell the truth and be respectful." Using this argument, participants clearly saw it possible that if outsider researchers could 'get it right' and 'be nice,' then the 'possible' detrimental effects of non-Native research could be avoided altogether.

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<sup>24</sup> This is remarkably similar to Mark's vision of himself.

They cited examples of outsider researchers who had done so<sup>25</sup> including themselves and various other outsider researchers. In an attempt to absolve themselves and their chosen form of knowledge production of direct responsibility in this matter, some participants, such as Ed and Mark, referred to those in other disciplines as being just as or even more likely to ‘get it wrong’ and hence, do damaging work.

Participants consistently envisioned both themselves and their own work on Native issues very positively. None of the six participants, for example, could see any ways in which they or their own work might further oppress First Nations people. Instead, every participant saw their work as empowering, if not only to Native people, then to people in general, and then eventually to Aboriginal people. Since participants understood Indigenous people and their culture to be decidedly different from Euro-Canadian culture, as seen here and in previous sections, all of them also stated that they were needed as educators of non-Native people about “a people and a culture that they (Euro-Canadians) don’t always encounter” (Ron) and used words like “bridges,” “messengers,” “story-tellers,” “facilitators,” “helpers,” and “allies” to describe themselves. In addition, participants seemed to envision their roles as neutral observers who could not always “advocate” but could help “bridge the gap,” between Native and non-Native cultures. Furthermore, they described their role in relation to Native people as a benevolent one. For example, Kate described herself as a resource to “help” Native people and students, Helen “helped” by gathering stories from dying Elders, Mark ‘helped’ by demonstrating the humanity of Native people in his films, Ron “helped” by informing non-Natives about Native people, Ed saw himself as “helping” organize his Native friends’ conferences and “providing a direct service” to Native communities, and Alex saw that in his “modest” role as a “good communicator,” he could do nothing short of “changing the public mythology” about Native people. Many of these activities, however, were informed by imperial beliefs and as such, did not effectively challenge the hegemonic practices these participants claimed they were interrupting in their work. In fact, it can be argued that they actively perpetuate systems of domination and

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<sup>25</sup> Many participants’ positive descriptions of the work of outsider researchers are also covered in the previous section under *Views of Native Knowledge Producers*.



exclusions by providing images of 'a dead and dying, helpless, unskilled and unorganized Native people and culture.'

Although Ed and Kate, both scholars, referred to their employed positions as educators, evaluators and assessors of Aboriginal people and programs, they repeatedly stated that they were much more comfortable viewing themselves as "facilitators" located between Native and non-Native people or between Native people only - in conversations, training programs, conferences, curriculum development and decision-making. Ed and Kate did not, however, mention or address any issues of power as privileged whites in such a position.<sup>26</sup> Their role as facilitators, therefore, implicitly relies on two key factors, both informed by a cultural difference model. One is a notion of the necessity of bridging two "different" worlds, with non-Natives like themselves serving as necessary and neutral links to educate each side on Native as well as "mainstream" societal structures. The second notion is a colonial and racist one assuming the inherent "incompetence" of Native people: it implies that without a white facilitator's presence in the room, dialogue or organization, Native people will not discuss pertinent matters with one another nor be capable of communicating their ideas effectively.

In addition, the role of facilitator, since it depends largely upon a cultural difference model where there is a marked underemphasis on material factors, negates the implications of white power and privilege. When some participants were asked how they reconciled the dilemma of being privileged Euro-Canadians employed in the field of Native issues, they appeared strikingly untroubled by this. In Ed's words, "it's not a big deal... it's a positive problem." Seeing the implications of their own privilege as irrelevant or non-existent, participants then spoke readily of the need for cooperation, collaboration, partnership, mutual respect, and collegiality between themselves and Native people. Moreover, participants like Mark and Ron warned that when Native people begin to speak a language of independence - ie., wanting self-government and the "right" to tell their own stories, they "alienate many of the people that would otherwise be their allies."

Evidence of the participants' racism, power and privilege, although always salient and woven throughout

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<sup>26</sup> Neither did any other participants who envisioned themselves in similar roles.

my dialogue with them, came to a particular forefront when asked how they felt about perhaps ceasing to write about Native peoples' experiences. Mark, when being informed of the fact that some Native and non-Natives have asked whites to stop writing about Aboriginal experiences, stated, "Don't tell me I can't do something because of the colour of my skin or my gender because I wouldn't make those prohibitions and I think that we're getting on really, really scary ground here." He referred to the request as "cultural fascism" and stated:

Obviously, if you put it in the context of the historical imbalance of power between Native and non-Native Canadians, then if you see the relationship of a film-maker or writer in that guise, then you are going to demonize. And I think that's a lot of what's going on.

Ed stated that the request was "ludicrous":

How else can you proceed in a democracy if we're prohibited from making comments about what we see, right? We can make them, and then, of course, it's legitimate for others to comment on those perceptions. That's what a democracy is about. So, I think it's ludicrous to say that there's some things you can't talk about or some things you can't say. To me, it doesn't fit in any society, I don't care... If we live in a democracy, we live in a democracy.

Both Mark and Ed referred to such a request as being a "prohibition."

As van Dijk notes and as is evident here, elites will quickly forget the norms of tolerance and the value of equality that they supposedly espouse when their interests are challenged (1993: 8). All six of the participants agreed that, despite the potential ravaging effects of outsider research and knowledge production, to ask or suggest that non-Natives like themselves stop writing about Native experiences is to condone censorship. Following this argument, all of the participants, when asked whether or not Outsider research and writing on Native issues should continue, responded with a definite "yes" again restating that they were against censorship of any kind. None of the participants cited appropriation as a challenge to Native people, even though, as we saw in Chapter One, appropriation is a genocidal move that effectively undermines the cultural decolonization and ultimate liberation of Native people.

In conclusion, through concentrating on individual scenarios where the intentions of outsiders and Native people alike were key, where the accuracy of representations of Native people was of utmost importance, and where outsiders like themselves were seen as neutral and helpful allies, facilitators or story-tellers, the Euro-

Canadian knowledge producers in this study avoided articulating the real implications of their locations within greater hegemonic structures. Within such structures, their own work and the work of other outsider researchers like them is directly linked to the continued oppression, exploitation, regulation and genocide of Native people. Participants seemed unaware of and/or unaffected by this injustice. By continually referring to and re-focussing on the ways in which Native people, their culture, and their knowledge was “different” from that of non-Natives, participants did not then have to trace in real or practical terms the actual material relationships between themselves and those they studied. This allowed these white elites to significantly distance themselves from any issues relating to the actual implications of their unchecked racial power, unrecognized privilege and significant complicity involving the oppression of First Nations people.

However, rather than one’s personal intentions and the accuracy of individual portrayals, it is the entire system that employs and rewards non-Natives like those in this study who write, study, observe, exploit and gaze upon marginalized Native people that must be not only concentrated on but seriously interrogated. Using anti-racist discourses rather than ones emphasizing difference, responsible knowledge producers like the ones in this study could cease attempting to explain racial, cultural and ethnic differences, and more importantly, focus on the genocidal but socially-acceptable inequity and injustice currently being reproduced within Canadian society in which they themselves play a role.

## Concluding Remarks

“There can be no artistic breakthrough or social progress without some form of crisis in civilization - a crisis usually generated by organizations or collectivities that convince ordinary people to put their bodies on the line.” - Michel Foucault, 1980: 98

In this thesis, I attempted to look at outsider research, and as its title implies, how white writers “explore” Native issues, knowledge, and experiences. This project is not only about knowledge production, however, but about issues of access and injustice as they directly relate to land, resources and people. I cited within these pages those who spoke about social responsibility and the importance of recognizing one’s complicity as well as those who did not. Anyone who is reading this thesis, it can be argued, is privileged. The issue is not one of placing blame. Nor is it to point to the six participants in this study and show how they, in particular, are racist, implying others are not. It is not even to demonstrate how the non-Native elites interviewed here are members of a certain group within society, so sometimes see (or don’t see, as the case may be) things in some remarkably similar ways to one another. The issue is one of injustice, and the fact that there is a cultural genocide occurring within Canada at the current time that too few non-Aboriginal people take note of and disrupt. When I speak about agency, responsibility and complicity as privileged members of society, I mean turning to look honestly and critically at ourselves as white and non-Aboriginal knowledge producers, at those who are around us and those who are not, and seriously interrogating the greater structure that positions us in various ways and in different places for the benefit of some and to the detriment of others.

The word “hope” appears on the pages of this thesis more times than I had initially realized. Here is what participants said about it - with particular reference to their own work as outsiders:

- “*hopefully* we can have a mutually respectful discussion about it”
- “*Hopefully*, if the films are used in Native education, it would be empowering.”
- “The kind of work that I do would *hopefully* lead to Native people assuming power.”
- “*Hopefully*, they are being seen by people who otherwise might not wonder about those issues.”
- “*Hopefully*, at the end of the day, people do see the work I’ve done.”

- “It’s *hopefully* to give them some glimpses or some insight into maybe a people and a culture they don’t always encounter.”
- “which *hopefully* allows their concerns to be heard”

However, participants’ statements which followed *after* those ones made on their being hopeful are perhaps more indicative of what I actually heard throughout this study by the non-Native knowledge producers:

- “but don’t tell me I can’t do something because of the colour of my skin or my gender”
- “I have worked with lots of different, well, with *a* Native director on a couple of occasions”
- “It’s a tricky one to put into words, but it’s what I’m trying to do.”
- “it would increase understanding between the races”
- “And then it’s up to them to draw whatever conclusions they want to.”
- “into maybe a people and a culture they don’t always encounter”
- “That’s about as far as a journalist can go.”

Hence, before, during, and now, at the end of this study, I remain very concerned about the continuing marginalization of Aboriginal people through outsider research and knowledge production. In any case, it is not my own feelings that are relevant here, but the lives of those whose bodies are being “put on the line” (Foucault, 1980: 98), and violently impacted upon every day in Canada.

I do not pity Native people, and I would expect that this work is not seen as such an effort. After all, as Sherene Razack (1994) has written, “pity is the emotional response to vulnerability, a response that does not necessarily lead to respect - that is, to a willingness to interrogate and ultimately to change the conditions that hurt people” (412). However, I *do* feel that there is great change that is needed within Canada and on a global scale that begins to look at and seriously question the ways hegemonic structures work to benefit a certain few while harming many others. It is socially inhumane to continue to justify these inequities by moves of innocence or of guilt. We are all implicated in this work. No one is left untouched.

George Dei suggests that we “seek to connect who we are as individuals with a larger project of social transformation” (1994: 2). He has noted that anti-racist education is more than a discourse:

It is a call to make the theoretical discourse of 'empowerment' real, a call for a fundamental restructuring of power relations in the schools and in wider society. It is also about educators acknowledging their relative power and privileged positions in the schools and a preparedness to question this power and privilege. (1)

Having reviewed the relevant literature of Native and non-Native writers and scholars, having interviewed the non-Aboriginal participants of this study, and having reflected on the issues myself, I can only agree. Unless we, as privileged knowledge producers, are prepared to examine our own privileges and the resultant assumptions we make about who is the expert and who the object of study, white supremacy cannot be interrupted.

However, I would like to make it very clear, that I am *not* saying that white, non-Aboriginal people can *never* work on Native issues or with Aboriginal people themselves. In fact, I believe that quite the opposite is true: non-Aboriginal people *can* be allies, *can* work in solidarity with First Nations people, and *can* produce knowledge on Native issues in efforts to make effective change, as my own work here as an outsider researcher attempts to demonstrate. At the same time, however, there are ways in which this can be done responsibly, and ways that it can not. One of the ways that is dangerous, at best, genocidal, at worst, is focusing exclusively on the so-called cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, environmental, and 'other' differences of Native people, without critically discussing crucial issues such as cultural genocide, colonialism, appropriation, agency, access, racism, sexism, poverty, gross material inequities, and non-Aboriginal complicity, power, privilege, and social responsibility, all of which directly relate to the lives of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people within Canada. Without such a shift in paradigms, there can be no effective change, and change is what is needed most.

I will conclude with the words of Enid Lee, who writes:

Researchers and teachers have a responsibility to help young people discover from history and from the present society that power is seldom willingly shared. We can demonstrate by our own activities that anti-racist work is a struggle, a serious though not necessarily a joyless one... Part of this struggle to stop racism must be the willingness to name and overcome the contradictions that often prevent us from reaching the goals of fairness and dignity for children of all races. The other part of this struggle is to remember to celebrate when we have helped to change the words 'fairness' and 'dignity' into daily experiences. (1994: 25)

It is my hope that many more people will have reason to celebrate in the future.

**Appendix A**

**PARTICIPANT RELEASE AGREEMENT**

## PARTICIPANT RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the qualitative study, *Outsider Research: When White Writers Explore Native Issues, Knowledge, and Experiences*, being conducted by Susanne Dabulskis through the Graduate Department of Education, at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto under the following conditions:

1. That I grant permission for all interviews to be taped.
2. That all data collected (including informal conversations, telephone conversations, or conversations held before or after taping has ended), will be considered confidential at all times.
3. That all audio cassette tapes, transcripts of tapes, field notes, computer disks, and other confidential information be kept by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet at all times, unless being used.
4. That my real name, and the real names of persons or places mentioned, my places of work (if applicable), and/or any other personally-identifying information will not be used in the data or results.
5. That I choose my own pseudonym, if so desired, to be used in the study.
6. That I grant permission for the members of Susanne Dabulskis's thesis committee to view data pertaining to me (under a pseudonym), if required, during data analysis.
7. That I may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason.
8. That I grant permission for the research materials to be used in the process of completing a M.A. degree, and any further publications.

.....

**I have read and fully understand the above terms and conditions of my participation in this study, and I agree to participate.**

**Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix B**

**POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me your age, your occupation, and briefly describe your involvement/link with Native issues.
2. When did you become involved in Native issues?
3. What drew you to this area of research/study/involvement?
4. How would you describe your experience in this field? For example, in what, if any, ways have aspects of your involvement changed? In what ways have you and/or your ways in thinking about it changed/remained the same?
5. Have you published any articles or produced any knowledge (films, articles, books, reports, conference papers) on Native issues? If so, could you outline these for me?
6. If you have produced knowledge in this area, what do you see as the goal of this knowledge production?
7. Do you see publishing and/or producing knowledge as an “Outsider” on Native issues as an effective way of empowering Native peoples? How so?
8. Do you see any ways in which non-Natives themselves might benefit from their involvement with the Native movement and/or Native individuals/communities? Could you describe these to me?
9. Is the empowerment of Native people the ultimate aim of the knowledge you have produced in this area?
10. Can you see any ways in which publishing or film producing by Outsiders could be detrimental to the empowerment of Native people, even by those who “mean well”?
11. As you are probably aware, a large number of Native authors and scholars such as Lee Maracle, Patricia Monture-Angus, Greg Young-Ing, and several others, have asked non-Natives to stop writing about their experience. In addition, there has been quite a controversy about outsider films such as “Where the Spirit Lives” on Native residential schools. What do you think or feel about such a request? Do you agree with this position? If so, why? If not, why not?
12. Do you believe Native writers/scholars/film producers face special challenges compared to their non-Native colleagues? If so, what might these be and how did you come to learn about these?
13. If you believe that Native knowledge producers face special challenges, how do you see these challenges being remedied or eased?
14. Have you attempted to encourage, in any way, Native people themselves to write/produce knowledge about their or their people’s experience? If so, could you please outline these for me?

15. What do you see as the most beneficial ways for non-Natives to become involved in Native issues? For example, if I were interested in somehow contributing to social justice in this way, what would you suggest I do?
16. What do you see as the most effective ways Native people could empower themselves?
17. What Natives scholar or writers have had an impact or influence on you, if any?
18. We talked about some of the benefits of this type of work, what do you see as a disadvantage(s), if there are any, to both yourself and to the Native individuals/communities you work with?
19. Do you see any ways in which your work might further silence, oppress, or disempower Native people?

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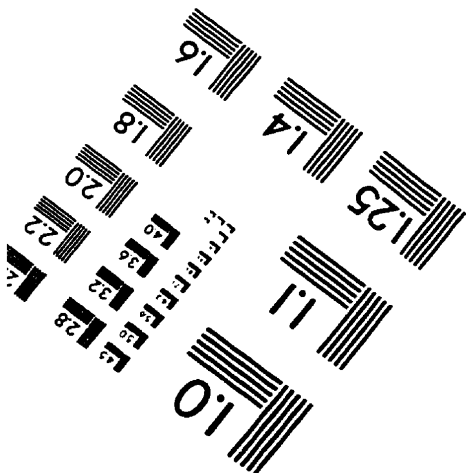
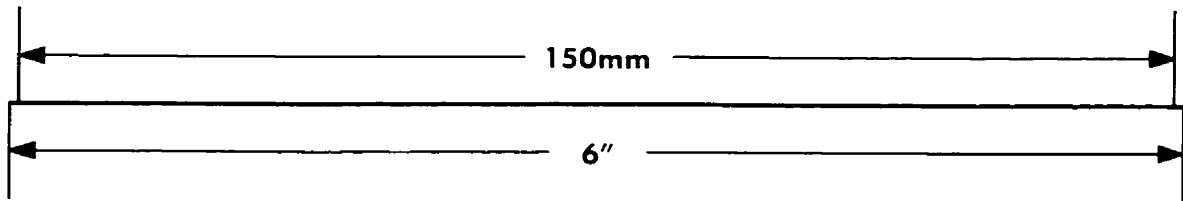
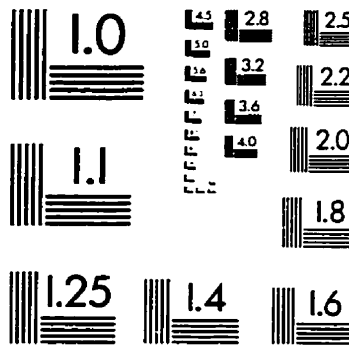
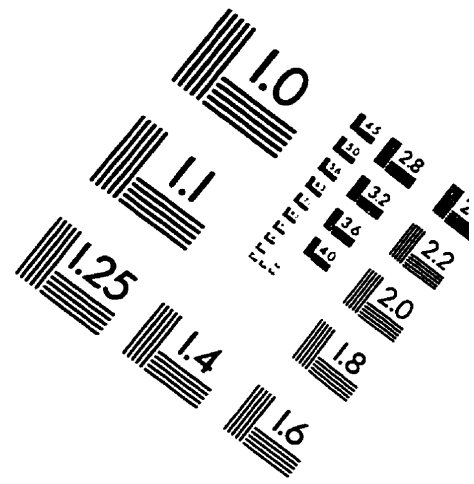
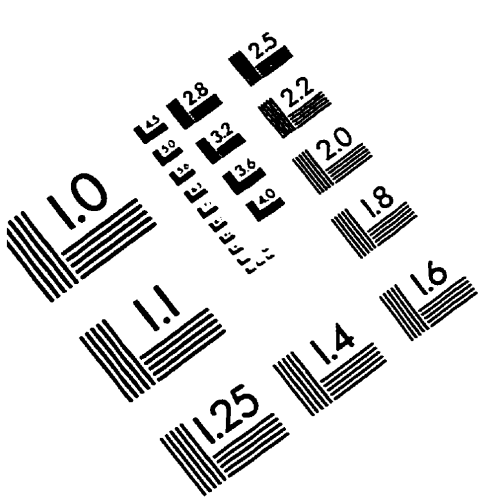
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