

The universe and my brain in a jar: Canadians, universities, and Indigenous Peoples

by

Lyanne Quirt

Hon.B.Arts Sc, from McMaster University, 2005

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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During the last decade, the University of Victoria (UVic) in British Columbia, Canada has developed several policies that aim to recruit and retain Indigenous students. UVic is a leader in a wider Canadian trend of encouraging Indigenous youth to complete high school and pursue post-secondary education, but ensuring that universities are safe spaces for Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge is a significant challenge, particularly given the historical roles that universities have held in colonisation. Universities' influence extends beyond their campuses, as the majority of Canadian business, media, and political leaders train in universities. If universities are to develop a positive relationship with Indigenous peoples, then, one must also consider the kind of education that non-Indigenous students receive. This thesis draws together the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, using UVic as a case study, to examine Indigenous-university relationships, discussing both positive developments and areas for improvement.

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Dedication

To CP; I hope it's as good as a new pair of boots.

Opening: Who am I to write about this?

I am a white, middle-class, female Canadian Citizen
brought up in Ottawa
currently living, working, and studying on Coast Salish Territory

My encounter with oppression is really limited to challenging my own racism,
heterosexism, and classism
and my tendency to slip back into problematic ways of thinking and being
(it's so easy to do)

I usually identify as a feminist

Much as I criticize the modern university, I'm doing pretty well in the system
but then, I'm the kind of person who's supposed to be doing well

I'm pretty good at math and science
I just don't find that they're a lot of fun to study
and I've never been able to make hydrogen gas "pop" in a lab

I don't know where I'm going to go from here
(hopefully it will involve more sleep and fewer word processors)

I read Galeano and crossed 'bananas' off my grocery list
but I'm not sure that solved global power relationships

I don't believe that research is ever objective
or that we'll ever know everything, even if we study really hard

My undergraduate degree was in an interdisciplinary program
and my masters program is interdisciplinary as well
(I have a math minor)

I didn't go to law school, even though I could have
(I know law school would have been easier to explain at parties)

I tend to get flustered when people challenge my ideas
so sometimes I just don't bring them up

I'm trying to learn ways of living well on this land that isn't mine
and to live that way
It's a process.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“The mainstream has never run clean, perhaps never can. Part of mainstream education involves learning to ignore this absolutely, with a sanctioned ignorance” (Spivak 1999 2).

Welcome to the University of Victoria (UVic), a school that promotes itself as “outstanding people – real life experience – making a difference.” The University of Victoria, located on Coast Salish territory on the southern end of Vancouver Island, has a student population of approximately 18 000 students, of which just over six hundred self-identify as Indigenous. With the largest co-op education program in Western Canada, a significant focus on community-based research, and a number of initiatives that work with Indigenous communities, the University of Victoria has established its reputation as a school whose students and faculty focus on ‘making a difference’ in the world outside of the ivory towers. UVic graduates have the highest rate of satisfaction with their overall educational experience of any university in Canada, with 97 percent of graduates reporting satisfaction (canadian-universities.net 2008).

The University of Victoria is situated within the province of British Columbia, a province where, as in other Canadian provinces, relationships among the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that share the territory are problematic at best. British Columbia is in a unique situation because the majority of the province was settled without any formal treaty process during the period following contact. As Indigenous communities have gathered strength and challenged building, mining, and other development projects in recent decades, tensions within the province have flared, and the provincial government has attempted to restore economic stability in the province by

working to develop a so-called “new relationship” with the province’s Indigenous peoples. So far, the resulting processes have been deeply flawed. As in most of the country, Indigenous communities in British Columbia face disproportionate levels of poverty, unemployment, violence, and incarceration compared with the general population, and it is not clear that the “new relationship” will really have any success in addressing these issues.¹ Any move toward genuine change is hampered because the province’s *whitestream*² population is largely ignorant regarding the history that led to, and the complexity of, the current challenges that Indigenous peoples are facing.

It would seem that the University of Victoria holds a unique potential in terms of working toward overcoming this general ignorance. Universities have an obvious role in education because they are filled with students, but there are broader effects as well since most teachers, politicians, and business leaders today have passed through a university in preparation for their careers. Most university professors have opportunities to engage with difficult or controversial questions because they are offered a certain level of academic freedom through their tenure. Universities also bring together society’s youth with older generations; ideally, this enables mentoring relationships that connect scholarly wisdom with youthful energy.

Some professors take this role very seriously as they encourage their students to apply the knowledge they develop at university in their lives outside of school. In the first year

¹ For an in-depth discussion of the flaws with the BC Treaty Process, see Taiaiake Alfred’s *Deconstructing the BC Treaty Process*.

² I am using the term *whitestream* as defined by Claude Denis in *We Are Not You*: “Adapting from feminism’s notion of ‘malestream,’ I say whitestream to indicate that Canadian society, while principally structured on the basis of the European, ‘white,’ experience, is far from being simply ‘white’ in socio-demographic, economic, and cultural terms” (Denis 1997, 178). There is a lot of diversity within whitestream/settler/non-Indigenous groups in Canada; it is not my intent to render invisible Francophones, people of colour, or people who otherwise do not fit neatly within the categories I have set down for the purposes of organisational clarity. These terms are not perfect, but I hope that they work well enough as a means to convey my arguments.

of my undergraduate degree, one of my professors encouraged her students to conceptualise their academic careers in terms of social practice; in her words,

One of my aims as a writing teacher is to demystify certain lofty (and often debilitating) notions about ‘the writer’ and ‘the intellectual’ in order to instill the idea in students that, as citizens, we all have the freedom and responsibility to use our time and talent: i) to critique existing knowledge; ii) to preserve and refresh what is good in our language and culture; and iii) to create appropriate knowledge for our generation (Bowerbank 2004 71).

If all students, and all faculty, were to engage in this process, universities would hold tremendous potentials as sites of social change. Unfortunately, current trends in Canadian universities may be diminishing this potential. My aims with this thesis are therefore aligned with Dr. Bowerbank’s challenge: to critique the structures and trends in Canadian universities that hinder their potential as sites of social change; to acknowledge many important developments that have been undertaken in universities to work toward this kind of change; and to offer my own vision, limited though it may be, for changes that would contribute to universities' potentials as sites where appropriate knowledge for my generation can continue to be generated. Throughout this, I will be focusing specifically on Indigenous-whitestream relationships in Canada, and I will be referring to the University of Victoria as a case study. Many scholars have already written useful critiques of the modern university, and I reference many of these throughout this thesis.

Although it is on the forefront of social change in terms of developing concrete policies that aim to improve the experiences of students and faculty from outside of the whitestream, the University of Victoria, like all Canadian universities, still has work to do if it is to be an institution that not only tolerates but welcomes diverse worldviews.

Relative to other Canadian universities, the University of Victoria has certainly made an effort in this area. UVic has a policy that states that public lectures and meetings are to open by recognising that the University is located on Indigenous territory, and by acknowledging the Coast Salish peoples whose territory the University occupies. This policy is usually respected, if somewhat awkwardly.

Certainly the campus itself holds several physical reminders that the land is home to Indigenous peoples and cultures, from the Indigenous art in the library, to the many totem poles that stand outside the buildings. The University of Victoria is also home to LE, NONET, a pilot project co-funded by the University and the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation that aims to “support the success of Aboriginal students at UVic.” Still, UVic faces challenges to overcome. Many Indigenous students still encounter racism during their studies UVic, and often these students are left with a lack of satisfactory options for redressing such situations. University research protocols sometimes do not accommodate, and may in fact contradict, concerns specific to Indigenous students and Indigenous communities. Further, many whitestream students who pass through the University of Victoria are able to avoid engaging with the questions surrounding Indigenous-whitestream relationships in Canada. Although universities have tremendous potential as sites of critical self-reflection, this potential depends on the extent to which students and faculty choose to engage with difficult questions; currently, many do not.

There is no question that modern universities are very influential. In 2004-2005, for example, more than one million students were registered in Canadian universities.

Universities also provided one million research jobs (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006

35). More than half of the Canadian population aged 25-54 currently hold post secondary degrees, and it is estimated that two thirds of new jobs created by 2008 will require post secondary education (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 35). In the United States, these numbers are still larger.

The university's influence, its cultural impact, goes beyond those who are working or studying in the academy; the people in positions of power in most industries in the Canadian economy, from government, to the military, to corporations, to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), are trained at the university, and the few exceptions are rapidly becoming fewer as the "self-made" individuals from the post-war era are reaching retirement. It is this influence that interests me: the way that universities shape and reflect the worldviews of the powerful and the dominant within Western society in ways that prevent whitestream governments, institutions, and individuals from developing better relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities. As long as universities are not effectively encouraging the majority of students to overcome problematic ways of thinking, university graduates will continue to shape society's institutions accordingly.

The Plan

To begin, I will trace the Western university's development, beginning with its origins in Medieval Europe. For students and to some extent for faculty within universities today, it can be difficult to conceptualise a university that is significantly different from today's institutions. It may seem that universities have always been much as they are now, and as a result, it may be difficult to imagine possibilities for change. My goal in providing an overview of the historical developments that have shaped today's universities is to

provide a broader perspective; understanding the many significant changes that have already occurred in Western universities may open up conceptual room for new possibilities. Throughout this chapter, I also describe imperial and colonial influences that have shaped university structures, because these structures may be particularly problematic for Indigenous students who choose to enroll in universities.

In my third chapter, I provide a survey of several recent academic works that offer various critiques of the modern university. Although few of these scholars look at Indigenous issues directly, many offer perspectives that are relevant to my arguments. In particular, many scholars are observing a trend toward the corporatisation of universities, in which these institutions are embracing business models for their operations. As a result, many students are beginning to perceive university education as a credential to be purchased in order to increase one's value to future employers. These developments have a significant impact on the quality of education that most university students are able to achieve, particularly because many developments that enhance a university's financial well being – large class sizes, lowered academic standards, and increases in online or distance learning rather than face-to-face seminars and lectures – make it more difficult for professors to encourage their students to engage in the forms of critical self-reflection that are necessary for good scholarship dealing with Indigenous issues. These problems are further compounded by an increase in student disengagement, particularly at the undergraduate level; many disengaged students (who may make up as much as 50 per cent of a typical university's undergraduate population) seek out classes in which they do not have to work, or think, very hard (Coté and Allahar 2007). Many such students are content to graduate without ever questioning the opinions they brought with them to

university; this is particularly problematic given the widespread ignorance regarding Indigenous issues in Canada.

Indigenous peoples³ have also brought forward critiques of the university, critiques that need to be taken seriously. In the fourth chapter, I look at some of the ways that the university impacts Indigenous communities, both in Canada and internationally. I will also look at some of the experiences Indigenous students face in university, the steps institutions are making to try to improve these experiences, and the critiques that Indigenous people offer of university structures more generally. In this chapter and the chapters that follow, I look to the University of Victoria for specific illustrative examples. In addition to these challenges, I outline several of the steps that the University of Victoria has taken to accommodate the concerns of Indigenous students and faculty.

In the fifth chapter, I begin with a description of the nature of whitestream ignorance of Indigenous issues in Canada. I argue that this ignorance is particularly problematic because it involves a level of denial – a conscious attempt, by many individuals, to avoid honest reflection on these difficult questions. I connect this denial with my previous discussion about student disengagement, and I look at the ways in which these phenomena combine to make good teaching on these topics particularly challenging. I end this chapter with a discussion of the role of physical geography in perpetuating whitestream denial. I argue that the physical landscape of many Canadian universities

³ Much as my use of the term *whitestream* overlooks much of the diversity within this general group, when I refer to *Indigenous peoples*, I am overlooking the many differences within and among different Indigenous communities, and also the overlap that has occurred between Indigenous and Settler communities as a result of several centuries of living on the same land, including intermarriage, etc. Again, my intention here is not to downplay the significant variation within these broad categories, but to provide some organisational clarity for the sake of my arguments.

erases the land's history as an Indigenous territory, and serves to perpetuate problematic ways of thinking through what I call a "hidden curriculum."

In my concluding chapter, I look at the idea that has begun to emerge that a new vision of the university could serve as a model for a parallel vision of the world. In this chapter, I bring forward my own suggestions to bring about positive change in universities, including both specific steps and a more general vision.

Terminology

Several of the words I am using throughout this thesis have confusing or multiple meanings, so I will take a moment here to explain what I mean when I use the following terms.

Definition: Racism

As Sheila Wilmot discusses in *Taking Responsibility, Taking Direction: White Anti-Racism in Canada*, in everyday dialogue *racism* is often interpreted only in terms of extreme acts that are "abnormal, unusual and irrational" (Wilmot 2005 22). As Wilmot explains, this interpretation ignores the source of these more extreme acts, and thus also ignores the more subtle, everyday behaviour, acts, and attitudes, in addition to the structural laws, policies, and programs, that make racism a widespread, systemic issue. The racism I am talking about in this thesis reveals itself in multiple ways. Some forms are conscious, such as ignoring or dismissing comments made by people of colour in discussions, telling racist jokes, or belittling people who try to call attention to these acts as racist. There is also a less-active form of racism, present in stereotypes (even "positive" stereotypes) of non-white peoples, and in our silence when we do not speak to these issues. Immigration laws and programs that give preference, whether implicitly or

explicitly, to “white and middle- and upper-class migrants” in determining who enters this country, and the reality many immigrants face once they are here (when, for example, immigrants of colour who are doctors and engineers find themselves driving cabs and struggling to meet expenses) are examples of a form of racism that is structured into state institutions (Wilmot 2005 23).

Everyone, including myself, is implicated in this kind of racism when one falls into silent acceptance of the status quo. While blatant acts of racism occur in today's universities, they are usually (though not always) openly criticized and denounced by the “tolerant,” “multicultural” mainstream. The more subtle, systemic, and structural forms of racism present in universities are often much more difficult to address, since they are often more easily dismissed as non-racist, rather than being recognized for what they are.

Definition: Imperialist/imperialism

I am using the term *imperialism* to mean the ideology and practice of imposing a way of living on alternative ways of living through intervention (military force) and interference (cultural, political, and social programs).⁴ Thus, for example, imperialism is present in the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programs that require the nations of the Tricontinent⁵ to re-structure their economies to fit within the global capitalist system (usually to the disadvantage of the nation in question) in order to receive financial aid. Imperialism is also at work when often well-intentioned people working for an NGO try to change a foreign cultural practice (e.g. the way women dress, the way a local economy functions, the physical infrastructure in a community, the way children are educated or

⁴ Thanks to Dr. James Tully and Tim Smith for helping me understand and articulate this concept.

⁵ I am using the term “tricontinent” to refer to the nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that are often described as the “third world” or the “global south.” I prefer the term “tricontinent” because the other terms define this part of the world only in relation to wealthier countries, rather than as nations in their own right.

the things children learn during their education) without first establishing with the local people(s) whether or not these changes are welcome, or without being aware of the power imbalance that is present between the “helpers” and the “helped.” This is not to say that all cross-cultural contact or dialogue is imperial. Non-imperial relationships that cross cultures are possible when both (or all) sides involved acknowledge and are constantly aware of the power differential at play and thus do everything they can to respect one another within that dynamic.

As with racism, there are both blatant and subtle forms of imperialism. Many people, both inside and outside academia, recognize the 2003 United States invasion of Iraq as an imperial war. That is, they recognize that this invasion intended to serve the economic interests of the United States, e.g., by securing access to oil. These same people, however, may not recognize that when an NGO implements an international development program, it is similarly acting according to the economic interests of the G8 Countries by re-shaping a community’s economy to fit within global capitalist systems, often to the detriment of the community that is being re-shaped. There are a number of words (Modernisation, Globalisation, Democratisation) that disguise this subtle form of Western imperialism.

Definition: Culture

When I write about *culture*, I am writing about “the ‘truths’ about life [that a group of people] believe to be totally self-evident and backed by experience” (Hudspith 2004 180). Thus, a culture is a set of assumptions about life, including what we would normally call *values*. These assumptions hold varying degrees of importance – some are nearly interchangeable, while others are so fundamental to a given culture’s way of

perceiving the world that they could be called ‘sacred;’ without them, life would be unthinkable. According to this understanding, then, science, technology, economy, social structures, political and legal organisations, morality, and religion are not independent segments of human activity, but are intertwined dimensions of a single culture, specifically, in this case, the culture of the Modern West (Hudspith 2004, 177-177-194).⁶ Western debates about multiculturalism often emphasise the separation of Church and State, for example, but even the idea that these two aspects of life occupy separate spheres is an idea rooted in the same culture that developed both Western ideas of government and governance and Western ideas about religion. My interpretation of culture as described here stands in opposition to the liberal multicultural interpretation, in which culture is generally represented as particular customs (costume, cuisine, religion, and art, generally) that lie somewhere on top of a set of core values that are supposedly common to all humanity. It is much easier to recognize “assumptions [which] appear so obvious that people do not know what they are assuming because no other way of putting things has ever occurred to them” when the people making the assumptions have a different cultural understanding of the world than one’s own (Whitehead in Pelikan and Newman, John Henry, Idea of a university 1992 47). Throughout the following arguments, I am attempting to call into question cultural assumptions that are particular to the West from various perspectives that have somehow managed to see these assumptions

⁶ There is not one single description of “Western Culture” that holds true for every individual in the West, but for the purpose of this thesis, I will be operating with the assumption that there are particular themes that are common to the majority of Western ways of thinking. In our globalized world, not all people of Western European ancestry still hold to these tenets of supposes Western Culture (I like to think I do not, but I keep finding bits of Western theory embedded in my thought processes) and in parallel, many cultures from outside the West have shifted, either by choice or through intervention, to reflect some aspects of Western culture to varying degrees.

from outside the cultural mindset. Of course I will probably miss a few – I have no doubt that there are a number of assumptions that I am not aware that I am making.

Methodology

I recognize that many of the issues I will be discussing are not unique to universities. Many similar issues are present in elementary schools, high schools, and community colleges, and in non-academic workplaces. Regarding curriculum, many of the seeds for current university curricula are planted much earlier in a student's education. I am focusing this study on the university, rather than other levels of education, for several reasons. In Canada, primary and secondary curricula in public schools are dictated by provincial and territorial governments. University curricula are not subject to the same direct influence.⁷ This means that the curricula for primary and secondary education tend to be relatively similar in content within a province or territory,⁸ but there may be significant variation between provinces. While Canadian universities span equally diverse geographic regions and grew out of very different circumstances and philosophies, during the last half-century they have become increasingly uniform in content, so that in a sense, it does not much make a difference which university a student chooses for his or her undergraduate education (Pocklington and Tupper 2002).

The flip side of the lack of direct government control with regard to university curriculum in Canada is that, in theory, it could be significantly easier for a university to implement significant changes should its students, faculty, administration, and staff

⁷ Certainly the government influences curriculum indirectly through the selection of departments and research projects for government grants and funding, but private corporations also have at least as much, and possibly more influence in this regard.

⁸ There are exceptions, of course, depending on the overall quality of any particular school or teacher.

decide that a particular change is in their collective best interest. Certainly implementing changes is a slow and difficult process. For a primary or secondary institution, however, similar changes would involve an additional and significant level of bureaucracy.

I am limiting my discussion of the university to universities in the global north, specifically Anglophone Canadian universities and the institutions that have influenced them. Furthermore, I am focusing primarily on the experiences of whitestream students; often people of colour and Indigenous peoples have significantly different experiences as students, staff, or faculty in Canadian universities. I will be including some discussion on this latter subject, but other writers with much more direct experience have already written several excellent works.⁹ As a person who has only begun to realize the extent of this different experience, I have endeavoured to do it justice.

I will bring in critiques that come from perspectives that are able to call out our most common cultural assumptions, both from people who stand in the vast world that lies beyond Western Culture, and from people of the West who have managed to step outside of common whitestream assumptions. I will focus, though not exclusively, on Canadian universities relationships with Indigenous peoples. I have chosen this focus because Settler Canadians¹⁰ are involved, whether we want to be or not, in a relationship with the peoples whose land we are living on and changing. Most Settler Canadians expend a great deal of effort either avoiding or ignoring knowledge of this reality, as I discuss in detail in Chapter Five. It seems to me that the institution that many whitestream

⁹ See for example (Tagore 2006), (Mihsuah and Wilson 2004) etc.

¹⁰ I use the term *settler* to refer to the non-Indigenous peoples of North America, both immigrants and their descendants. I prefer this term over “Canadians” both because it is less ambiguous (i.e. some Indigenous individuals in Canada also identify as Canadians) and because the word calls attention to the Settler-Indigenous relationship as one with close connections to the relationship that was established with the first Colonial settlers from Western Europe. I would argue, in fact, this relationship has not changed significantly with time, much as we might like to believe otherwise.

Canadians embrace as the centre of their knowledge-production is a good place to start in developing Canadian whitestream-Indigenous relationships in a healthier direction.

Throughout this project, and throughout my time in the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria, I have been constantly, sometimes painfully aware of my position as a non-Indigenous person writing and talking about issues that involve Indigenous peoples. I want to be clear that it is not my goal to “study” Indigenous peoples, but instead to examine the whitestream relationship with them in Canada. It is my goal to look at this relationship in the wider context of British Columbian and Canadian history, and in the present, because it is necessary to challenge the dominant view that, as Mary-Ellen Kelm writes, “our relations with the First Nations were ultimately largely benevolent” (Kelm 1998 xxiii). With this in mind, I have endeavoured throughout this project to avoid positioning myself as speaking for Indigenous peoples; when I have presented Indigenous scholars’ and students’ words, I have quoted directly when possible, but the reader should remember that I am presenting all of these ideas from what is ultimately an outsider’s perspective. I believe it would be more problematic to try to examine the Indigenous-Settler relationship without presenting any Indigenous words or viewpoints on the issue; I hope that I have been able to include these important voices in a respectful manner. It is certainly my intention to do so.

Chapter 2: History

It can be difficult to step outside of one's own perspective. From a position within the Modern university, it can be hard to imagine a different kind of university. Those who passed through the university a decade or two ago may observe changes: more buildings on campus, larger class sizes, changing academic standards, a proliferation in available clubs and activities, changing rules about on-campus drinking or co-ed residences. These observations are often coloured by nostalgia, and even though there have been obvious changes in the last fifty years, certain aspects of the institution may feel eternal and unchanging: the disciplinary divisions, the structures of administrative power, even the ideas that motivate students to pursue a university education.

In developing a new or different vision of the university, then, it is important to remember that many of these aspects of the Modern university are actually very recent developments. To illustrate this further, I will be tracing a general history of the Modern university, beginning with its origins in the twelfth century. There has always been a tension at play in the university between the way a university actually runs and the new or critical ideas that its faculty and students are producing. This tension has drawn out the various changes to the university during the last 900 years, and is likely to continue to mould universities in the future.

With any vision of change, it is important to remember that the university is a continuously inhabited space; Bill Readings uses the metaphor of renovating a city. Massive changes cannot happen all at once, because people are living there. Similarly, a university cannot make sweeping changes suddenly without causing massive headaches to the students and faculty who have degrees, or projects, in progress. Instead, the

existing structures remain in place, and changes occur gradually – a new course here, a building retrofit there – until eventually, the whole has been transformed from its original form (Readings 1996).

In *Beyond the modern university: toward a constructive postmodern university*, Marcus Ford argues that the university's main identity has changed with time and in conjunction with Europe's own vision of itself through three particular eras: "Christianism" (476 CE until the Seventeenth Century), "Nationalism" (from the Seventeenth through the first half of the Twentieth Centuries), and "Economism" (approximately the last fifty years). Bill Readings interprets the university's history using similar categories with different names, using "Culture" instead of "Nationalism," and "Excellence" instead of "Economism."

I am approaching my discussion of the history of the university using similar categories for explanatory clarity. I recognize that these categories are oversimplifications. In any given time period, all of these broad categories overlap to some extent; a number of explicitly religious universities still exist, for example, in today's "economistic" age. Furthermore, whether at the level of the university or the nation, particular individuals and communities have always thought and acted in ways contrary to the mainstream. In universities, these dissenting or different voices have in fact often existed on the cutting edge, eventually influencing mainstream thought; other dissenting voices have remained small but consistent minorities. For much of the university's history, universities have sought specifically to protect these different points of view through policies of academic freedom, usually quite successfully. I am using these categories primarily to explore the development of aspects of the modern university, and to point to some of the major

historical ideas that continue to influence aspects of institutions of higher education today.

Similarly, I am drawing on examples of historical universities in specific countries, specifically England, France, Germany, Scotland, and the United States. With this approach, it is not my intent to imply that other institutions, within these or other countries, have not also influenced modern Anglophone universities in Canada. Instead, these should be interpreted as particular examples illustrate broader trends.

Category 1: “Christianism”

The West tends to link its “Great Institutions” back to the Greeks and the Romans, but in fact the Western university originated much later and was not classically inspired. Throughout the middle ages, following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Church was the dominant institution. The Roman Catholic Church (and later Protestant denominations) influenced law, architecture, art, philosophy, family life, and science in Europe, and the Church influenced the rise of the university. The University of Paris, for example, one of the first medieval Universities, grew out of a guild of scholars, centered around the Notre Dame Cathedral during the middle of the twelfth century, and was formally established in 1170. The University of Paris offered degrees in medicine, law, the liberal arts, and Christian theology. The influence of the Church is evident in the status accorded to the Doctor of Theology program – it was the hardest and the longest degree to obtain, requiring twice the study of law or medicine. Even the Liberal Arts program was cast in the context of theology; it served as a prerequisite to the other programs, and emphasized Latin, the language of the Church (Ford 2002 22). In England, Oxford (established at the end of the eleventh century) and Cambridge (founded near the

beginning of the thirteenth century) followed a very similar pattern, and like the University of Paris, remained church-based until the late twentieth century (Ford 2002 24). Most universities founded in North America before the Second World War were also affiliated with churches, either Roman Catholic or Protestant, but with curricula that were less overtly Christian.

Category 2: Nationalism

From the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the Church's influence declined in Europe. Mercantilism and colonialism began to create new bourgeois classes in Europe at the expense of the Indigenous peoples whose lands and labour supplied this new European wealth. The enclosure process of the Tudor period created new poverty among English peasants. Protestantism began to spread in England and Germany, weakening the Roman Catholic Church's power. Political authority began to trump the authority of the Church. Gradually, people and countries in Europe began to define their identities through national culture (which often included, but was not limited to, their national religion) rather than only through their religion. Thus began what Ford calls the era of nationalism (Ford 2002 26).

These changes were reflected in the universities that were founded during this era. Germany in particular fostered some significant changes that have shaped the modern university. The University of Halle, founded in Brandenburg in 1694, was one institution that reflected these changes. It was one of the first secular Universities, designed to serve the purposes of a secular state. Rather than theology, Halle emphasized scientific thinking, public administration, and statecraft, with a curriculum "designed to train German officials and bureaucrats and later to educate others in ways that would be of use

in a world that was becoming increasingly modern in its ways” (Ford 2002 27). It was in Germany during this era that the notion of the university education as training in good citizenship began to develop.

In *The University in Ruins*, Bill Readings explores a similar idea. For Readings, producing, protecting, and inculcating culture (a national culture specific to a nation-state) was the university’s primary role during this period. Like Ford, Readings writes that this university mission originated in Germany, and that, although the true role of the university has changed since the Second World War, most people still tend to think of the university, and particularly of Humanities departments, as developing and preserving culture.

Germany

Enlightenment Germany developed a unique focus on national culture. The German Idealists (e.g. Humboldt, Schiller, Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Kant) saw the Greeks as the pure origins of a lost culture (Readings 1996). They argued that modernity had replaced this once-pure civilisation with fragmented knowledge; while this knowledge was technically more advanced, it lacked meaning. An individual’s purpose was thus to attempt to understand the central unity of knowledge, to use science and reason to achieve the cultural unity that the Greeks once possessed naturally (Readings 1996). It was not enough to simply re-embrace tradition – reverting to the past without using modern rationality would have been a step backward. Instead, tradition was to be worked through with reason – scholars were to develop a new, rational culture by isolating the rational aspects of tradition, and preserving them, while similarly preserving the best

aspects of their present time. The university was to be the site of this cultural quest, and German universities incorporated specific structures to enable it.

The German interpretation of culture had two complementary aspects. *Wissenschaft* (scientific-philosophical study) described the identity that could be achieved through the unity of all smaller divisions of knowledge, divided so that each could be studied in depth. *Bildung* described a process, the development of character (Readings 1996 64). This was reflected in the university through two complementary processes: research (to develop and expand the various aspects of knowledge that are then to be united) and teaching (a process that develops the characters of both the student and the teacher simultaneously). The university was unique as the place where research and teaching were to be inseparable; high school, for example, was concerned only with teaching, while industry was only interested in research. This, then, is the origin of the university professor's dual role.

Recent critiques of the university have questioned whether these two aspects are, in fact, complementary. In *No Place to Learn*, for example, Pocklington and Tupper argue that research and teaching in fact detract from one another, because the Modern university's emphasis on "frontier research" has resulted in research so specialized that it is no longer relevant for more than a small group of researchers. In spite of this hyper-specificity, many professors teach upper-level undergraduate courses that focus on their research interests rather than more general courses that could potentially be of more benefit for the students. As a result, at many research universities, an undergraduate's education may become a jumble of courses with specific but unrelated content than rather than a coherent educational program. Furthermore, graduate education, Pocklington and

Tupper argue, focuses on learning research skills (through course work and the thesis/dissertation) but features no instruction relating to how to teach. Hiring decisions, too, are heavily biased toward candidates with a large portfolio of publications, and a candidate's teaching skills figure little, if at all, in the hiring process. Associate and Sessional professors, whose jobs have a greater emphasis on teaching, earn a much lower wage; this is a further illustration of the relative value of teaching compared with research in the Modern university. Even though research and teaching are no longer really assigned equal merit in the modern university, and even though these two aspects of a professor's role may in fact detract from one another, this idea, that research and teaching are complementary aspects of a professor's role, remains very much entrenched in current university structures.

The German university, through the influence of the German idealists, was also the origin of the divisions between the academic disciplines that are present in the Modern university. The German university of the Enlightenment combined the Semitic religions' basis, that humans have been given divine revelation regarding what is important to know and how it is important to live, with the notion that although human knowledge is subservient to divine revelation, philosophy is essential both to humanity and to the university curriculum as the way to understand this revelation. Knowledge, then, was to be developed through reason, through rationality, rather than by tradition alone. In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Immanuel Kant develops a model of a 'University of Reason.' The goal of such a university was to transcend reality, to achieve knowledge for knowledge's sake – thus, for Kant, the knowledge developed at the university could be considered universal. The disciplines of the Medieval university were divided according

to the kind of information to be studied, into the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and knowledge), which was to be followed with the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). The Medieval university included the broad study of several kinds of knowledge as a route to developing humanity's understanding of divine revelation. The curriculum unified these branches of knowledge in terms of their relevance to religion.

To contrast, in Kant's University of Reason, knowledge was divided into disciplines. The idea that resulted in this way of categorizing branches of knowledge was that a scholar in any particular discipline could develop an understanding of the philosophical nature of some manageable aspect of reality, and that these parts could combine to contribute to human reason in general. Reason itself was then studied through philosophy, the "lower" faculty because it was the faculty on which everything else rested (Kant 1992, 217).

Each discipline could serve as a self-sufficient path to achieving a transcendent understanding of reality, but only when grounded in, and in dialogue with, philosophy (Ford 2002 42). First the humanities (human activities) were divided from the sciences (the non-human world); later the social sciences (sociology, psychology, and economics) were added as a third group that attempted to use scientific methods to understand the human world. The "higher" faculties (law, medicine, and theology) each had specific content and referred to an external authority, and all three of these depend a great deal on tradition. In Readings' words, the risk in the higher faculties is then that "theology teaches people how to be saved without being good... law tells people how to win cases without being honest... medicine teaches people how to cure disease rather than to live

healthily” (Readings 1996 57). Thus the role of philosophy: to remain in dialogue with the other faculties, to challenge established tradition through rational inquiry, and to encourage the other disciplines to develop by interrogating their own foundations.

The social mission of the Kantian university was to train students who would go on to become the nation-state’s powerful individuals, whether politicians or business leaders, in learning to use knowledge (specifically philosophy) for self-interrogation. A university education aimed to prevent society’s leaders from blindly accepting tradition, and encouraged them to work toward forward progress along humanity’s grand historical stage. The university, then, functioned to ensure that “reason” would rule public life. Furthermore, keeping the study of philosophy confined to the university, for Kant, offered the university a certain level of protection from the abuse of state power, since it would theoretically not be in the state’s best interest to limit its own supply of rational thinkers.

Of course, this assumes that the state is willing to give up a certain level of power. When Kant’s influence played out in reality, the German state appealed to a blending of culture and reason for its legitimisation that was perhaps not quite as open to rational self-critique as Kant’s model suggested. Because culture, for Enlightenment Germans, meant national culture, it was centered in the Nation-State, which re-oriented power toward the state government rather than the university philosopher. The state gained a level of influence in the university’s institutional structure and in its social applications, thus gaining a means of controlling both research and teaching. Although post-secondary education is no longer supposed to be limited to a small, privileged societal class, and although today’s university education is supposedly to be oriented toward practical

knowledge, the disciplinary structure remains in most undergraduate and graduate programs.

These ideas were manifest in the University of Berlin, which Wilhelm von Humboldt founded in 1810. The University of Berlin formed a sharp contrast to l'Ecole Polytechnique, founded in France in 1794, which was devoted to practical studies, particularly engineering. Instead the University of Berlin was devoted to the study of "pure" knowledge, operating under the ideology that cultivating one's intellect, rather than learning specific practical skills, was the best way for an individual to serve humanity. In Humboldt's words:

The university seeks to embody thought as action toward an ideal; the state must seek to realise action as thought, the idea of the nation. The state protects the actions of the university; the university safeguards the thought of the state. And each strives to realize the idea of national culture (Humboldt in Readings 1996 69).

The University of Berlin (today called Humboldt's University of Berlin) thus became the first university whose explicit mission was to safeguard national culture in order to ensure that the country's citizens would have a motive to buy into their Nation-State. Today, Humanities departments still often refer to "preserving culture" as their *raison d'etre*, though with mixed success.

England

Nineteenth century England was subject to rapid industrialisation and an increasing level of technological development. A sense of fragmentation resulted as people moved to urban centres and away from their families, their families' land, and their familiar ways of life. Culture, in England, thus became increasingly defined in opposition to technology and science. Philosophy could no longer be the primary site of cultural

development, because Philosophy was intimately connected with reason, rationality, and scientific ways of thinking. Literature, however, seemed separated from science, and thus the English embraced literature as the discipline through which to understand and study culture, and the university was the place in which to understand and study literature (Readings 1996 70). Studying literature, then, became a social mission; as philosophy was for the Germans, literature became England's means of preserving a national culture that stood in opposition to the fragmentation and the feelings of purposelessness that resulted from industrialisation.

Shakespeare served the role in England that Ancient Greece served in Germany (Readings 1996). According to the English cultural mythology, Shakespeare created a body (the original body) of national literature without any reference to previous knowledge, so his works served as the national origin of culture. Thus for England, the "authentic community" that the study of literature sought to return to was the England of Shakespeare's time, an England with a culture so real that it apparently enabled an uneducated man to single-handedly pen the works that served to define all English culture that followed. The goal of education, then, was to reunify the "civilized" industrial world with the mythical organic community of Elizabethan England (Readings 1996). This particular mythology has declined in relevance with the decline of the dominance of the Nation-State, but English literature, and Shakespeare in particular, remain in a privileged position in many English-speaking universities, including many Anglophone universities in Canada.

John Henry Newman's *Idea of a University* (first published in 1852), modeled on his experiences with the founding of the Catholic University in Dublin, and influenced by

Oxford and Cambridge, describes this English understanding of the purpose of a university. This work was influential enough that it still resonates with many, though certainly not all English speakers' ideas about the university. Newman's ideas have several parallels with the German idealists; for example, for Newman the object of university study was not to learn specific skills but to pursue knowledge for its own sake (Newman 1959). Newman supported the traditional liberal education, and differentiated education (learning to think) from instruction (learning specific facts or techniques). He saw the university as a community in pursuit of intellectual culture, through both teaching and research, but unlike the Germans, "truth" for Newman was theological. Some of these ideas continue to influence the way that some people think about the university, more so in the disciplines of the Humanities than in other faculties. Other scholars, faculties, and universities have abandoned these ideas altogether in favour of approaches to education that focus more on practical skills and job training. Still, within current literature that explores new visions for the modern university, the liberal education model (in which undergraduate students study a broad range of subjects in both the sciences and the humanities) and the argument that universities should avoid straight instruction, instead encouraging students to develop critical thinking skills – both important aspects of Newman's work – remain significant recurring themes.

Scotland, the United States, English Canada

During the Eighteenth Century, Scotland and the United States adopted slightly different methods for creating universities that, as in England and Germany, were intended to serve the Nation-State. As younger countries that were in the process of separating themselves from one level of colonial control, Scotland and the United States

had very different priorities that were much more directed to physically building up a Nation-State through industrialisation and instruction in practical skills. The University of Edinburgh, for example, emphasized accessibility through scholarships and broad acceptance policies, training citizens with skills that contributed to nation building, and indoctrinating them to embrace a national, rather than a local perspective and a solid work ethic (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006). Science was emphasized more than literature, and the school had no religious affiliation (Pocklington and Tupper 2002). These schools taught practical skills, to some extent scorning “knowledge-for-knowledge’s sake,” and eventually becoming leaders in developing new technologies.

Universities in the United States also began to focus on educating workers and citizens for the benefit of the state. This does not mean that religion had disappeared from universities during this era; Harvard, a Protestant university founded on 1642, for example, once stated its purpose as “The education of the English and Indian youth of the country in knowledge and godliness” (Ford 2002 24). Harvard’s purpose, as stated, reflects two levels of imperialism at work; both the English education of the colonies’ white settler population, and the religious and cultural assimilation of the continent’s Indigenous peoples. In 1862, following the American Civil War, the Morrill Land Grant Act granted land to any universities that were to be founded to teach agriculture, science, military tactics, and engineering; this land was available only because its Indigenous inhabitants had been brutally evicted from it in previous decades. Hundreds of new universities were founded in the United States at this time, with mandates aimed at practical education to train the professionals who were to build up the young country.

Following the Second World War, these secular, state-supported universities became the dominant form of higher education in North America. The GI Bill subsidized college for war veterans in the United States, creating hundreds of new students nearly instantaneously, and serving at the same time to create thousands of jobs both teaching them and building the institutions' physical infrastructure – jobs that were most welcome in a time when the Depression of the 1930s was fresh in the collective consciousness of North American settlers. Today, even the few universities and colleges that remain officially affiliated with particular religious denominations have curricula that are fairly similar to curricula at secular institutions.

Universities in Canada¹¹ that were founded during the nineteenth century adhered to various combinations of these models.¹² The University of Toronto is probably the most obvious example of¹³ the “Oxbridge” influence, though Oxford and Cambridge supplied most Canadian universities with the majority of their faculty until the mid twentieth century (Pocklington and Tupper 2002). Dalhousie, Queen’s, and McGill were modelled primarily from the University of Edinburgh’s ideal that academia should be open to anyone with enough perseverance and self-discipline to perform to the standards of a demanding curriculum. British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, with their close proximity to American land-grant institutions, followed that model, while the remaining

¹¹ For a very thorough discussion of the history of universities in French and English Canada, see (Harris 1976).

¹² When I refer to Canadian universities, it should be assumed that I am in fact referring to Anglophone universities in Canada, not including those in Quebec unless otherwise noted. Although some aspects of Francophone universities and universities in Quebec may be similar, I do not want to make that assumption. A more nuanced discussion of the differences between Anglophone and Francophone universities in Canada is beyond the scope of this thesis.

central and eastern Canadian Universities developed under the influence of various Christian churches and still retain their particular denominations' seminaries.

Pocklington and Tupper (2002) argue that Canada has not yet produced any significant new or distinct ideas about post secondary education; instead, in Canadian universities:

Oxbridge ideals about higher education as transmission of culture and character building combined with practical Scottish ideals provided a foundation for undergraduate teaching as the main task of universities. The German influence manifests itself in an emphasis on rigorous graduate studies and advanced scientific research. ... The egalitarian and public service impulses of the great public universities in [the US] provided examples of close relations between universities, business, and society, applied research, and practical programs of study (27).

These models of university education enabled and were enabled by European colonial expansion. As Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, several of today's academic disciplines have "derived their methods and understandings from the colonized world," or else they have tested out their hypotheses in the colonies, using Indigenous peoples as test subjects (Smith 1999 65). The colonies were sites of so much new knowledge, and so many human experiments, that whole systems of classification had to be developed to cope, many of which still form the basis of modern disciplines. Political science and psychology developed the notions of the "savage" and the "civilized," via Kant, Hobson, Rousseau and Freud (among others) that served to justify the distinctions along a spectrum from the "civilized" to the "uncivilized" peoples.¹⁴ History is also implicated as a discipline; the history of the

¹⁴ See, for example (Kant 1991, 41-53), (Hobson 2005, 386), (Rousseau and Cranston 1984), and (Freud, Strachey, and Riviere 1963).

colonies, as told by the colonizers, has often left little room for alternative views of the significance of these historical events.

Smith argues that anthropology is the discipline that is most closely associated with definitions of otherness and primitivism (Smith 1999). Western anthropologists studied “primitive” societies through the lens of their own culture, creating such a mass of representations of other cultures that “anthropologists are often the academics popularly perceived by the Indigenous world as the epitome of all that is bad with academics” (Smith 1999).

Newman was aware that “national culture” is an explicitly Western invention, and also that creating a unified national self-consciousness could serve to ground and to justify imperial expansion for England’s benefit (Readings 1996). The assumption here was that Europeans (specifically Western Europeans, and some countries more than others) had, through luck and hard work, been granted the ability to progress through the “universal” stages of human development at an accelerated rate and had thus achieved a more advanced, superior form of culture than humans in other parts of the world. Therefore, the justification goes, Europeans had a moral duty to share this technological, moral, and religious superiority with the world’s supposedly “uncivilized” races by whatever means necessary. Often this involved inducing a work ethic through slavery or underpaid labour that had the side benefit of funnelling tremendous wealth into Europe. To maintain this justification, European Nation-States continued to focus on and develop their “superior” national cultures – a task which fell to their scholars within their universities.

I am not trying to imply that Kant and the German idealists, or Newman and other British scholars set out only to create a structure for domination and exploitation. Their

worldviews were shaped by two hundred years of European religious and civil wars, and they were working from the assumption that ignorance provokes fear, and that fear in turn provokes violence. It was with at least some good intentions, then, that they embraced shared knowledge and the quest for “universal” truth as a road to peace (Saul in M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 28).

Of course, the truths that scholars within the university subsequently discovered were and are not, in fact, universal. Many scholars in the disciplines I mentioned previously, among others, continue to challenge these problematic assumptions. Scholars and people from various other communities are working to re-imagine the academy's and the West's problematic relationships with Indigenous peoples and peoples of the Tricontinent.

Through the work of Indigenous scholars, scholars of colour, and their allies, many of whom have overcome tremendous barriers in the process, spaces for alternative voices and visions have been and are being carved out in the Western academy. Areas of scholarship including Women's Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Studies, and Indigenous Studies have developed theories and alternative frameworks for knowledge that question many, if not all, of the theories developed in the university that serve to justify or to conceal the nature of the West's unequal power relationships with much of the rest of the world.

This process is ongoing. Some Indigenous and Tricontinental scholars have given up on the academy as a site that can truly respect non-Western ways of knowing, as a site where the subaltern can truly speak as an equal; other scholars continue to seek out new avenues for change; still others vehemently oppose any potential challenge to their own positions of power and privilege. Much of my argument in subsequent chapters draws

from the growing body of work that questions and proposes alternatives to the problematic ideas I described above.

Category 3: “Economism” or “Excellence”

The end of the Second World War signalled a shift in global politics. The two World Wars both resulted from a power struggle among wealthy European nations regarding their occupation and control of formal colonies – colonies that were the primary generators of European wealth. With the formation of the United Nations, and the gradual onset of formal decolonisation (in which colonizers withdrew their formal governments from external territories)¹⁵ a new version of the same power relationship began to emerge in which trade agreements and international organisations (the United Nations, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, etc.) have replaced formal colonial governments in maintaining the “Great Eight” countries’ control over most of the world’s wealth and resources.

Another significant shift is occurring in universities. With globalisation, the nation-state is no longer the primary reproducer of capital. In one sense, the trans-national bureaucratic corporation has assumed some of the roles that once belonged to the nation-state, and the university may be becoming one trans-national bureaucratic corporation among many (Readings 1996). While many people still think of the university, and particularly of the Humanities, as the place where culture is preserved and developed and new national citizens are trained, Readings, M’Gonigle and Starke, and Ford argue that

¹⁵ Specifically those territories separated from them by salt water. While Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia have all “decolonized” in the sense that they have become independent from Britain, their settler populations remain in a colonial relationship with the Indigenous peoples whose territories provide their homes and their incomes. This relationship, however, is not subject to decolonisation because of the United Nations’ “Salt Water Thesis” which states that to be considered a colony, the colonizers must inhabit a territory that is separated from the colony by salt water. Even this policy has exceptions, as is the case for Hawai’i.

this is no longer true. Instead, they argue, the university has adopted “economism” (Ford 2002; M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006) or “excellence” (Readings 1996) as its paradigm, with a curriculum that not only favours job preparation over knowledge-for-its-own-sake, but that trains students in subtler ways to be good consumers in the ever-expanding global marketplace.

This new purpose for the university, the newest version of The Right Way for Humanity to achieve Peace and Prosperity, teaches the social benefits of the market economy, the necessity of economic growth, and focuses on individual freedom and individual “equality” with a level of suspicion directed toward any kind of collective interest (Ford 2002; M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006). Again, this vision for prosperity is justified through a form of idealism; as Ford writes, the justification for economism is “that future wars could be avoided if the economic interests of individuals replaced the interests of particular nations” (Ford in M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 34).

This change is manifest in many ways. Pocklington and Tupper (2002) focus on the influence of corporate and government driven research in today’s universities, arguing that decreased government funding of post-secondary education forces many universities to accept funding, sometimes with specific conditions attached, from private corporations. Pocklington and Tupper focus specifically on *commercial science*, in which universities and private bodies develop partnerships around specific research agendas. Although such partnerships “promise research funding in the face of declining government support,” commercial science may also weaken the democracy involved university decision-making (since such partnerships are often developed separately from

and with more secrecy than other university business) while increasing university bureaucracy (Pocklington and Tupper 2002 147).

Commercial science also has the potential to affect universities' priorities and decision-making. In order to secure funding for specific research projects from specific businesses, universities may be forced to adopt positions on public policy matters that counteract the goals of other legitimate (though often less financially supported) interests in society.

When corporate or government agendas control which projects or people receive funding, and sometimes stipulate that the results of the research remain the property of the funding agency, this eliminates even the pretence of the university producing knowledge for the public good (Pelikan and Newman, John Henry, Idea of a university 1992).

Ford focuses on the advent of the for-profit university, citing the University of Phoenix (founded in 1976) as one example. The University of Phoenix might not have been the best school for Ford to use to make his point. This particular institution is widely criticised on a number of bases, including over-inflated tuition rates, unqualified faculty, over-simplified course and degree requirements, and the lowest graduation rate of any university in the United States (Dillon 2007). Still, many of the aspects of the University of Phoenix that Ford criticizes are reflected to some extent in mainstream post-secondary institutions across the United States and Canada.

Henry Giroux argues that the distinction between for-profit and not-for-profit institutions of higher education is blurring, and that in the process, students and the general public are turning to economic arguments ("corporate management, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness") for solutions rather than questioning deeper philosophical questions about the economy-based mindsets that are beginning to dominate some

universities (Giroux 2006, 63-78). University presidents, once chosen from among experienced scholars known for intellectual leadership, are increasingly career administrators with experience as fundraisers. Academic subjects earn respect and stature through their market exchange value, while Arts departments downsize and eliminate once-popular majors like Classics because they are no longer “useful.” Many students devote more time to working to fund their education than to their studies themselves, feeling increased pressure to earn degrees that will be useful in “the real world;” these useful degrees may be the least likely to question the problematic assumptions and ideas that justify global power relationships in this economistic age. Students are called customers, presidents are called CEOs, faculty are rewarded when they are able to secure grants and funds from external sources, and “the majority of their colleagues,” called sessional instructors, “are increasingly reduced to contract employees” (Giroux 2006, 63-78).

Ford and M’Gonigle and Starke argue that this trend toward economism means that the modern university is reproducing and occasionally reinforcing some of the assumptions in which many global issues are rooted; in Ford’s words:

Higher education was part of the problem. Worse yet, the modern university was actively engaged in perpetuating and legitimizing the various cultural assumptions that undergird [global issues, particularly environmental issues]. The very institution that I loved so much was neither an innocent bystander to suffering nor a salvific force in the world. . . . I had assumed that higher education, and more of it, would make the world a better place. I began to understand otherwise (M’Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 24).

Universities teach, and in many cases function according to the assumption that unlimited growth is both possible and desirable. The Modern university’s disciplinary structure

limits the kind of coherent worldview that could encourage widespread alternative ways of thinking about “progress.” Because of disciplinary divisions and the immense volume of work that universities produce, theories that challenge problematic but widespread ways of thinking may remain confined within their disciplines; Ford laments in particular the contradictory logic that allows the Department of Economics to train students rooted in a paradigm of unlimited economic growth, while in the next building, earth scientists study the impossibility of such growth, with no communication between the two (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006).

Readings argues that this trend can be summarized as a trend toward university “excellence” which “recognizes that the university is not *like* a corporation but *is* a corporation” (Readings 1996 22). The problem with “excellence” as a means to evaluate university performance, Readings argues, is that the concept lacks any concrete reference point. Excellence is always defined in relation to something else, and because it needs these external criteria, it cannot itself serve as a meaningful criterion. The use of excellence as a measure is expressed through evaluations like the annual *Macleans* university rankings, which employ quantitative measures, weighing such diverse aspects of university life as parking services, university finances, and the diversity of the student body with a formula that attempts to provide prospective students with a “value-for-money” analysis. This assumes, in accordance with capitalist logic, not only that there is a single standard according to which all aspects of a given university can be judged, but that students will have the ability to pay; affordability is only one category among many (Readings 1996).

The problem with this line of evaluation, Readings argues, is that it replaces *accountability* with *accounting* (Readings 1996). It is problematic to assume that knowledge is stored in a library, and that more books imply more knowledge. It is problematic to assume that the professor with the most research grants will be the best teacher for undergraduate students. It is problematic to measure diversity by the number of student culture-based clubs on campus rather than by the quality of the interactions between them. Quantitative ranking systems, however, depend on the assumption that all of these aspects of an education can be measured and compared.

Next steps

My story of the university's development, though greatly oversimplified, has hopefully served to ground my subsequent arguments. I argue that, in spite of the many existing sites of contention, a mainstream university education may still serve, for some students, to reinforce cultural assumptions and to portray these assumptions as universal truths. As David Orr writes,

Much of what has gone wrong with the world is the result of education that alienates us from life in the name of human domination, fragments instead of unifies, overemphasizes success and careers, separates feeling from intellect and the practical from the theoretical, and unleashes on the world minds ignorant of their own ignorance" (Orr 1994 17).

It seems clear that today's university education is still causing problems not only for some of the university's students and graduates but for people disconnected from the Ivory Tower as well, both locally and abroad. From here, I will attempt to analyse what, exactly, is wrong with the modern university, what works (and what does not work) in

several proposed solutions, and what can be done in the short term to attempt to enact positive change.

Chapter 3: Literature review

“They sentenced me to twenty years of boredom for trying to change the system from within.” Leonard Cohen

Hundreds of popular and academic books and articles offering varying critiques of the university have been published during the last half-century. A number of these works explore similar themes, in a debate that has lasted decades thus far. These themes include the increasing corporatisation present on university campuses; the shifting role of university education from teaching critical thinking to job-training; the challenges associated with increasing class sizes; the devaluation of the disciplines and the faculties that do not focus on non-human science (and especially of the disciplines categorized as the Humanities); the disengagement of students; and the ongoing tension between teaching and research. In a 1963 essay, George Grant observed:

There will be all kinds of criticism of the university from within itself. How it should be governed, how the students should be treated as persons, whether research is sweeping away good teaching? etc., etc. Such criticisms are immensely welcomed because they serve as evidence that the society is still free and forward moving. The President of the University of Toronto praised the Macpherson report as ‘radical.’ (Grant 1969 131).

Although Grant is ultimately arguing for a conservative return to something similar to the University of Culture discussed in the previous chapter, this particular point is worth considering. The majority of the literature that criticises the university has emerged from within the institution itself; this thesis is no exception. In one sense, this is an example of academic freedom at work; those employed by the university are able to offer their perspectives regarding the problems inherent within the institution along with their suggestions to improve it. Academics can, and do, publish articles and books that call

attention to some of the problems with university administration and governance, for example, without the risk of losing their jobs.

In another sense, however, the danger remains that radical arguments may be incorporated within existing structures as a form of tokenism. A university that hires professors who have earned strong reputations through their critiques of university corporatisation, for example, might use these appointments to advertise itself as the university of choice for a particular niche of students, while also continuing to engage in many of the practices that form the basis of the professors' critiques. In this sense, it may be easier for a university's administration to assign these ideas to the realm of academic debate than to look seriously at incorporating proposed changes into the institution's practices and operations. I do not want to imply that all universities act according to this form of institutional hypocrisy – many university administrations take criticism seriously and try to adapt their policies accordingly – but examples of similar discrepancies are not difficult to find, and the dialogue between critics and policy-makers must remain an open and ongoing process.

I am devoting this chapter to an overview of the existing literature that has formed the foundation for much of my thinking about higher education. Many of these critiques address genuine problems or weaknesses that are present within the modern university structure, so they are important to consider. Ultimately, however, I am interested in a different question from most of this chapter's authors: whether the modern university can be a space for non-Western worldviews, and whether the modern university plays a role in developing mindsets that limit the space for these worldviews. I believe that many of these works offer partial answers to these questions; I explore these here. In subsequent

chapters, my aim is to explore other works that criticise aspects of Western ideas about knowledge on a more fundamental level. I hope that this combination will offer a more complete picture of the challenges and the strengths of the modern university as a place for thinking differently. For simplicity, I have divided this analysis into broad themes, but it is worth noting that these ideas are interrelated and influence one another.

Another line of critique has also emerged in the modern university that I will not be exploring in detail. Many conservative academics argue that the university is in danger of being subsumed by the various agendas of liberal scholars. The essays in *The Imperilled Academy* provide examples of this line of argument; this collection of essays criticises political correctness, feminism, and affirmative action for imposing limits on academic freedom, for rejecting the possibility of objectivity, and for seeking to delegitimise and marginalise conservative thinkers (Dickman 1993). Although it is interesting that many of these writers co-opt the language of marginalisation in order to portray conservative, white, male academics as marginalised within the modern university, I will not be focusing my attention on these arguments. In general, this line of argument does not clarify my points, and a thorough rebuttal is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Corporatisation

The various and increasing forms of corporate influence that are at play in the modern university are a common line of analysis in university critique. One of the most common forms of corporate influence is the “infiltration” of corporations into campus life, primarily through funding. One obvious manifestation of this phenomenon is through on-campus advertising. Most Canadian universities or their students unions have signed

exclusivity agreements with one of two major soft drink corporations;¹⁶ in exchange for funding, often in the millions of dollars, the corporation in question receives the opportunity to sell its products on campus without competition for a specified length of time. These agreements have been subject to a great deal of debate in recent years. The exclusivity agreements provide funding for projects that benefit the student body (such as Student Union Building renovations and funding for Student Union services) often as an alternative to collecting this revenue from the Student Union fees that accompany tuition. Many students, however, object to these Exclusivity Agreements in principle, either because the students oppose all forms of on-campus advertising, or because they object to the specific corporation's policies, citing records of human rights abuses or poor labour practices as arguments against "endorsing" the corporation in question. Similar arguments surface regarding other forms of on-campus advertising, from ads in campus washrooms to the corporate sponsorship of building and classroom names.

Universities also act as advertisers themselves, promoting major donations, student achievements, particular academic programs, and faculty appointments in national news sources and abroad. Pocklington and Tupper attribute the university-as-advertiser phenomenon both to the assumption that business leaders are interested in universities, either as businesses or in relation to university contributions to local economies, and the assumption that universities need to compete to attract strong students. It is not clear whether this second assumption is valid, given that the majority of undergraduate students in Canadian universities commute to campus because they cannot afford to move

¹⁶ This MA thesis has not been sponsored by either corporation so I will not be naming them; chances are good, however, that the reader can guess the names of the corporations to which I am referring.

elsewhere (Pocklington and Tupper 2002).¹⁷ Graduate students are more likely to travel, but Pocklington and Tupper argue that these students are more likely to choose a school based on the advice of their professors, rather than based on advertising. Corporations are also increasing their control over the direction of university research by providing funding for specific research projects in a process Pocklington and Tupper call commercial science, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Corporations and industry are also increasingly influential in the modern university in a much broader sense; in many ways, higher education has become an industry, where individual universities are equivalent to individual corporations. Students are increasingly thinking of themselves as consumers of a higher education product. Prospective students select from among increasingly homogeneous institutions through external ranking systems like the *Macleans* magazine ratings that evaluate and quantify various aspects of universities to deliver a cost-value comparison the way *Consumer Reports* ranks cars and stereos. Professors think of themselves as manufacturers whose commodity is knowledge. University presidents, once perceived as the soul of their institutions, are now largely professional administrators at the head of an expanding bureaucracy filled with increasing numbers of lesser professional administrators.

Universities themselves are often hugely influential in multiple sectors of their local economies. Universities often serve as one of the primary employers in their local cities and suburbs. In 2004-2005, Canadian universities had over one million registered students and provided as many research and development jobs, contributing more to Canada's gross domestic product than, for example, the pulp and paper and the

¹⁷ The University of Victoria is an exception to this general trend; the majority of UVic students are not originally from Victoria.

automotive vehicles industries (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006). Universities are also consumers of a significant proportion of economic “throughput,” from books to building materials to energy to water, and of course they are producers of corresponding quantities of waste (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006). In this way, universities are inseparable from global economic systems that depend on highly organized power structures and that keep a minority population wealthy and powerful by exploiting less powerful groups and distant places. Furthermore, universities are training the very elites whose interests favour keeping these systems in place.

Funding

These issues relate to wider questions of university funding. The amount that a student pays for an undergraduate education in Canada has been consistently rising since the early 1980s. This increase in tuition fees cannot only be explained by general inflation; from 1990 to 2006, for example, the Consumer Price Index in Canada rose 39.2 percent, while tuition fees rose 196.9 percent in the same period (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64). This increase in cost is generally explained by a corresponding decrease in government funding, which accounted for 81 percent of universities' operating budgets in 1985, but funded only 57 percent by 2005 (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64). It is not accurate to say that government funding has constantly declined during this time period; since 1997 the Government has initiated several programs that contribute funding to post-secondary education. Direct federal government spending since 1997 has increased, through primarily through programs in tax credits, commercial science, and personal education savings programs; increased government spending has not necessarily decreased a student's tuition costs. Transfers to the provinces for post-secondary

education remain below pre-1990s levels (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64). Although the federal government pledged in the 2007 federal budget to increase post-secondary education spending by \$800-million in 2008, the government did not set any conditions for this investment (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64). Although some provinces have successfully frozen tuition fees for some period of time, the trend in Canadian universities in general has been an increase in tuition fees over time.

As a result of these changes in government funding, tuition has increasingly accounted for the majority of university revenue; from 1985-2005, tuition rose from being 14.1 percent to 30.4 percent of university revenue (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64). Because high tuition limits access to higher education,¹⁸ and because broad access to higher education is usually considered to be desirable, the corporate funding that is subject to so much controversy alleviates some of the financial burden that would otherwise fall to individual students. This is not an easy problem to solve. Neither students nor the federal or provincial governments are eager to take on the funding burden that is currently shouldered by corporations in exchange for advertising or control over research directions. If a decrease in private funding is not somehow balanced from other sources, the corresponding increase in the cost of a university degree will limit access to students in low-income families; given current Canadian demographics, this would likely affect a disproportionate number of students of colour and Indigenous students.

¹⁸ According to the Canadian Federation of Students, 72 percent of high school students surveyed about why they did not go on to college or university listed “finances” as a barrier. Furthermore, researcher Edward St. John has found that for every \$1000 increase in tuition fees, low-income students are up to 19 percent less likely to complete their studies (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64).

There is another reason that Canadian universities are unlikely to see an increase in state funding. As I argued in the previous chapter, in the past, the university's role, its mission, was the reproduction of the nation-state. The university was to train the nation-state's citizen-subjects in order to ensure the survival of a strong national culture. Since the Cold War, however, the need to uphold national prestige has declined dramatically. As the university shifted from being a state apparatus to being a bureaucratic corporate system, the motivation for state governments to fund their universities has declined. Post-secondary education, now, is often framed as an investment for individuals to make in their own upward social mobility. Students are often encouraged to pursue higher education on the grounds that a university degree holder can earn on average one million dollars more over a lifetime than an individual without a similar credential.

As the Canadian Federation of Students argues, however, this argument is misleading. Not only is the figure inflated by including an element of compound interest, it relies on averages to downplay the variability in university graduates' incomes. Economist Hugh MacKenzie argues that, in fact, approximately one quarter of university graduates report annual earnings that are less than the average earnings of workers with only a high school diploma (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64). Of course, university degrees may be valuable for other reasons, but it is problematic to resort to arguments about increased earnings after graduation in order to justify an increase in tuition fees.

Credentialisation

One specific critique of the modern university, one that is closely connected, but not identical to corporatisation, is the phenomenon of credentialisation. In *Dark Age Ahead* Jane Jacobs criticises the North American tendency, since the 1960s, to increasingly

regard university degrees as “passports” to job interviews (Jacobs 2004). University degrees, she argues, are becoming no more than credentials that demonstrate a graduate’s persistence, ambition, and ability to cooperate and conform, rather than a graduate’s ability to engage in critical thought. Similarly, many of today’s students enrol in university because they have been told that a university degree will net them a higher salary, when in fact the job market may be artificially inflating its educational requirements, considering only applicants who hold MAs or PhDs for positions that once could be filled with no more than a high school diploma (Coté and Allahar 2007).

Statistics suggest, as discussed previously, that a university graduate will earn more on average than a worker who does not hold a similar credential. Certainly many students say that they are enrolled in university “to get a good job” (Coté and Allahar 2007). Employers and students alike justify university-education-as-job-preparation by arguing that the content of a degree does not matter as much as the skills necessary to acquire it. A degree, they argue, is evidence that the individual in question has mastered particular skills: critical thinking, good writing, attentive listening, the ability to work independently or as a member of a team.

The trouble is, for a student who has truly mastered critical thinking, excelling in many jobs involves a great deal of selective forgetting – particularly “forgetting” about the connections between the work that we, in the affluent West are doing, the physical infrastructure that makes such work possible, and the impacts of this work on the daily realities of peoples within our own communities and halfway around the globe. If students learn about their roles in these global relationships, they will likely need to ignore or forget about these roles in order to support themselves in the North American

economy without going crazy. Critical thinking is thus indirectly discouraged when it calls the corporate livelihood into question. Even professional academics are caught to some extent, since even those professors who teach about the inequalities inherent in global power relationships must be aware, on some level, that they are benefiting from the system.

A New Generation of Students

In *Ivory Tower Blues*, James Côté and Anton Allahar (2007) argue that the student body itself has started to change in ways that may further limit the modern university's ability to engage students in critical thinking. Côté and Allahar focus in particular on the *millennial generation*, the children of the Baby Boomers, born since 1982 and first enrolling in Canadian universities in 2000, who have been "coddled" more than previous generations were, and are thus less prepared to engage in academia. Côté and Allahr acknowledge that this is a generalisation that is not true for all students of this cohort. Still, for Côté and Allahar this generation is unique both because it is the first to have grown up with advanced communications technologies, and because this cohort's upbringing incorporated a strange mix of parental permissiveness (e.g., increased concern with self-esteem, in turn responsible for grade inflation at all levels of education) and parental anxiety (as manifest through education about 'strangers,' bicycle helmets, and car seats): "the net result of these technological and parental influences is a generation that has been wired to the virtual world-at-large, especially through their peers, but who have been protected from realities in their immediate lives" (Co_te_ and Allahar 2007 102).

Côté and Allahar argue that these influences have affected the millennial generation's successful passage into adulthood, a passage that should, but often does not occur as students transition from high school to university. In general, these students feel that they deserve good grades, but are often so accustomed to instantaneous access to information that they are not willing to put in the work necessary for academic achievement. The analysis of complex ideas requires a level of engagement not often reflected in today's popular culture, which instead emphasises instant gratification, flashy entertainment, and high levels of material wealth. This problem has been compounded by grade inflation at the high school level; many universities find that even among entrants with strong high school grades, many students lack basic writing, comprehension, and mathematics skills.

Côté and Allahar suggest that this problem may be further compounded by financial pressures; students are expected to put time into their studies that is equivalent to what's required for a full-time job, yet many students hold part-time or full-time jobs in order to fund their studies. Thus, Côté and Allahar argue, many among the current generation of university students tend to gravitate toward courses that offer entertaining lectures, minimal assignments, and fact-based evaluation, even though the result may be, as they quote one student saying, "I end the semester without having gained/retained a lot of knowledge; you learn a little bit of everything but fully understand nothing" (Côte_ and Allahar 2007 112).

Of course many factors have contributed to current levels of student disengagement, and students from the millennial generation offer some valid explanations for their disengagement from the university: tuition costs are high, some classrooms are overcrowded, some professors are not good teachers, and some courses have over-

simplified or over-specific content that caters more to ease of grading than to critical thought. Further, it is important to recognise that this line of argument is a generalisation. Some current university students are committed to their studies; they seek out academic challenges and put in the time necessary for critical thought and engaged classroom participation. Still, the net result of a cohort of students that is seeking out an easy credential through “GPA boosting” courses that require minimal effort could be a generation that, in general, is even less willing, or able, to engage with the difficult questions that surround Indigenous-settler relations in Canada.

The Lament for Liberal Education

One of the most popular counters to credentialism (and also to over-specialisation) is the lament for the bygone era of the traditional liberal (or Liberal Arts) education. Many critics of the current system long for the days when an undergraduate’s courses included a little bit of everything, perhaps with a capstone course or two to draw it all together. Until the late 1960s or the 1970s, for example, most science students at Canadian universities were required to take a number of arts courses, including at least one English course. After all, the argument goes, scientists, no matter how specialized, need to know how to read others’ research and how to write in order to describe their own. Still, in the sciences and in engineering, non-science requirements have been diluted down to as little as a single course (which can be, and often is satisfied with courses that limit evaluation to a few multiple-choice tests on subjects like “Popular Music”) and several Arts students have not taken any math or science since early high school, with the possible exception of a first year statistics course. At UVic, B.Sc. students were required to take a second language, and all B.A.s included a science requirement until curricular reforms in 1966

that allowed students “the possibility of earlier and more intensive specialisation” (Smith 1993 155). None of these changes passed without considerable opposition from both faculty and alumni (Smith 1993), but ultimately graduate school requirements determined these curricular reforms the same year that the first graduate students enrolled at UVic.

Today, several academics argue that a return to an old-fashioned liberal education is either a necessary or a sufficient condition to restore a university whose graduates have a thorough understanding of the world and the will and desire to act as thoughtful engaged citizens who will cultivate a lifelong love of learning. I must admit, I find this argument particularly tempting. I earned my undergraduate degree in one of Canada’s few programs that includes a wide range of arts, science, and interdisciplinary courses, and certainly I found this combination of courses both enjoyable and engaging. I like to think that I graduated with improved critical thinking skills and a better understanding of the world. In some ways, I have to admit that a version of the classic liberal education worked for me.

But this does not mean that a nostalgic appeal to liberal education is not problematic. On a very basic level, there is a logistical problem. Such an overhaul of undergraduate education would require parallel changes in both high schools and graduate schools. The prerequisites for most undergraduate science programs today are extensive enough that students are forced to begin “specializing” as early as grade ten or eleven, eliminating arts electives because they are required to complete a number of advanced science and mathematics courses. Similarly, many disciplinary graduate programs, in a number of disciplines, require a significant level of specialisation in a student’s undergraduate degree – certainly more than the prescribed liberal education allows without a great deal

of careful course planning beginning in a student's first year. This problem is not insurmountable – such adjustments could be made, if enough academics agreed that they would be beneficial, and such changes to degree structure could theoretically be grandfathered in. But this issue in undergraduate education reflects the demand for specialisation in later stages of an academic's career. Specifically, academics are expected to publish as much original research as possible if they are to progress through the academic ranks to tenure-track positions. This drive for original research has resulted in specialisation to the extent that professors' colleagues within their own academic department may not have the knowledge they need to understand one another's research. Thus, although most undergraduates will not enter graduate school or pursue careers as academics, their undergraduate education seems to be designed to train future professors.

It might be true that a liberal education with an emphasis on critical thought would best prepare undergraduate students to be engaged and thoughtful citizens, but such a change would require an overhaul of many of the university's existing structures. Many of the interdisciplinary programs that exist today bring together specialist professors from different disciplines, rather than interdisciplinary professors. Many of today's students are enrolling in university to improve their job prospects, not because they want to better engage within civic life. Many corporate funding bodies are interested in funding specific research that holds clear potential for profit. Thus, it is difficult to separate the realities of the disciplinary structures as they are from many of the other criticisms of the university that I have explored previously.

The Trouble with Teaching

In *No Place to Learn: Why Universities Aren't Working* Tom Pocklington and Allan Tupper focus on the relationship between research and teaching at Canadian universities. They argue that universities focus on producing vast quantities of new research (“knowledge production”) that is highly specialized and, as a result, is not really scrutinized either in terms of quality or in terms of potential social impacts. They argue that shifting to focus on quality undergraduate education, and particularly encouraging critical reflection, would be a far better measure of a university’s success. The current model, in which professors are evaluated according to the quantity of their publications rather than the quality of their teaching, Pocklington and Tupper argue, has yet to be scrutinized. This model results both in highly specialized research that very few people can actually understand, and in undergraduate degrees that reflect a random assortment of specialized courses, thus university degrees are better suited to perpetuating the current form of academia than they are to useful learning. Essentially, the university has embraced a corporate model. Therefore, Pocklington and Tupper suggest that a shift in the university’s approach to research is necessary, incorporating broader critical reflection, so that students can learn to think critically and professors can learn to teach.

These problems with teaching are reflected in the modern university in several ways: class sizes are expanding to a point where there is not even a semblance of any meaningful interaction between the professor and the students. Professors who are excellent researchers are “rewarded” with reduced teaching schedules, which serve not only to fill a student’s undergraduate experience with associate and sessional professors and to deny undergraduates the opportunity to interact with senior professors, but to imply to anyone in the university system that teaching is a burden while research is the

true role of the professor. Graduate students spend their time learning how to do specialised research in order to churn out publications and are given no formal instruction in teaching, except perhaps a short workshop before they take on teaching assistant roles (Pocklington and Tupper 2002).

All of these points are valid, particularly in popular undergraduate programs at large, research-oriented universities (e.g., the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia). The challenge to this line of argument is that there is a great deal of vested interest in the system as it is; again it is very difficult to find strategies for change without also requiring an increase in funding. Kim Richard Nossal (2006) offers an articulate version of this counter argument. Of course, he argues, it would be nice if every undergraduate student's experience could be filled with meaningful one-on-one interactions with experienced senior professors in small classes, but this would significantly increase the cost-per-student of an undergraduate degree (Nossal 2006, 1-20). In fact, the rapid expansion of class size lies in the rapid broadening of access to higher education following the Second World War to groups who had previously been excluded, primarily middle- and lower-class males (many of whom were able to access university through programs designed for returning war veterans) and women. Government funding projections assumed that university enrolment would decline parallel with the post-baby boom population, but university enrolment continued to grow (Canadian Federation of Students 2007, 1-64). It is said to be impossible to reconcile broad access to affordable post-secondary education with the teacher-student ratio that was possible when university education was an expensive luxury accessible only by society's elite.

It may be true that the current system is failing undergraduate students in terms of providing them with four years of what Pocklington and Tupper call a “first-class” and “attentive” education, but the system is working well for almost everyone else. Nossal argues that to return to the 12:1 student/faculty ratio of 1976 would require a near-doubling of the number of full-time professors currently employed by the Canadian university system, which would increase the total expenditures required for salary alone from \$2.91 billion to \$5.37 billion (Nossal 2006 748). Tax payers are unlikely to welcome the cost of this increase. Provincial governments recognize that public favour rests with low taxes and relatively easy admissions policies, and that any move to change either aspect would likely be tremendously unpopular among voters. The federal government is unlikely to expand its funding beyond its own interest in graduate research funding of projects, primarily in the hard sciences, with obvious applications in various fields of technology. Parents of undergraduate students can send their children to expensive American liberal arts colleges if they can afford the kind of tuition fees that would “correct” the current system (Nossal 2006, 1-20).

Furthermore, the “buy-outs” of Professors’ teaching time, justified largely through needing to devote more time to research, have been welcomed by most university professors at all levels. Much of the reduction in teaching load for new hires has followed the widespread unionisation of university faculties in the 1980s and 1990s, and is seen as a means of granting junior colleagues the time they require to build the research and publication portfolios necessary for achieving tenure (Nossal 2006 743). Similarly, other programs that provide teaching reductions for senior professors (such as the Canada

Research Chair programme and the SSHRC Release Time Stipend) enjoy “widespread support across the academic community” (Nossal 2006 744).

It is true that today a slightly larger number of faculty with significantly reduced teaching loads are teaching many more students than in 1970, and certainly this has an impact on the quality of an undergraduate student’s educational experience. Students are in larger senior-level courses, and have difficulty establishing long-term relationships with experienced professors, so there is a mentoring aspect to higher education that has been lost as an increasing number of courses are taught by part-time, sessional, or visiting professors. It is probably also true that students have more difficulty establishing the kind of meaningful relationships with professors that enable professors to write genuine, detailed, strong letters of reference for students who hope to move on to further levels of study. The university is one of the few institutions of modern society that brings together youthful energy (students) and the wisdom of experience (professors) in a setting that encourages the exchange of ideas. As these interactions become less and less personal, professors may have a harder time understanding their students, while students may find they feel increasingly disconnected from the material they are studying.

A certain level of student-teacher trust is necessary if a class is to undertake critical discussions on difficult topics, like colonialism, that require self reflection, in a respectful way. It is certainly possible for students to ask difficult questions and to experiment with new ways of thinking in small classes with capable professors; certainly many such classes occur daily on today’s university campuses, particularly at the graduate and the senior undergraduate level. In a giant lecture hall, however, such discussion becomes nearly impossible.

On a practical level it is difficult to ensure that so many students are able to participate in the discussion, and chances are good that a percentage of the class is counting on this reality as an excuse to not prepare adequately in advance. There is also the danger that the discussion can be easily derailed if a small number of students contribute inappropriate comments, whether through racism or ignorance, placing the professor in an awkward position, trying to defend ideas that are not widely recognised in mainstream society. Discussions of this kind may be particularly volatile in classes dealing with particularly contentious issues in which students might have a personal stake; discussions involving Indigenous title or land claims, and discussions involving racism are particular examples. If class sizes continue to rise, an increasing number of students could complete a university degree without ever experiencing the type of classroom dialogue that opens up spaces for new ways of thinking while challenging students to question their own assumptions. Like liberal education, however, this issue is connected to larger questions of university funding, and the changes required to address this issue would be significant.

Next Steps

In summary, much of the current literature that offers criticisms of the university addresses some or all of the issues of corporatisation, questions of funding, credentialisation, increasing levels of student disengagement, the decline of the broad liberal arts curriculum, and the devaluation of university teaching. Many of these themes are relevant in discussions of the university's relationship with Indigenous peoples and knowledge.

An additional theme relevant to this discussion is emerging from Indigenous and other non-Western perspectives, and also from a few voices within the West itself. Many of

these writers argue that various aspects of the university, from curriculum to architecture, can combine to perpetuate the West's notions of its own superiority, and to affirm narratives of universal historical processes and objective "truth" (Miheuah and Wilson 2004). The modern university, these critics say, is involved in socializing some of its students to accept current global systems of power, governance, and economy, while simultaneously acting to de-legitimate dissenting voices (Deloria and Wildcat 2001). I will be discussing this theme in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4: Universities and Indigenous peoples

University has become a destination of choice for youth and adults from different cultures who are aiming for success. I want to be clear, here, that I do not want to discredit the hard work that these individuals (like all students) put into earning university degrees. In fact, students from different cultures (and “different” students from within Western culture – students with disabilities, for example) often face unique challenges in university, so that the degrees they earn may in fact indicate a level of perseverance and hard work beyond that of a typical university graduate. Certainly, too, there is something to be said for “learning how the enemy thinks,” or “learning to speak the enemy’s language” and many brilliant individuals have begun approaching university training from this perspective, while maintaining close ties to their home communities and their own ways of knowing.

I do not know whether it is true, as Audre Lorde says, that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” but it can sure shake up a development plan when a young Indigenous person is able to turn the developer’s own reasoning on its head. In this chapter I explore some aspects of Indigenous peoples’ experiences in the university, as described in existing literature. I begin with a general discussion of Indigenous student enrolment at Canadian universities. From there, I move on to a discussion of some of the specific barriers that Indigenous students face at the University of Victoria, and of UVic’s initiatives to overcome these barriers. Next I explore specific Indigenous and non-Indigenous critiques of the Western university, including the sometime-problematic relationships among academic researchers and Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Students and Faculty in the University

In Canada, a number of reports have been issued in recent years that call attention to the very small proportion of Indigenous students in Post-Secondary Education.

According to statistics from the 2001 Canadian Census,¹⁹ eight percent of First Nations people older than 25 had a university degree in 2001, compared with fifteen percent of the rest of the population (Mendelson 2006, 1-52). Further, 23 percent of Aboriginal peoples aged 18 to 29 reported completing post-secondary education (but not necessarily university), compared with 43 percent in the rest of Canada (Holmes 2006).

This is a significant increase from 1952, when only two Indigenous students were attending any Canadian university (though perhaps there were some who were purposely trying to conceal their cultural identity). These reports argue that the primary reason Indigenous individuals do not attend post-secondary institutions is they do not complete high school, and that those students who do complete high school normally opt for community colleges or diploma programs instead. This is a problem, the reports argue, because these individuals will not be able to participate properly in Canada's economy that is "evolving" to require more education for satisfying jobs.²⁰ Michael Mendelson (2006) recommends setting targets for increased enrolment and striking projects to track

¹⁹ While it may be all that is readily available to most researchers, census data is not a particularly accurate method for tracking Indigenous participation in education. The census measures only "the highest level of schooling" a person has achieved, which does not always indicate which steps they have taken or skipped in getting there. "Post-Secondary Education" is a confusing term, as it could refer to alternative high school programs for students who have not completed high school, or to college or trades training, or to university education. Finally, many Indigenous people do not complete census forms, either because they are indifferent to the census, or as a political statement because they do identify themselves as Canadian.

²⁰ In *Ivory Tower Blues*, Côté and Allahar describe this phenomenon not as evolution but as the inflation in the credentials required for many jobs. They argue that this has occurred as a result of the significant increase in the proportion of the population that is pursuing higher education, specifically university; employers who once required only a high school diploma have started to require a university degree as a means of culling the number of applications. For, as Côté and Allahar argue, this change in the job market does not indicate that new jobs are being created that require the skills developed at university, but that many people who graduate from university will have to settle for underemployment.

the number of Aboriginal students who complete high school or post-secondary education in coming years.

One reason this issue may be gaining widespread attention at this time relates to population trends. In most Canadian provinces, the number of young people of high school and university age is going to decline dramatically in coming years, a reflection of the country's declining birth rate. The University of Victoria cites this decline as a concern in its strategic report. As an objective the institution aims to recruit more aggressively outside of Canada in the future in order to avoid a parallel decline in its student population, especially because this decline will likely begin just after a massive campaign to increase campus infrastructure to deal with recent growth in student numbers (University of Victoria 2008). In contrast, from now until 2016, the Indigenous population aged 15 to 24 is set to grow rapidly (Holmes 2006). Universities concerned with maintaining student numbers in order to avoid having to reverse their growth have a vested interest in seeing high school graduation rates and post-secondary recruitment and retention rates increase among the Indigenous population. Several reports explain this in entirely economic terms, turning people into numbers: "Some studies have shown that Aboriginal people have the highest average dollar return for an investment in education both in Canada and the U.S." (Holmes 2006 5).

While no doubt well intentioned, reports like these often neglect to discuss several factors that may be contributing to this situation, factors that I will explore in detail in the remainder of this chapter. The public school system, at all levels, has a curriculum that many Indigenous students find largely irrelevant. History classes, for example, tend to focus on Western history, and many elementary and high school teachers do not

themselves have a nuanced enough understanding of settler-Indigenous history in Canada to offer more than an over-generalized and sometimes stereotypical perspective to their students (Furniss 1999, 237). Similarly, Western perspectives on the sciences are often difficult to reconcile with Indigenous ways of understanding the world, Western authors often dominate English classes, and many students, regardless of their cultural background, have a hard time understanding how mathematics will be relevant later in life. Throughout my classes in the Indigenous Governance program, several of my colleagues expressed their frustration that they, like many Indigenous students, had to wait until the university level to find a forum in which to discuss the issues that are relevant to their communities in a meaningful and productive way.

Many Indigenous students also encounter racism when dealing with their peers, their teachers, and school administrators. Some Indigenous communities have greatly improved student retention by developing separate schools with culturally specific curricula. Indigenous communities on the Saanich peninsula on Vancouver Island, for example, established a Tribal School for grades one to seven in 1988 on the T'sartlip reserve. These communities also took control of the school's curriculum, incorporating the *SENCÔTÉN* language and local stories and history (McCaffrey 2002, 1-20).

Unfortunately there is no parallel institution at the secondary school level, and many of the students who thrive at the Tribal School eventually drop out from the local high school. Also, not all Indigenous communities have access to similar schools at any level, and urban Indigenous youth rarely have the opportunity to attend similar institutions.

Many Indigenous individuals retain much stronger ties to their land base and to their families (including their extended families) than are common in non-Indigenous

communities. Thus, unlike many students in Canada who are almost expected to move out of their parents' home or their home town to attend post-secondary education,²¹ Indigenous students are far more likely to attempt to stay close to home – even if this means attaining a diploma rather than a degree. Finally, although the majority of students at any university are likely working toward a credential so they can participate in a meaningful way in their country's economy, many Indigenous students are in university to gain skills that their community needs, rather than with motives relating to enhancing their personal incomes. For Indigenous students from some communities, relevant employment with a degree other than, for example, medicine, law, or social work means relocating to an urban centre. Thus, while Indigenous communities may represent “a badly-needed and under-utilized source of human capital,” and while a university degree might mean an increase in an individual's “lifetime earnings outlook,” these changes will not necessarily be reflected proportionately at the community level on reserves; they may result in yet another incarnation of the brain drain. This is recognized in many of these reports, e.g., “many graduates do in fact become assimilated into mainstream society,” but the only concern expressed in this context is that there may be few role models with university degrees living on reserves (Holmes 2006 10). There is no recognition that many Indigenous peoples do not want to be assimilated within the country's economy, that Indigenous cultures are valuable and provide unique insights into living on this landbase, or that some students find that they lose valuable knowledge (ways of communicating and behaving within their communities, for example) even as they gain the forms of knowledge offered by the university.

²¹ A majority of the students attending the University of Victoria, for example, are not from Victoria, according to the University's 2007 Strategic Plan.

It is also problematic that several discussions of Indigenous students in the university focus heavily on numbers. This line of reasoning assumes that progress, that positive developments, will be known to have occurred for Indigenous peoples in Canada when more of them are in university. Mendelson (2006) takes this to the extreme, he suggests setting targets for Indigenous student enrolment and then counting enrolled students as a strategy for addressing this situation. It is true that tracking the number of Indigenous students enrolled in university is difficult because it depends on students' self-identification²² on their university applications. For various reasons, many students choose not to self-identify as Indigenous. The problem is, an increase in Indigenous student enrolment and retention may be interpreted to mean that the university is successful in creating a good and relevant environment for Indigenous students. Just as the number of books does not necessarily reflect the quality of a library, the number of Indigenous students in a university does not necessarily reflect any real success at university decolonisation.

Furthermore, reports that focus on numbers as a measure of success tend to focus the blame for the current low numbers on Indigenous students themselves. Indigenous students are not in university, the line of thinking goes, because they could not get their act together to finish high school, or because they come from communities that face problems with addictions and violence and unemployment, or because they do not have enough support from their parents. Some aspects of these arguments may be partially true – many Indigenous communities face significant social challenges, and of course these

²² Self-identification is controversial as a means of establishing Indigenous identity. Although other methods (depending on status as defined by the Indian Act, for example) risk excluding Indigenous individuals who have become disenfranchised as a result of colonial policies, self-identification is open to the possibility of “ethnic fraud,” where individuals with no connection to Indigenous communities claim to be Indigenous in order to take advantage of specific programs.

issues will impact a young person's ability to succeed in the education system. The problem with this line of reasoning is it ignores the flip side of the problem. It does not ask what aspects of public high schools and universities cause Indigenous students to drop out in such great numbers. It does not acknowledge that these schools are teaching and perpetuating attitudes among the whitestream public that allow most Canadians to remain entirely unaware of their own roles in this destructive relationship. And it ignores that Canada's present Indigenous-settler relationships are intimately linked to historical acts – land dispossession; inaction toward, if not intentional spread of disease in Indigenous communities; residential schools; the “Sixties Scoop;”²³ environmental destruction resulting in loss of traditional modes of subsistence; etc., – because at a fundamental level, the whitestream relationship to this land and its people has not changed as much as most Settlers want to believe.

Indigenous Students at the University of Victoria

Initiatives

The University of Victoria's Strategic Plan addresses the recruitment and retention of Indigenous students specifically in its third objective, “to increase the number of Indigenous students graduating from all faculties at UVic, building on our commitment to and our unique relationship with Canada's First Peoples” (University of Victoria 2008 15). Other aspects of the Strategic Plan are working toward developments that might benefit Indigenous students at UVic indirectly. There is a significant focus on recruiting international students (Objective 18), which may result in an increase in programs directed at targeting racism in general. The plan also emphasises increased experiential

²³ The “Sixties Scoop” refers to the forced adoption, en masse, of Indigenous children by white families during the 1960s.

learning and community engagement (Objective 17), which could provide good opportunities for Indigenous students to build valuable connections off campus.

The University of Victoria certainly has had some impressive results with Indigenous student recruitment. In recent years, for example, more than 30 percent of students graduating from the Master of Law Program at UVic's law school have been Indigenous (Li 2007, 8). Particularly under University President David Turpin, UVic has made a concerted effort to recruit and retain Indigenous students. The university employs several Indigenous staff mandated to work with Indigenous students: an Aboriginal Liaison Officer who serves as the university's contact person for academic and cultural matters involving students and communities; a First Nations Counsellor at the Student Counselling Centre; and an Indigenous Student Advisor for the Faculty of Human and Social Development.

Unfortunately, these staff tend to be very busy, and are perpetually short of resources (Martin and Warburton 1998). Similarly, the University of Victoria employs approximately 20 well-respected Indigenous faculty members and offers over 100 courses that deal with Indigenous issues in various departments, including Law, Indigenous Studies, Education, Social Work, and the Indigenous Governance program (Mason 2007, 10). There are designated spaces for Indigenous students to meet and gather, including the Native Student Union space, and, scheduled for completion in 2009, a First People's House. A support service for Indigenous students in Science and Engineering used to exist, but had to be disassembled because of a lack of resources.

There are Indigenous Academic Advisors in the School of Social Work and the Faculty of Law. The University and these faculties have also developed specific admissions

policies for exceptional Indigenous candidates who do not meet regular admittance criteria, and have reserved seats in their programs for Indigenous applicants. Several academic departments have designed programs that attempt to address Indigenous student and Indigenous community needs. Undergraduate students can take an Interdisciplinary minor in Indigenous Studies. The School of Social Work offers a First Nations Specialisation and a First Nations Child Welfare Specialisation. The Faculty of Law has an Aboriginal Law Program, and graduate students can enroll in the interdisciplinary Indigenous Governance MA and PhD programs, which focus on the “values, perspectives, concepts, and principles” of Indigenous peoples’ politics and their context.

The University of Victoria is developing a reputation across the country for its efforts to accommodate Indigenous students. This is reflected in the increase in Indigenous student enrolment over the last decade. In 2000, UVic had 76 students who self-identified as Indigenous; in 2007, there were approximately 620. It is likely that this increase has occurred both because more Indigenous students are attending UVic and because more of those who attend are choosing to self-identify.

The University of Victoria is also home to LE,NONET, a pilot project sponsored by the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation. LE,NONET (a Straits Salish word meaning “success after enduring many hardships”) is particularly interesting because its mandate focuses on improving the retention of Indigenous students by transforming the institution to suit students’ needs, rather than ways that students need to adapt to fit the institution. There is a Bursary Program to provide funding to supplement any funding a

student may receive from his or her band,²⁴ the bursary is also available to Indigenous students who do not have status as defined by the Indian Act and thus do not qualify for band funding. There is a Peer Mentoring program that aims both to ease the transition to university for new students, and to foster a sense of community among the Indigenous students at UVic. Only Indigenous students are hired as Peer Mentors, so the program provides meaningful and relevant employment opportunities for senior-level students. Students can enroll in Community Internships or Research Apprenticeships for academic credit, in which they are matched either with an Indigenous community or with a faculty member at UVic to complete a project that fits with the community's needs or the student's research interests. Community Interns and Research Apprentices also receive a \$3500 stipend. Finally, LE, NONET is developing a Cultural Awareness Training program for staff and faculty at UVic in order to help the broader campus population to better support Indigenous students. The program focuses on introducing staff and faculty to current and historical Indigenous-state relations, to the challenges facing many Indigenous peoples, and also on concrete ways to avoid and to deal with racism in the classroom.

LE, NONET is due to release its preliminary quantitative and qualitative research findings in mid-2008. So far, approximately 150 UVic students of Aboriginal ancestry²⁵ have participated in at least one of LE, NONET's programs. The Program has received local and national media attention (Bell 2008, 4; Gidney 2005, 4; Mason 2007, 10).

²⁴ A popular myth among whitestream Canadians is that Indigenous students receive band funding that covers all of their expenses in Post-Secondary education. In reality, the amount of funding available to each student varies greatly depending where they are from, and funding levels per student generally are declining because Band Councils do not have access to extra money even as the number of people from their community attending post-secondary education increases.

²⁵ For a number of reasons, LE, NONET chose to accept students into its programs based on a student's self-identification as having Aboriginal Ancestry. Students are required to support their self-identification with documentation, though many forms of documentation are accepted as valid.

Although specific results have not yet been released, reactions to the project have been very positive thus far. Sarah Dickie, a former student mentor, confirms that the Peer Mentor program has provided support for new and returning students that has been very much appreciated (Bell 2008, 4). Dickie has graduated from UVic, and is currently working on campus in the Office of Community-Based Research. Roger John, one of the project's Co-Principal Investigators, explains that the Project has been particularly successful at fostering Indigenous community on campus, giving students “a venue to be among other Aboriginal students to discuss Aboriginal topics” (Bell 2008, 4).

The project also encourages students to connect with local Indigenous communities and urban organisations through the Community Internship program, in response to Community Members' concerns that many Indigenous students who graduate from university do not return. John confirms that LE,NONET seems to be succeeding thus far in “preparing [Community Internship participants] to go beyond the classroom” during their time at UVic (Bell 2008, 4).

Challenges

Many of these initiatives are positive developments, but UVic still has a long way to go. Several of these initiatives are very focused on particular people or programs; none really address university-wide changes. This is not entirely surprising, given that there is generally a lack of communication between the various faculties and departments at any large university. Thus, although the university's strategic plan contains Objective 3 to encourage the recruitment of Indigenous students, it also contains several objectives that could work to counteract the positive developments aimed at improving the university experience for Indigenous students at UVic.

In its focus on securing government funding, the Strategic Plan offers Key Strategy 29a, to “advocate effectively for increased support, provincially and federally, by presenting the university’s activities in education and research as fundamental to the well-being of the province and the country” (University of Victoria 2008 37). History has shown that the well being of the province, the well-being of the country, and the well-being of Indigenous peoples and communities do not always coincide. In fact, when well-being is interpreted in primarily economic terms (as it is likely to be, particularly given the increasingly corporate structure of the university) it is likely to counter the interests of some communities because economic growth in British Columbia usually involves housing and retail developments or resource extraction, all of which threaten Indigenous territories and modes of subsistence.

Additionally, Objective 30 deals with diversifying funding sources, including a strategy to “establish appropriate partnerships with the private sector that allow us to achieve our goals” (University of Victoria 2008 37). Again, the private sector and Indigenous communities may have different interests and worldviews, so these partnerships will not necessarily benefit Indigenous students or their communities.

Racism

In spite of a level of general denial that it is still a problem on university campuses, racism also has a significant documented presence at the University of Victoria. In 1998, a group of UVic researchers put together *Voices for Change*, a report on racism at UVic. There was no significant action to address racism at UVic until the late 1980s, following the release of the Federal Employment Equity Act, which mandated employment equity for Aboriginals, people with disabilities, visible minorities, and women in Canada.

Starting in the 1990s, particularly following the university's implementation of the policy of actively recruiting international students in 1994, momentum began to build as various groups began calling attention to racism at UVic. Predictably, there was a counter-response of defensiveness and denial among some of UVic's population. The report had several findings.

Statistically, *Voices for Change* found that visible minorities and Aboriginal people are under represented among all employee groups at UVic, and visible minorities are not distributed evenly across the faculties (a higher proportion are in science and engineering). Faculty from visible and cultural minority groups faced several barriers to promotion. Those who are vegetarian or who do not consume alcohol often could not participate in informal social gatherings in bars or around barbecues that influenced promotion and hiring decisions. Often faculty whose research relates to advocacy publish most of their work in smaller, community- or advocacy-oriented publications, and attend less-prestigious conferences which are not as highly respected in peer evaluations. Many faculty of colour often find themselves taking on unofficial roles, counselling or doing advocacy work for their students from similar cultural backgrounds. Many university committees and organisations have mandates requiring diverse membership, so the same faculty and staff find themselves participating on multiple committees to fulfill these requirements, but these responsibilities are not considered relevant to their CVs. Faculty who participated in advocacy or political work dealing with racism also faced peers and hiring committees who questioned their ability to make objective judgments as a result. One faculty member commented

We're all burnt out from doing this work. And we found out there is very little institutional support for it... in terms

of encouraging us and supporting us in doing the education we're doing... it's not part of the overall plan of this university. It's not like part of how they see our role as a university in terms of training people for the people, which I think is really appalling. (Martin and Warburton 1998 76).

Faculty of colour, particularly those whose work challenges existing norms and ways of thinking in the classroom, often face racism from their students. In these situations, students question the teacher's authority or direct challenges at the professor's person rather than at his or her scholarship. Whiteman students also sometimes appropriate the discourse, claiming to feel "marginalized" by the professor's focus on issues surrounding people of colour.

Students of colour also encountered various forms of racism. Like faculty, students of colour often faced tokenism, being assigned to many committees without any academic recognition for their work. Many students found the curriculum irrelevant to their concerns. Some students found themselves singled out by their professors, asked to speak on behalf of all people from their culture. Other students found themselves ignored, or found their comments and questions belittled by their professors or their peers, particularly when speaking out about issues of race. Many students faced denial of racism from many different sources (Martin and Warburton 1998).

Several students, staff, and faculty who encountered racism told the researchers that the university lacks effective ways of resolving such situations. Enough denial of racism was reported at administrative levels that, as one student expressed, "When I have an unpleasant experience I cannot figure out if it is because I'm Native or because the person is rude or that I don't understand" (Martin and Warburton 1998 64).

The report found that UVic did not have adequate support people working on these issues, or that the people in place are not appropriate – students commented, for example, that they were told to approach white, male faculty about departmental racism. Often, too, when students or employees report racism, the existing structures are designed to deal with them as persons with emotional problems who need help coping and feeling better, rather than to help them address the issues. Some students and employees faced endless chains of referrals between various services, ending in unofficial student groups that lacked mandate, time, and/or resources, to cope with the resulting workload. The VIPIRG director, for example, handled approximately one hundred cases dealing with racial and ethnic matters from 1993-1998, including some for faculty, because no other appropriate services existed.

This report is nearly ten years old now, and the University of Victoria has undertaken several initiatives in response to the report's findings, but this work is ongoing. There is still a general lack of staff mandated to help students and faculty confront racism on campus, and the staff that are in place lack resources. The Report recommends that senior administration adopt a leadership role in developing a strategy for change, including adding a "clear, concise anti-racist vision statement" to the University's Strategic Plan. The current Strategic Plan does feature Key Strategy 1b that reads, "Identify and address equity and diversity issues across the university by monitoring and reporting on the recruitment, retention and experience of students, faculty and staff," but the word "racism" is notably absent from the plan as a whole.

Students continue to report encounters with racism on campus as well. Prama Tagore's volume *In Our Own Voices: Learning and Teaching Toward Decolonisation* (2006)

features pieces from female women of colour in the academy, including many women attending UVic. As Tagore writes in the introduction, the anthology's purpose is to promote and practice the idea that "marginalized people have the right to name [their] own experiences, to claim [their] own knowledges, and to speak [their] own stories" as opposed to having other people speaking or describing their realities for them (Tagore 2006 7). My attempting to re-tell these women's stories feels like the very thing they are arguing against; I will instead say that what is clear to me from these stories is that many people outside of the whitestream still experience discrimination on several fronts, and that people hoping to work as allies need to start by listening, by taking what they hear seriously, and by taking the initiative to do their own part in anti-racist work, particularly in looking at their own roles.

In addition to the pressure from the administration on students of colour and Indigenous students to take on vast quantities of anti-racist work, Tagore lists the following issues that these students experience in the university:

a general silence around colonialism, racism, and racialised experiences; backlash for speaking up against racism; isolation in classes and within departments; racist violence, harassment and threat; a Eurocentric curriculum and the absence of voices and histories that speak to the realities, knowledges, and needs of people of colour and Indigenous people, stereotyping, silencing, marginalisation, invisibility, tokenism and/or objectification in classrooms both by other students and by white professors; a lack of models and/or resources to help manoeuvre specific circumstances, including seeking redress for harassment, coping with racism, or imagining anti-colonial and anti-racist spaces and methods of learning; a lack of supervision, support and/or expertise for projects on anti-racism or on histories and knowledges developed outside, apart from, or in resistance to colonial ways of knowing (Tagore 2006 8).

I believe that this “general silence” is not absolute. As I discussed in previous chapters, academics from many different cultural backgrounds and in many disciplines are taking questions of colonialism and racism seriously, and this often-difficult work should be acknowledged. Still, as a person of Western-European descent, I must also acknowledge that I have not directly experienced “racist violence, harassment and threat,” and that in spite of my best efforts, I am not always aware of Eurocentric biases that may become manifest in academic discussions.

Spaces are beginning to open up on university campuses for “minority” peoples, but even these small spaces are constantly challenged. A recent article in the *Martlet*, the UVic student newspaper, for example, argued that it is discriminatory that undergraduate students pay as much as \$2.95 per year to fund “the Women’s Centre and advocacy groups for students of colour, Native students, gay students and students with a disability” when there is no similar “safe space” for white males. The core of the writer’s argument is, because approximately 60 percent of students on campus are female, and because each student gets one vote in student elections, women hold the political clout on campus and therefore do not need their own space (Karp 2007). Several students, male and female, responded to this letter, both in favour of and arguing against the writer’s points. Thus, although these spaces exist on campus, they are subject to controversy.

Western Education as Schooling and Assimilation

The Western university incorporates and promotes many Western attitudes toward education in general, and these have significant impacts on Indigenous students. Many of these assumptions are obvious with a quick look at any development project that deals with education. First, those in power must be convinced, if they are not already, that

schooling is an essential aspect of progress or development, and ideally the government should draft laws to ensure mandatory schooling for all children up to a particular age. By now, this is fairly universal.

Next, teachers must be trained. Finally, NGOs and volunteers must fund-raise and/or head overseas to construct school buildings and to fill them with textbooks and school supplies. The assumptions here are that all children from a particular region, if not all humans, need to learn similar things; that many children should learn much of what they know from one adult or from a small group of adults with specific, formal training; and that education happens in buildings and from books. These assumptions are fundamental to Western education at all levels both locally and as exported abroad. Such assumptions can be difficult to escape, particularly when we are taught, by our education system that is steeped in these assumptions, that this form of education is a necessary condition for the development of individual freedom and to encourage individual success.

In his many books, essays, and talks dealing with education, Ivan Illich critiques these assumptions. Illich, an Austrian by birth, and an ordained Catholic priest, spent much of his life travelling throughout Europe and North and South America observing the impact of development projects firsthand. For a time, he ran the “Centre for Intercultural Documentation” for Catholic missionaries in Latin America with two goals: to challenge missionaries to question the cultural impacts of their assignments (and to convince them to refuse such assignments if possible), and to gain enough influence among the agencies sponsoring the missions to “dissuade them from implementing” Pope John XIII’s modernizing plan for Latin America (Illich 1970 47-48).

Illich criticizes most Western institutions (schools, hospitals, work, and technological infrastructure) on the grounds that as these institutions became more and more efficient, they became less and less capable of accomplishing their purposes (education, health, life purpose, and less-gruelling labour, respectively). Illich argues that development projects, as a result, mistake expanding Western institutions – institutions designed for and by an affluent culture that was made affluent by the plunder of the continents being “developed” – for useful solutions. Such is certainly true of Western development projects involving education.

Western schooling, Illich argues, functions by separating knowledge from one’s lived environment; this separation in turn divides knowledge (“making”) from action (“doing”). The creation of these categories is fundamental to Western consumer culture: it enables our ability to value the “making” of things without considering whether these things should be made, over “doing,” where there is less productivity and fewer “things” are produced, but one must evaluate the overall value of any given action (Illich 1971). When we attend school, we learn to equate schooling with education, and we learn that those who stay longer earn the right to more power, wealth, and prestige – the longer one stays in school, the worse one feels if one drops out. Furthermore, school teaches us to hold dropouts personally responsible for their failure, thus rationalizing social stratification “with much more rigour than churches have ever done” (Illich 2006 98). The idea that schooling can be equated with education is thus most destructive for the people who are least likely to be able to afford to stay in school for a long time. As Illich writes, “Once the imagination of an entire population has been ‘schooled,’ or indoctrinated, to believe that school has a monopoly on formal education, then the

illiterate can be taxed²⁶ to provide free high school and university education for the children of the rich” (Illich 2006 97).

Illich offers an example of Indigenous children in Oaxaca to illustrate the potential of mandatory schooling to add additional discrimination to poverty, rather than to serve as a means to equality. Previously, these children had no access to schools, but they could enter the building trades to help support their families. Access to schools, for them, meant a “measure” of their “inferiority relative to the urban population” in an environment where their poverty and their physical distance from the schools virtually guaranteed that few of them could stay in school very long or could do very well. The only difference that access to education brought them was an inability to access trades without certificates earned in school (Galeano 2006, 440-219-220). Schooling, after all, can only offer opportunities to those who can afford to drop out of their lives in order to attend – in many Indigenous families of the tricontinent, this is just not possible, even for children.

Mandatory schooling has other particular impacts on Indigenous children, both in the communities that remain formally colonized, and those of the tricontinent. Indigenous forms of education were often a process to maintain continuity between parents and children – parents and extended family members were often seen as a child’s first teachers – while modern education is intended to create discontinuities, to “raise” an educated child “above” the parents’ level (Mead et al. 2006 153). Often, students who are successful in school are encouraged to leave their communities: “The student with a primary school certificate goes to the little town, the one with a high school diploma goes

²⁶ Most Status Indigenous peoples in Canada do not pay taxes, but I believe that the spirit of this argument is still very relevant.

to the capital, the graduate and the post-graduate to rich countries.” (Mead et al. 2006 154).

This has several impacts on Indigenous communities. The most obvious is the schools’ tendency to act as “sieves for ambition,” encouraging the brightest students leave home to take advantage of the opportunities available elsewhere, but leaving communities without some of their brightest minds in the process (Mead et al. 2006 158). Communities that were already poor are left further unable to cope with and find ways to escape their poverty. This process also serves to sever a community’s historical memory, as schooled students lose their ability to talk naturally with their own families, and may lose respect for their communities’ unique knowledge and traditions (Mead et al. 2006, 152-160). In communities where every adult might once have been recognized as a source of valuable knowledge, schoolteachers are trained to recognize only the school as a cultural resource, even though “one can finish a long and brilliant university training without ever having been provoked to dance, to sing, to paint or to talk” (Mead et al. 2006 157-158).

Thus, although Western models of education served to unify European nations around particular cultural ideas, as described in Chapter Two for Germany, England, Scotland, and the United States, the opposite is often true in Indigenous communities. When they are exported, Western educational models end up separating and selecting instead of unifying, replacing cultural knowledge and identity with an imitation of identity and a foreign version of national consciousness (Mead et al. 2006, 152-160).

These impacts of exported schooling are not always unintentional. European colonial administrations have a well-documented history of using education as a conscientiously applied tool of assimilation within their colonies. Residential schools in North America

are famous for their “Kill the Indian, save the child” approach to assimilation through education, and British colonial administrators engaged in long debates, many of which are recorded in writing, about the school system best suited to creating good colonial subjects in India during the nineteenth century, summarized in the Macaulay quotation about using education to create “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay 1972 249).

Particular languages are also lost. Western schooling’s emphasis on the written word excludes the languages that have not already been purposefully destroyed among oral populations, so that these languages are not passed on (Mead et al. 2006 158). In regions in which multiple languages once coexisted, a scarcity of both schools and printed resources in all but official national languages further exacerbates this problem, particularly among Indigenous populations of the Tricontinent. Thus, schooling can work in a way that violence alone could not to make conquest permanent by destroying unique forms of knowledge and identity. In spite of the best intentions of many of the individuals involved with Western NGOs, education-based development projects often serve two purposes: to train an elite, and to create new consumers among the masses, both at the expense of the rural majority (Mead et al. 2006 159).

Illich offers an alternative to the Western model of schooling, to replace the models that influence Western schools and that are exported worldwide. Illich argues that a useful model of education should focus on “the awakening awareness of new levels of human potential and the use of one’s creative powers to foster human life” (Illich 2006 97). He acknowledges that it is difficult to design alternatives to the very institutions that shape our understandings of reality itself, but also that it is possible, if people get together

to focus on particular solutions, to create a higher concentration of determination and intelligence than any one person is capable of alone – in other words, through research. This research, however, needs to be different from the majority of research currently taking place in Modern universities, because it needs to question the assumptions of the university itself, which is easiest to do by including different perspectives – the very perspectives that tend to be excluded from the university.

Indigenous Critiques of the University

Before I look to such perspectives for alternatives, I will further explore alternative perspectives' critiques that focus specifically on Western universities, particularly those critiques emerging from Indigenous peoples. Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson's edited volume, *Indigenizing the Academy* (2004), brings together several different (but critical) perspectives on the university's response to Indigenous scholars. At the time of the book's publication, most of the authors within agreed that the academy is worth "Indigenizing," i.e. that Indigenous critiques and challenges to the institution could bring about positive change, and that the university itself holds the potential to serve as a locus for liberation and anti-racist work. Some focus instead on trying to establish autonomous spaces within the ivory tower, choosing to remain separate from broader institutional agendas, while encouraging Indigenous scholars to challenge whitestream approaches to knowledge. Their goal through this Indigenizing work, as stated in the introduction, is

To carve a space where Indigenous values and knowledges are respected; to create an environment that supports research and methodologies useful to Indigenous nation building; to support one another as institutional foundations are shaken; and to compel institutional responsiveness to

Indigenous issues, concerns, and communities” (Mihesuah and Wilson 2004 2).

The articles that follow describe many different ways in which these goals are thwarted in the Western university. Mihesuah’s article focuses on “academic gatekeeping,” the methods that those with established power within the academy – search committees, publishers, award committees, reviewers, and hiring bodies – use to prevent so called “activist”²⁷ scholars (Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who are interested in re-developing traditional governance models, reinvigorating Indigenous languages, critiquing their colonial context, or otherwise attempting to bring about real change for their communities) from getting published and hired. This, she argues, is a struggle for control – those who have traditionally been in control of Native Studies departments are beginning to feel threatened, often because their work is being challenged as irrelevant given the challenges that most Indigenous communities face. Thus, Mihesuah argues, the majority of awards and recognition go either to non-Indigenous scholars or to Indigenous novels and poetry. Native Studies programs in many universities feature irrelevant curricula and reading lists that feature few Indigenous voices apart from works of fiction.

Many articles that either call attention to these problems within the academy, or that address actual community needs are rejected by journals with no explanation, or are not taken seriously if they are actually published (Mihesuah and Wilson 2004). The Indigenous scholars who do manage to get hired in universities are often chosen based on their demonstrated ability to avoid being political. Vine Deloria Jr agrees; in his

²⁷ Indigenous scholars are often criticized for being “activists posing as academics,” as though the two roles are mutually exclusive. This accusation, of course, embodies the assumption that academic research should be cut off from having any impact on the world – or at least that research involving Indigenous peoples should be cut off. See, for example, (Corntassel 2004).

contribution to this volume, he appeals to those Indigenous scholars who are employed in academia strictly for their own individual benefit to re-connect with their communities' political struggles in meaningful ways (Deloria 2004, 16-30).

In the article "Social Corruption in Academe: The Organisational Psychology of Native Experience in Higher Education," Keith James explores Indigenous scholars' and students' experiences with marginalisation within academia. James recognizes that the university can be a source of meaningful and fulfilling employment for many people, but that the university's traditions, customs, and power structures can lead to enormous frustration and stress for others, most often those who are not white males in favour of the status quo. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of life in the academy for those who are subject to unfair judgments is that their stories are often labelled as unbelievable exaggerations by their colleagues, and thus are ignored at higher levels and cannot serve to bring about positive change (James 2004, 48-68).

American Indian History and Anthropology are both singled out as particularly problematic disciplines.²⁸ Mihesuah argues that the most obvious problem with History is its scholars' inability (or unwillingness) to consider the ways that the historic events they study affect present-day situations.

Academics also need to be aware of the impacts their research may have on broader public opinion. Vine Deloria Jr. illustrates one example of an academic debate that has been slow to spread outside of the Academy in *Red Earth, White Lies* (1997) through his discussion of the Bering Strait theory. This theory, still propagated in several high school history classes, suggests that Turtle Island's Indigenous peoples migrated to this land

²⁸ Again, this is a generalisation. Of course there are Historians and Anthropologists doing anti-colonial or good Indigenous research. This argument, as Mihesuah's work, is addressed to those who are not.

mass from North East Russia between 100 000 and 13 000 years ago, when glaciers held a significant enough portion of the Earth's water that a "land bridge" resulted between the two continents. This theory has tremendous political implications for Indigenous-settler relations, since it backs the idea that "we are all immigrants," and thus that Indigenous peoples have no more "real" claim to their territory than later arrivals from Europe. This theory gained enormous popularity, and many people still assume it is historically accurate.

Deloria argues, however, that in fact two scholars, H. Muller-Beck and William Laughlin, put this theory forward, as an idea with no supporting evidence, and because it sounded and felt good, "generations of scholars, following the so-called scientific method of inquiry, have simply accepted this idea at face value on faith alone" (Deloria 1997 72). Thus, because enough people cited the original articles, they eventually gained "truth" status in the academy. The Bering Strait Theory has recently been subject to debate within the academy, and archaeologists are finding and writing about evidence that calls the Theory into question, but in my experience it is not difficult to find North Americans who insist that the Indigenous peoples of this continent migrated from Asia and subsequently spread southward. In this case, the problem is not necessarily that the academy is ignoring this debate, but that the debate is not spreading effectively outside of the academy.

Within both History and Anthropology, Indigenous writers are sometimes ignored on the grounds that they cannot be "objective" with regard to their own communities' histories (Mihsuah 2004, 143-159). Archaeology is home to the issue of repatriation of skeletal remains and sacred objects that belong to, and were stolen from, Indigenous

communities and that are now stored in universities, museums, and private collections (Hunter 2004, 160-173).

Research and Research Ethics

Another set of issues facing Indigenous peoples in the academy that is common not only to History and Anthropology but to other disciplines as well relates to research and research methodology.²⁹ Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), is one of the most thorough written explorations of the problems with traditional university research methods. Smith traces the role that research, including university research, has played in establishing Western cultural narratives of the "inherent superiority" of Western knowledge. Smith argues that Western interpretations of history, as manifest in the academic discipline of History, have often silenced or distorted Indigenous voices and served to justify Western colonial expansion. In particular, Smith problematizes the discipline's focus on written, rather than oral traditions, and Smith argues that academic accounts of history have often been interpreted as objective or universal when in fact they only offer a few of the many possible points of view of the unfolding of various events (Smith 1999). Although many scholars in History and other disciplines are working to take these critiques into account, it is not always easy to reconcile Indigenous and Western perspectives.

Even today, when we have ethics boards to ensure that humans who participate as research subjects are treated with respect, several Indigenous scholars argue that many

²⁹ Research Methodology relating to Indigenous peoples is a huge concern, and whole graduate-level courses exist that deal exclusively with this topic. I am including only a very brief summary here. This section of my thesis is in no way intended to serve as a template for research in Indigenous communities. There is no single template, or checklist that can be followed to ensure that any given research project is truly of benefit for the community. Instead, the researcher or research team must go through the hard work of establishing a respectful and ongoing relationship with the communities in question, and must be willing to accept ongoing feedback from that community – even if the feedback is that the community does not want the project to take place.

ethics policies do not adequately protect Indigenous communities.³⁰ Some research projects are undertaken with the scholar's personal curiosity in mind; the scholar pursues a research project in partial completion of an MA or a PhD, or to provide content for a paper, or in order to acquire grant money. Of course most academics are genuinely interested in the subjects they want to learn about, but this interest is sometimes expressed in very personal terms; the scholar is doing the research because the scholar wants to learn about something. Often too, academic research is linked to broader discourses and knowledge claims, while community needs may be more specific and immediate (Keller and Hall 2006).

Research ethics committees are working toward ensuring that the community "being researched" has input at all stages of the research process, but ensuring that researcher-community relationships are as respectful as possible is often a complex and imperfect process. Academics who plan to conduct research in Indigenous communities need to be aware that many communities are flooded with researchers, and that many elders and knowledge-keepers face many demands on their time and may not feel that participating in research projects is a priority. Furthermore, the distrust that many Indigenous peoples and communities feel toward academic researchers has resulted from problematic historical relationships. In the past, and to some extent in the present as well, outside research has resulted in the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and the patenting of Indigenous technologies by non-Indigenous groups. Although any particular researcher

³⁰ When I use the word "community" in this chapter, I am not equating the term with either "reserve-community" or "Indigenous nation." On any given reserve, or in any given urban Indigenous group, there may be several different communities. A Band Council may not represent the views of all of its community members. A particular group of individuals may be disenfranchised or oppressed within a broader reserve-community. Thus, permission from a Band Council to conduct research, though it may be an essential part of protocol, is only a first step. In research that involves disenfranchised groups within a larger community, members of these groups must have the opportunity to provide informed consent, to retain ownership and control of the data, and to veto research projects that they feel should not be undertaken.

may be genuinely interested in working with a community to pursue mutually-beneficial goals, this work cannot be effective unless the researcher is willing to put in the hard work necessary to develop a relationship based in trust. There are no shortcuts or “how-to” guides for this process; every researcher and every community is unique.

In “OCAP: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary First Nations Research and Some Options for First Nations Communities,” Schnarch (2004) argues that research involving Indigenous peoples must ensure that the Indigenous individuals in question, or their communities, maintain ownership, control, access, and possession of their data. Thus, in contrast with many Western conceptions of intellectual property, Schnarch argues that an Indigenous community owns its knowledge collectively, just as an individual owns his or her self-knowledge. Indigenous peoples must also maintain control of their data at all stages of a research project – from design to completion – which means, among other things, that a community must have the ability to exclude particular data or knowledge from the research project at any time and for any reason.

For Schnarch, Indigenous peoples must also be able to access all data about themselves (Schnarch 2004, 80-95). It is not enough for a researcher to mail a copy of the completed report to the Band Council Office; is it important that the researcher ensures that the research is presented to the community in accessible language, and also that community members have an opportunity to provide their feedback, and to have this feedback taken seriously. This relates back to issues of control; it is difficult for a community to maintain control of information that is presented in a format that is virtually incomprehensible to all but a small group of academics in a particular field. Finally, Schnarch argues, Indigenous peoples must maintain literal possession of their data. They can assign a

steward (an individual or an institution that is accountable to the community) to take care of the data, but in this situation a relationship of trust is particularly important.

Some researchers are beginning to recognize these problems, and are working to develop more respectful research models. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) model is one model that has resulted from these efforts. In this model, the researcher works with the community at all levels of the research project, essentially using her or his expertise and the resources of the university to tackle some issue that the interested community wants to learn more about. Thus, the community is involved even in the earliest research-planning stages, and normally PAR focuses on enabling concrete change in the researched community as part of the project (Fletcher 2003, 28-61; Stringer 1999, 17-42). PAR is certainly a creative attempt to bridge the researcher/researched gap, but no model can guarantee that any research project will have only positive impacts on the researched community. This depends on the researcher's personal ethics and commitment as much as anything, particularly the researcher's willingness to accept that not all Indigenous knowledge is up for grabs. Some Indigenous scholars go so far as to say that only Indigenous people should conduct certain forms of Indigenous research (Steinhauer 2002, 69-81). I tend to agree with this assessment, not because I believe that there are no non-Indigenous people who do Indigenous research well and respectfully but because I believe that whitestream academics, including myself, have a lot of work to do first in researching our own roles and histories in Indigenous-Settler relations.

Another reality with PAR, with any similar alternative research model, is that it requires much more work on the part of the researchers. It takes a lot of time to communicate effectively, especially across cultural differences, so of course it is easier

and faster for a researcher to swoop into a community and extract his or her data than to develop meaningful and ongoing relationships in that community. Because of the time involved in such projects, and given the tight deadlines often set by funding agencies, many researchers are forced to employ more traditional research methods, and many students are discouraged from pursuing alternative models because they are “too much work” for a Masters or PhD project.

Alternative research models and practices can also be difficult to reconcile with the requirements of most universities’ Human Research Ethics Boards. Some specific ethics policies reinforce disrespectful research practices among Indigenous communities (Battiste and Henderson 2000, 132-144; Ermine, Sinclair, and Jeffery 2004; Eshkakogan and Borchert 2005; Indigenous Governance Program 2003). Often ethics boards require ethics approval before the researcher is allowed to have any contact with research subjects. In Indigenous communities, however, designing a research project without first gathering significant input from community members is considered very disrespectful. Often, researchers are discouraged from including friends and family members as research participants because Western academic tradition holds that such contacts are likely to induce the researcher’s “bias” and “subjectivity.” This policy makes things very difficult for Indigenous researchers attempting to conduct meaningful research within their communities. Even very simple Human Research ethics policies may contradict community protocols. Offering gifts or remuneration to research participants is discouraged on the grounds that it may be a form of coercion. In many Indigenous communities, however, it would be disrespectful to occupy a person’s time (particularly if the person is an elder) without offering a suitable gift in exchange.

In an attempt to work toward better research-relationships with Indigenous communities, the University of Victoria established the Office of Community Based Research (OCBR) in 2006. The idea for this office was developed during a forum of community-based researchers at UVic in April 2005, and was fine-tuned through consultation with community representatives. This development is summarized in a university-community task force report, released in June 2006. The report acknowledges the many existing community-university partnerships, and pledges to build on these successes. Included within the vision of the OCBR is an emphasis on civic engagement; the Office aims to strengthen the connections between research and teaching, including sharing knowledge and research findings at the community level, rather than only within university classrooms. The report also emphasises the importance of working respectfully with local Indigenous communities: “The priorities and concerns of Aboriginal communities, beginning, but not restricted to those on whose traditional territory the University sits are of paramount importance” (Keller and Hall 2006 4).

The OCBR team includes individuals with a university research background, but also individuals from community background with experience in community-university engagement in an attempt to combine both perspectives at all levels of operation. Furthermore, in an attempt to move beyond the idea that community-based research is not practical for student projects, the Office maintains close relationships with several student groups (including Co-op Education, the Community Law Clinic, Graduate Studies, and Engineers without Borders) to facilitate student-community research relationships. Finally, the Office aims to support discussions about wider university policies that influence research, including human research ethics, intellectual property ownership, and

criteria for faculty hiring, promotions, and tenure decisions. At the time of the report, community partners expressed “cautious optimism” about these developments, and cautioned that “moving beyond words and good intentions will be important” (Keller and Hall 2006 4).

Initiatives like the Office of Community Based Research at the University of Victoria are important steps on the part of the University to recognise and work toward resolving some of the problematic aspects of academic research involving Indigenous communities.

Even given these important steps, it is important to acknowledge that there will always be power dynamics in a researcher-community relationship, and that as a result, some communities might choose not to participate in academic research, or to participate only in very limited terms. In a recent lecture at the University of Victoria, Indigenous scholar Lee Maracle encouraged Indigenous students and academics to discuss their stories with one another within a university setting, but cautioned non-Indigenous academics to consider that, in her words, “equity in research is not possible at this time. ... In a colonial relationship, you can’t have equity. You can have a kinder kind of inequity so that you still get the story you want” (Maracle 2008). Maracle emphasised that even with developments in research ethics policies, a community often cannot really control what is done with the knowledge they share with an academic researcher. Research is part of a larger context; as long as a colonial relationship exists between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, Canadian research in Indigenous communities cannot escape some level of influence from this broader relationship.

Although Maracle was clear in encouraging Indigenous peoples to attend and explore knowledge within universities, some Indigenous writers take a different perspective.

Marie Smallface Marule, writing in 1984, argued that the appropriate role for Indigenous people with respect to universities is to not attend them. For Marule, the assumption among Indigenous peoples that they “have to go to university for knowledge” is an example that indicates that Indigenous peoples have reached the stage in colonisation, identified by Fanon, in which a people becomes convinced of their own inferiority (Marule 1984). Marule argues that communities’ elders provide wisdom and guidance, and that no one looks down upon that wisdom, even though most elders have not attended university, because the wisdom grows from a lifetime of experience. Furthermore, she argues, Indigenous people and communities survived and achieved good lives before any significant number of them began attending university in the 1970s. She cites the National Indian Brotherhood as an example of an organisation whose members all had very nuanced understanding of “the white man’s system” without any university training; thus the university is not necessary even for those students who justify the experience in such terms (Marule 1984 43).

Marule’s position is no longer particularly common, and there is no question that many Indigenous scholars have achieved a great deal. It should be noted, too, that Marule is currently working as the president of Red Crow College, part of the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, so it would appear that she has re-evaluated her views on Indigenous roles within universities. Still, it should be noted that not all Indigenous knowledge necessarily belongs in academia.

Next Steps

It is not my place to decide whether or not Indigenous people should attend university, but it is certainly important for those of us in the academy who work with Indigenous

people, or who study Indigenous issues, to understand that there are whole frameworks of knowing that may not belong within the ivory tower. Whether universities need to become safe and useful places for Indigenous students, or whether universities need to teach non-Indigenous students about learning to create respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples, or both, universities should not try to “fit” Indigenous ways of knowing into the curriculum, but instead should learn to respect Indigenous knowledge³¹ for what it is, an equal but different way of approaching the world. With the university that exists today, this is very difficult, if not impossible, for any programs except the few that already take radically different approaches to education. In the next chapter, I will discuss these issues as they currently in the university – what, and how, universities are currently designed to teach.

³¹ Of course the same argument applies for other non-Western ways of knowing that are not necessarily Indigenous as well.

Chapter 5: Universities and Canadians

“Education is not only a matter of the method and practice of giving or receiving instruction; education is deeply bound up with the social reproduction of ideals, practices, and ways of thinking.” (Jenkins, Ferrier, and Ross 2004, 289)

This “made me say, a great many years ago, that the aim of education was to make people maladjusted, to destroy their notions that what society did made sense, and that they had only to conform to it to make sense of their own lives.” (Frye 1990, 63-78)

In the second chapter, I sketched out my interpretation of some of the many influences that combined to create the Canadian university as it is today. In Chapters Three and Four, I outlined critiques of the university from within the whitestream academy and from Indigenous scholars and writers, respectively. In this chapter, my aim is to bring these discussions together to offer my own perspective on the challenges facing us, as whitestream scholars, if our aims are to take Indigenous critiques of the academy seriously, and to continue to build on the work that has already taken place to transform the university from a site of colonisation to an institution where multiple worldviews can work together to take on the many challenges of our time. These are not easy tasks; there are many interests in the West that benefit from general ignorance on subjects, ranging from racism to ecology, that relate to questions of exploitation, domination, and oppression. These interests are not only from outside the ivory tower. It can be difficult for students and academics, even those who attempt to confront and understand these global issues, to honestly locate themselves in relation to these problems. I have struggled with this throughout my time in the Indigenous Governance program, because I have come to realise that many of the comforts I am able to enjoy as a white, middle-class, Canadian are intimately connected to the oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada and

of peoples of the Tricontinent. As I look to my own future, the knowledge of local and global systems of power that I have developed here have brought me to a point where I must either learn to ignore this knowledge and enjoy my place of privilege within “the system,” or else undertake a struggle to lead a different kind of life.

It seems to me that there are several interrelated factors that enable, or encourage, students and academics to avoid engaging with these difficult but vital questions within the university. In Canadian society there is a general ignorance with regard to Indigenous issues; to some degree, this ignorance enters the university as well through students and faculty who, for any number of reasons, do not engage with these issues during their studies. I begin this chapter with a discussion of the most common manifestations of this ignorance within Canadian society, and then I trace some of the aspects of the university as it is now that prevent or discourage students and faculty to engage with these subjects during their time in university.

I am not the only person engaging with these questions within the academy. Many scholars are engaging with similar questions from a variety of perspectives, and I draw on several of their works throughout this thesis. The core of the issue as I see it is that it is possible to earn a university degree without ever engaging with these issues, without undertaking the kind of critical thinking involved with challenging one’s own assumptions, or the assumptions of one’s society. If some – or potentially, most – students are passing through the university without asking, or being asked, this type of question, then the university as a whole cannot have freed itself from its role as a site of colonisation.

Ignorance and Denial

Ignorance, or denial, of local Indigenous issues is deeply rooted and widespread among whitestream Canada. Here I am not referring to those who honestly know nothing about Indigenous issues, but to the majority of Canadians who are aware on some level that something is wrong in the Settler-Indigenous relationship but who choose to look away. In this situation, denial acts as an excuse for what would otherwise be morally wrong according to dominant cultural standards – an awareness of a moral wrong without an accompanying action to remedy the situation. If Canadian universities hope to establish respectful and productive relationships with Indigenous communities and academics, then scholars whose work focuses on questions of decolonisation need to address this denial. Many university students, and probably also many faculty, do not have a nuanced understanding of Canada's history of colonisation that continues to shape Indigenous-whitestream relations, and in fact many people actively avoid learning about these issues. For that reason, I will discuss the issue of denial here.

Denial

In *States of Denial*, Stanley Cohen (2001) develops an analysis of the phenomenon of denial in the West, and argues that Western discourses of denial serve as morally acceptable justifications of inaction and apathy. Cohen's work focuses on inaction in response to knowledge of international human rights abuses, but it is certainly relevant to Indigenous-whitestream relationships in Canada as well. For Cohen, denial is the need to distance oneself from a troubling realisation, which can apply on either an individual or a cultural level. There are three main categories of denial – “literal” denial, when one denies facts or the knowledge of facts; “interpretive” denial, when one assigns a different meaning to facts than the obvious explanation; and “implicatory” denial, when one

acknowledges a set of facts but denies the results that follow from those facts (Cohen 2001, 344). Canadian culture embraces all three levels of denial, manifest through suppressing knowledge, emotion, responsibility, and appropriate action with regard to Indigenous peoples.

Avoidance

Avoidance is one of the most blatant forms of denial at play in Canadian culture.

Avoidance occurs when someone is presented with an appalling image, something they do not want to know about or to look at, and so they choose to stop looking (Cohen 2001, 344). This is certainly easy to do. When residential schools are in the news, one only needs to change the channel or turn the newspaper page and the story goes away; one can return to everyday life. Of course, “nice” people would not turn away from suffering, so the response becomes “involuntary,” a physical rather than mental response – “hearing the stories made me feel sick” – and moral responsibility is gone (Seu 2003, 183).

Another option is to reinterpret the situation, which is easy to do when many alternative versions of the story exist.

In this context, these alternative stories were developed initially to justify the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from the land that was to become Canada, and these stories persist because the initial injustice remains and therefore still needs to be justified. Perhaps the most prevalent is the myth of the frontier, in which brave individuals set out into the empty unknown, armed only with wits and a work ethic, to set about taming the wilderness and building their own prosperity (Furniss 1999, 237). This myth is so insidious because it carries some truth – early settlers did work hard to stay alive, and many came to this territory to escape oppression elsewhere. The truth that is ignored or

forgotten, however, is the crux of the matter; these individuals benefited from the support of oppressive government policy, implemented through the Department of Indian Affairs and the early court system that removed Indigenous peoples from their territories to make room for settlement. The question, then, is not whether hard work is involved in success, but whether all people really have access to success through hard work. Of course, the capitalist doctrine that defines success in terms of material consumption and claims to offer the dream to anyone willing to work for it has another flaw – given the planet’s physical limitations, the material success of the few depends on the poverty of the masses. Even given Canada’s wealth of natural resources, there are limits. Social injustice is not a challenge to be overcome through a good work ethic and minimal government controls – it is essential to the system.

Popular conceptions of history also gloss over the violence that displaced Indigenous peoples from their territories. Richard Slotkin suggests that the idea of “regeneration through violence” is a quintessential aspect of the American interpretation of history (Slotkin in Furniss 1999 62); Furniss argues that the Canadian equivalent tells of heroes imposing peace, order, and good government in a “Conquest of benevolence” (Furniss 1999, 237). In an attempt to distinguish themselves from American culture, Canadians often contrast their reputation as international peacekeepers with the American reputation for invasion and violence. This distinction extends to Contact; while the American West was “won” through the “Indian Wars,” Canadian settlers and well-intentioned missionaries “negotiated” treaties and “shared” knowledge of agriculture and Christianity (Furniss 1999, 237).

This narrative ignores that lessons in agriculture accompanied banishment from fertile land, that shared technology was usually of inferior quality, that “education” meant devaluing culture and providing training suitable for only the lowest rungs of society, and that all of this was only possible because diseases came first, devastating the Indigenous populations. Some high school history classes still teach this glorified story of contact, and undergraduate students who have learned this simplified version are not always open to hearing about the darker sides of Canadian history.

Cohen also argues that distance affects denial; specifically that the ease of identifying with a victim is inversely proportional to one’s physical, emotional, or cultural distance from that victim. This idea applies to physical distance because it is harder to imagine what things are like “over there” and thus to empathize with physically distant suffering, and it also applies to emotional distance, created via culture, religion, or gender (Cohen and Seu 2002, 187-201).

Most whitestream Canadians have never spent much time on a reserve, even when they live in close proximity; as a result, many Canadians have only a surface understanding of what life on a reserve is like (Furniss 1999, 237). The role of physical distance in ease of denial is evident on a basic level; blatant racism tends to be strongest in rural communities that are physically closest to reserves (Epp 2003, 223-244; Furniss 1999, 237). In these communities, racism serves as a backlash, an affirmation of the individual’s rightful claim to what is his or her own on the basis of supposed superiority. In these situations, then, creating an “other” serves not to deny what is going on, but to deny that there is anything morally wrong with the situation. Stereotypes say that “Indians” who are always drinking, who are sexually promiscuous, who are too lazy to go

out and get an honest job or are unable to pick up garbage or dispose of broken cars clearly need the ongoing assistance of the benevolent government. These constructions of biological difference, of “inherent” tendencies to drink or to be lazy or to be violent and abusive, further alleviate the need to look at the Canadian responsibility for this situation. These stereotypes, widely distributed by high school history texts for most of the twentieth century and reinforced by selective seeing continue to direct attention away from the implications of colonial policy by creating a gap between cultures that is significant enough to prevent empathy (Govier 2003, 65-90; Furniss 1999, 237).

Agency

When a message does manage to sneak past one’s defences, and one can no longer justify ignoring it, Cohen and Seu argue that a common response is to deny personal control and agency, *I am not responsible because I did not personally cause this* (Cohen and Seu 2002, 187-201). In Canada, this form of denial is often manifest when people shift the blame to the past. Yes, bad things happened, but they were the results of a few greedy or misguided individuals. We made mistakes in the past, but now we know better; as a society, we have evolved.

This kind of argument is particularly popular in dialogues surrounding residential schools, in which the federal government is quick to note that most people attending residential schools were not abused, and most people working at residential schools were trying their best under difficult conditions. Thus, guilt is focused on the mistakes of the few, and issues of more general responsibility (that the schools happened at all, and wider implications of cultural loss) are ignored. Even intellectuals who seem to be well educated in these issues sometimes fail to carry responsibility through to the present.

Trudy Govier, for example, when writing about the need for the public's acknowledgement of its responsibility in crimes committed against Indigenous peoples, frames the argument entirely in terms of the past: we *were* wrong, "our institutions *caused*³² the suffering," "our *previous* governments were committed to a policy of assimilation" (Govier 2003 80). Even while arguing against denial, Govier denies, or neglects to discuss, ongoing policies of assimilation.

The major difference, in this example, between Cohen's analysis and the situation in Canada is that much of Canadian settler society tends to reframe questions of responsibility because, in reality, all members are in a sense responsible. The continued prosperity in whitestream Canada can only occur because of the wealth that continues to be generated from land that was stolen from Indigenous peoples and that has still not been adequately paid for (Alfred 2005, 313; Epp 2003, 223-244; Govier 2003, 65-90; Stevenson 1998, 33). To acknowledge this reality in any meaningful way could seem to threaten the comfortable Canadian lifestyle that has required a lot of work to achieve. Although whitestream Canadians can honestly say that they have never supported black slavery or Japanese Internment Camps, and they can lobby for redress of these issues without a second thought, whitestream Canadians do continue to benefit from the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous peoples. As Cree academic Winona Stevenson writes,

Not a single non-Indigenous North American can deny or escape from the benefits every one of them still draws from the racist actions of their ancestors against us. Not only were our resources appropriated and exploited for their long-term benefit, but every North American occupies our land – they walk on it, sleep on it, sit on it, admire it, and buy it from one another. Thus, contemporary Canadians... the heirs of colonialism, are confronted daily with the fact

³² Emphasis added.

of our existence. ... [In] the subterranean recesses of non-Indigenous North American minds there is a very real fear that facing the facts, taking responsibility for past and present actions, and taking concrete measures to rectify injustices against Aboriginal people might result in some degree of self-disempowerment. Any changes to the status quo may shake prevailing power relations (Stevenson 1998, 33).

I believe that overcoming the various manifestations of this ignorance is one of the most fundamental challenges facing academics who are working toward transforming the university to become a site of decolonisation. In the sections that follow, I explore some of the barriers to this important work within Canadian universities.

The Students

When many students begin their university education, they often have an understanding of Indigenous issues in Canada that resembles what I have described above. These students have built this understanding largely from high school history class, Hollywood, and the mainstream media, and many have never found a reason to question it. For students who grew up in communities where more overt racism toward Indigenous peoples is common, this ignorance often borders on outright hostility.

This is not the fault of the individuals so much as the fault of the contexts in which they were raised. Although both high schools and the mainstream media are part of the problem, both are beyond the scope of this thesis, though relevant changes to the university could of course have a ripple effect, since all high school teachers and most journalists in Canada earn their credentials in universities. The question facing university professors and policy-makers is whether, and how, to challenge students to question their own assumptions and expand their knowledge of Indigenous issues once they arrive at university; the critiques of the university that I explored in Chapter Three are relevant

here because many of these issues are preventing this form of critical inquiry from taking place.

Côté and Allahar's work regarding the millennial generation is relevant here, because they suggest that the current generation of students, in general, is less motivated than previous generations to undertake the kinds of critical thinking that are so vital for these complex issues. Recall that, according to Côté and Allahar's analysis, this generation has grown up with a unique combination of circumstances: their parents, out of an obsession with safety, have sheltered these students from many of the harsh realities of their immediate lives; at the same time, these students have grown up with access to an unprecedented amount of information through their access to the internet and other sources of media, including dozens of television channels and radio stations. This generation has been targeted for marketing via all of these media, most of which encourage these youth to pursue instantaneous gratification through consumer goods. Finally, these young adults are the products of an era that has been described as "the cult of self esteem" – growing up, the millennial generation learned to motivate themselves through verbal feedback, and many now believe that the activities in which they engage should generate "praise and fun" as opposed to being "interesting and valuable" (Côté and Allahar 2007).

This mindset has implications for the millennial generation's ability to engage critically with issues like colonisation and imperialism during their university studies. As a result of grade inflation in high schools, many students expect to be able to earn good grades without putting in the higher-level work (what Côté and Allahar argue used to be

standard university-level work) that is necessary in order to develop a nuanced understanding of complex contemporary global issues.

This is exacerbated because many of these students have bought into marketed ideals of instant gratification and self-indulgent pleasure; learning about forced dislocations, tuberculosis and smallpox epidemics, residential schools, forced sterilisation of Indigenous women and adoptions of Indigenous children, and the other dark stories from Canada's history that have shaped the present context could hardly be considered "fun." Côté and Allahar have observed this reluctance to engage with difficult issues among today's university students:

A lot of students believe they can get by with the 'opinions' they brought with them to university; such students simply refuse to incorporate new information into their assessments and understandings of the world. Change (of opinion) makes them uncomfortable, and those who challenge them to change their views are seen as 'bad' teachers (Côté and Allahar 2007 35).

When this kind of disengaged student enrolls in a class that deals, even peripherally, with Indigenous issues, he or she may contribute comments to class discussions that range from being misinformed to blatantly racist. Some professors and some other students are talented enough to turn such comments into "teachable moments" creating an opportunity for open and honest discussion about the sources of this kind of racism. Unfortunately, not all classrooms include someone with the knowledge, the skills, and the grace to deal with these moments effectively. In such situations, a professor might change the subject after an awkward silence, or the discussion might spiral out of control, or any Indigenous students who are present might be put on the spot; in such situations, a classroom atmosphere can quickly become a hostile for Indigenous students.

In addition to the students who do not engage with this material when they are presented with it in class, many students never take classes that deal with these issues at all. Most science degrees require only a small number, if any, courses outside of a student's discipline, and many students fill these elective requirements with courses that require minimal effort. Even in the social sciences and the humanities, many professors who are faced with increased class sizes and students who are more likely to dispute low grades are beginning to rely on evaluation by multiple-choice testing; at some Canadian universities, it is now possible to earn an undergraduate degree in some social science disciplines without ever having to write an essay.

Although multiple-choice tests are easy to mark and have an aura of objectivity, complex social issues cannot be distilled into a single correct solution that can be picked from a list. Professors are left with an uncomfortable decision: either water-down the material to fit this kind of evaluation (to the disadvantage of the students in any class who are engaged and open to learning) or face the unpleasant task of explaining to students who have not put in the work to engage with the material that they do not deserve the grades that many believe they are entitled to receive.

Because of the current disciplinary structure, many students complete university degrees without ever taking courses that deal with Indigenous issues or with broader questions of global power relationships. Some anti-racist activists suggest creating mandatory courses to train first year students to "unlearn racism" (e.g., see *Voices for Change*) in order to address this issue. I am not convinced that such steps would be effective. Although some individuals who resist such training end up learning from and responding well to the ideas the training presents, others are likely to become even more

hostile to anti-racist ideas. If Côté and Allahar are correct in their analysis of disengaged students which, they argue, might represent as much as 40 or 50 percent of the student body in most Canadian universities, then it seems unlikely that such a class could address these issues in an effective way.

The Disciplines: Specialisation and isolation

Current disciplinary structures have implications beyond their impacts on student programs of study. Today's academic disciplines are becoming increasingly specialised, which allows particular communities of scholars to distance themselves from one other, often in the most literal sense in large universities where different departments occupy separate buildings. This development is relatively recent; at UVic, for example, scholars from different disciplines once had offices in the same physical spaces, and there tended to be much more cross-disciplinary communication. In Peter Smith's words,

Not until the end of 1966 did most academic disciplines enjoy coherent, rationally planned accommodation – a welcome advance in terms of efficiency and physical comfort, but a change that tended to segregate learning, creating new attitudes of departmental self-sufficiency and aloofness. Almost overnight one felt the university become compartmentalized, academically and socially. Gone in 1967, quite suddenly, were the faculty pot-luck suppers, the progressive dinners, the badminton and bridge tournaments, and various other campus-wide events that had marked the pioneer stage of development. There is often a price to be paid for professionalism (Smith 1993 135).

M'Gonigle and Starke and Ford argue that these disciplinary divisions, this sense of isolation, can prevent both students and faculty from being able develop a coherent worldview. Specialised, disciplinary study in the university does not always result in an integrated larger picture of the world because there is no discipline of the disciplines, so to speak. This was not a problem when the disciplinary structures first began to develop.

At the University of Berlin, philosophy was the overarching discipline; study in any discipline would lead to new truths, but the study of philosophy integrated these various truths in a meaningful whole. In Britain and the United States, literature played this role; the disciplines gathered the knowledge, and literature told the story that made the knowledge meaningful. In both of these cases, the meaningful worldview, the complete picture, was developed through national culture, but in the era of globalisation since the 1950s, and with the onset of cultural relativism, cultural studies has become one more discipline among many, and no discipline now holds a similarly privileged place. This development happened concurrently with the booming growth in Canadian and American universities that resulted in the physical separation of the disciplines that Peter Smith describes. Thus, the university has lost its ability to create a coherent, meaningful worldview, and because faculty do not tend to talk to one another across disciplinary boundaries, separate disciplines can develop mutually contradictory “truths” without ever calling each other into question.

Henry Giroux suggests that some academics choose to retreat into their respective specialisations in order to avoid taking on the challenging questions of our time. Such academics, he argues, make few connections with audiences outside of their discipline, much less those outside of the university as a whole; when they do publish or present their work, “they often do so to very limited audiences and in a language that is overly abstract, highly aestheticised, rarely takes an overt political position, and seems mostly indifferent to broader public issues” (Giroux 2006 64). Giroux calls this mentality “publish while others perish,” and connects it with the broader issues of corporatisation

that I explored in Chapter Three, whereby academics are measured by the quantity of their publications rather than by the quality of the ideas they present.

When academics isolate themselves within their specialisations in this way, they often encounter difficulties when they need to communicate their knowledge to people outside of the academy. In *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, Paul Nadasdy (2002) explores one manifestation of this communication barrier. Nadasdy spent several years working with the Kluane people in the Yukon, and his work focuses on some of the challenges that arise in government/First Nation co-management of wildlife and other resources. Although the Canadian government portrays co-management as one solution to the inequalities in government relationships with Indigenous peoples, Nadasdy argues that, because co-management processes are based on Western concepts of knowledge, these processes replicate broader inequalities.

In this case, negotiations were underway to develop a relationship for co-managing the region's Dall Sheep population. During consultations in which biologists, sport hunting companies, and Kluane elders met to discuss the dramatic decline in the sheep population, Nadasdy observed that the elders' contributions to the conversation were not respected. The biologists approached the discussion from the perspective that their methods of tracking the population – counts taken from a helicopter passing by the sheep's mountainside habitat – were more accurate than the elders' accounts based on generations of living on the land. The elders, in turn, felt that the biologists did not know where to find the sheep at particular times of year, that the helicopter's noise tended to startle the sheep (sometimes causing sheep to fall to their deaths), and that the biologists' explanations for some annual dips in population – that the sheep had a hard time

surviving a harsh winter – were insulting to the animals. Although the elders invited members of the other groups to better understand their perspective by joining them in observing the sheep on the land, their invitation was declined (Nadasdy 2003). Thus, although the Kluane people were “included” in the co-management of the sheep population, in fact the paradigms employed by the other groups with a stake in the situation prevented the elders’ words from contributing to the discussion in any meaningful way.

I believe that this example illustrates a more general problem. Even though academics, government policy makers, and even developers are beginning to make efforts to consult Indigenous peoples about projects – whether research projects, new by-laws, mines, or subdivisions – that will affect Indigenous communities, the academy has not yet developed a language that enables consultants and community members to really understand one another. Even after the Delgamuukw decision, the academy in general does not really know what to make of oral histories; after centuries of depending on writing to preserve their cultural memory, scholars who have grown up with the Western education system often have a hard time incorporating oral histories into their work without these stories coming across as afterthoughts. Furthermore, many aspects that are common in many Indigenous epistemologies – that stories arise from the land, and that land, in turn, can hold stories like a memory bank; or that non-humans are conscious actors who actively influence human affairs – prove very difficult to reconcile with Western academic paradigms.

For scholars who view the world as a secular space in which events fit within laws of statistical probability, these statements sound like superstitious anthropomorphism. As a

result, when Kluane elders spoke of the sheep as conscious actors, and the biologists spoke of the sheep as instinctual, non-sentient animals, it is not surprising that communication broke down. In spite of good intentions, there are fundamental differences between Western and Indigenous worldviews in general. I do not know how academics in fields that do not normally study social issues can develop these understandings, but real communication cannot happen as long as the different sides are speaking such fundamentally different languages.

The “hidden” curriculum

Architecture as pedagogy

In addition to its formal curricula, the university, like many of the institutions of Western society, reinforces cultural myths and mindsets in subtle ways. As a result, engaged students may find it difficult to reconcile the things they are learning in their classes with the way their daily lives are affected by the technologies that shape the physical campus. One example is the technology of the arrangement of desks in a classroom – typically in fixed rows facing the instructor – that reflects, but also reinforces the view that learning is a transmission from the learned to the student. These technologies of authority find ways of sneaking past even conscious efforts to subvert them.

Gayatri Spivak offers one example of her attempt to circumvent this technology by arranging the desks for a seminar class in a circle, with no distinct position for herself as the instructor. She was late arriving in class the second week, and she found that the students had reserved the same desk for her that she had occupied during the first class; she writes “Because I warmed that particular chair with my bottom the last time, I seem

to have baptized it as the seat of authority and you have left it empty for me” (Spivak 1987 98).

M’Gonigle and Starke offer a similar example based on, but not limited to, the University of Victoria’s campus. UVic has a thriving Environmental Studies program, yet the campus itself employs many policies that do not reflect the knowledge that students develop in these classes. M’Gonigle and Starke illustrate this concept with an example; a student might learn about environmental problems relating to waste management, large-scale agribusiness, and the shipment of food across vast distances, before heading for lunch in a cafeteria that serves mass-produced chicken from Mexico in Styrofoam containers (M’Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006).

Both students and faculty at UVic have been actively encouraging the University’s administration to update policies to reflect the knowledge that has developed around issues of sustainability, and UVic has made some changes. Among other things, UVic now employs a sustainability coordinator who focuses on this kind of issue; recent policy changes include adopting a university-wide standard of 100% post-consumer paper use, gradual changes to hospitality services’ food purchasing policies, and numerous developments to encourage students and employees to commute to campus by modes other than single-occupant vehicles. Still, it is important to continue to develop our awareness of the subtle ways that a campus’s physical infrastructure plays a role in a student’s university education.

The idea of architecture, or geography, as pedagogy is gaining attention in academia. It is common to associate education with buildings, but usually we think of learning as happening inside, not because of, the buildings on a campus. Still, the physical structures

of a university campus offer implicit lessons about power relationships, technology, and authority, when one considers questions of who designed the buildings, how and from what materials the buildings are constructed, and how well buildings are suited to the uses to which they are put (Orr 1994).

Many university buildings advance the idea of knowledge that is independent from place or context, for example, because the buildings do not meld with their landscape in an organic way, and buildings from most Canadian campuses tend to reflect the era, more than the location, in which they were constructed. Even the location chosen for a new building – whether its construction requires demolishing a forest, an athletic field, or a parking lot, for example – sends lessons about the priorities and powers at play among a university's administration. The University of Victoria's administration sent one such message when they opted to clear-cut a section of Cunningham Woods, one of the last forested sections of southern Vancouver Island, to clear space for a new building. Students, faculty, and Victoria residents staged a massive protest of the plan, including a six month occupation of the woods, but the construction crews waited until students and faculty left for the winter holidays to remove the trees and begin building construction (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006).

M'Gonigle and Starke argue that university administrations may take advantage of the transience of the institution's student body when it comes time for controversial building decisions. Even students who are highly engaged with their campus during their studies will graduate and move on within four or five years of any controversial event. Even though I arrived at the University of Victoria in September 2005, I knew nothing of the controversy surrounding Cunningham Woods less than a year earlier until I read

M'Gonigle and Starke's book. Thus, M'Gonigle and Starke voice concerns that UVic's decision to place a 10-year moratorium on building on one particular ecologically sensitive section of campus land may have been an attempt to delay future construction until the students who were originally involved with generating the moratorium graduated.

Landscape erasing history

Landscaping at many Canadian university campuses also serves to erase the land's historical relationships with local Indigenous peoples. I am going to use the University of Victoria to illustrate this particular example, but again, the same is true, to various degrees, of the landscapes of all Canadian university campuses; as M'Gonigle and Starke (2006) write,

UVic's landscape history is typical of many North American universities – the displacement of Aboriginal occupation, the subsequent entrenchment of a family farming community and the more recent colonisation by the city (56).

In spite of the campus's Indigenous art and totem poles, the campus's physical landscaping conceals some of the area's stories. The University of Victoria's campus is located on shared Straits Salish territory, just up the hill from Cadboro Bay which was the site of a Lukwungen village for more than three thousand years (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006).³³ The landscape where UVic now stands was, when Europeans arrived, shaped by the Straits Salish peoples, a blend of ancient forest and camas³⁴ fields. The

³³ Another piece of the University, located on what is today called Mount Newton, occupies a place of significant importance to the WSANEC nation, now located further to the North.

³⁴ Camas bulbs were a local staple, comparable to onions.

Straits Salish were displaced from this site³⁵ shortly after the 1850 “signing” of the Douglas Treaties.³⁶ Although only Douglas understood these negotiations in terms of the Indigenous relinquishment of their territories, by 1854 the Hudson's Bay Company had established the 1 100 acre Uplands farm which included much of the land that UVic now occupies (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006).

The University of Victoria has not been the only presence that has significantly altered the landscape; a century of farming and a little more than a decade as the site of an army base have also left their mark. The construction of the University, however, had an unprecedented impact on the area. Not only was the physical landscape significantly altered through the mounds and berms and the various foreign plant and tree species³⁷ implemented according to a design planned by the Wurster, Berndardi and Emmons architecture firm based out of San Francisco, the campus also transformed much of the surrounding area (Segger and Smith 1988).

Once the location of UVic's current campus was chosen in the early 1960s, the surrounding area quickly become commercialized as suburbs replaced local farms. The 1965 campus plan, *A Plan for the University Area*, explicitly separates the University area from traditional land uses with the assumption that farming was poised to disappear as an economic use for land. All of this development is also connected with the economic

³⁵ First to a location in what is now downtown Victoria, later to a reserve in Esquimalt.

³⁶ Douglas had local chiefs make signs on blank pieces of paper; he had informed them that “they would not be disturbed in the possession of their Village sites and enclosed fields... and that they were at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands, and to carry on their fisheries with the same freedom as when they were the sole occupants of the country” (Arnett 1999). Two years later, settlers began to occupy the lands in question.

³⁷ The Finnerty Gardens, for example, are home to over one hundred species of exotic rhododendrons that were a legacy gift from Jeanne Simpson. The campus has also been home to several tree debates. In spite of a design calling for native plant species, rows of tulip trees, imported from the United States, were planted along the campus' quadrangle in front of the library in 1965. In 1966, in spite of opposition from much of the campus community, exotic pin oaks were chosen over native liriodendrons to cover another section of the quadrangle at the centre of campus. (Segger and Smith 1988)

boom that followed the end of the Second World War; both the shape and function of UVic's campus and its surrounding area were moulded according to this paradigm of limitless growth.

This economic vision of efficiency and “one right way” is entrenched in the campus's physical space in the sense that the campus and its suburbs are no longer defined by the giant trees and cultivated camas fields that once made the landscape unique. Instead, the university embodies *nowhere* in “sprawling acres of parking lots filled with mass-produced cars, the cafeteria food delivered via an exclusive servicing contract with a nameless multinational, and the standard-issue buildings heated and lit by energy from the void” (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 65). The only obvious remaining physical manifestation of the Indigenous presence that once shaped the land is in the art and the totem poles – some local, some not – that fit well with a “boutique multiculturalism” expressions of culture (Fish 1997, 378-395). The deeper Indigenous presence has been systematically erased. Local Indigenous groups are working to restore that presence, at least in part; Cheryl Bryce, a Lukwungen woman, organized a camas harvest in the University's Gary Oak Meadow in 2005 in a revitalisation of an ancient tradition. Still, such practices may not be sustainable if the University of Victoria continues to replace the campus's remaining green space with buildings, as M'Gonigle and Starke suggest that it might.

Next Steps

All of this is connected; the university's history in shaping and being shaped by Western culture, the university's difficulties in engaging most of its students in critical thought and self-reflection, and the homogenisation of the university's landscape. Still,

these challenges are not insurmountable. If academics and students can learn to recognize their cultural assumptions as assumptions, we may be able to begin to develop a culture that is more open to mystery and that values the importance of place and context. My suggestions for steps that might enable universities to work toward these goals are the subject of the concluding chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

“There is nothing complex that, upon close examination, does not become more complex.” John Browning

To end this discussion, I am going to return to the beginning, to the challenge that was offered to me at the beginning of my university career: to accept that, as an intellectual I have “the right and responsibility to produce appropriate knowledge and practices for [my] generation” (Bowerbank 2004 73). I have evaluated Canadian universities in general, and the University of Victoria in particular, in terms of their ability to encourage scholars to engage in work that reflects this challenge.

I believe that the last four chapters demonstrate that, although many academics are using their positions within the ivory tower to develop such knowledge and practices in highly creative ways, and are encouraging their students to do the same, there are still barriers to overcome. Several trends within the modern university, some of which must be understood in the context of wider social trends, serve to discourage scholarship that actively engages with the challenges of our time. As universities begin to resemble corporate entities, to see students both as consumers shopping for an educational credential and as a source of income via their tuition dollars, universities are actively recruiting large numbers of students who may not have the drive or the skills they need to engage with their intellectual experience. At the same time, cost-saving measures like large classes, online or distance education, and an increased reliance on sessional instructors who do not have the protection of tenure, limit these students’ opportunities to establish the kind of mentoring relationships that could encourage them to take advantage of the transformative potential of a university education.

Similarly, as professors are increasingly driven to pursue publication opportunities in order to ensure their own funding, many retreat into highly specialised research that may be of little relevance to either their students or broader society. This further disconnects the knowledge that the university is producing from broader societal discourses in an era when society badly needs people who are able “not only to think critically about the world around them, but also to use their capacities as social agents to intervene in the larger social order and confront the myriad forms of symbolic, institutional, and material relations of power that shape their lives” (Giroux 2006 75).

For questions that relate to Indigenous peoples, to Indigenous-whitestream relationships in Canada, this ability to engage in social critique must be coupled with critical self-reflection in order to move beyond the general ignorance that is prevalent in whitestream society, as I discussed in Chapter Five. Whitestream scholars must continue to examine their own side of this relationship, to learn to frame these questions not in terms of “the Indian problem” but instead in terms of “the settler problem” (Epp 2003 28). If scholars are unable to think critically about their own roles, their own positions, in broader power relationships, then it is unlikely that their classes will be welcoming environments for students from any but the more privileged of backgrounds.

The University of Victoria has developed, and is developing, several initiatives that work toward improving the environment for Indigenous students, and as I discussed in Chapter Four, the significant increase in Indigenous student enrolment at UVic during the last ten years suggests that these initiatives are working, at least to some extent. Still, as Côté and Allahar caution, efforts to ensure equal access to university should not assume that all who access university are equally prepared for the experience.

Although the democratisation of access to higher education has resulted in a huge increase in the number of students attending university, it has not been accompanied by a proportional increase in public educational spending; strong students who enter university generally engage with and benefit from the experience, while weak students enter weak programmes and graduate with a credential that means increasingly little because of the “educational inflation” of the last two decades. I am not intending to imply that the children of society’s elites are inherently smarter than the children of the disadvantaged, but the reality is that wealth enables some parents to ensure better primary and secondary educations for their children that will generally provide these students with significant advantages when they arrive in university. The challenge for society as a whole is to find ways to identify and recruit motivated and talented students from all social backgrounds, and to work toward eliminating the barriers that prevent those from disadvantaged families from reaching their potential at the university level.

Instead, the current trend seems to be toward a general watering-down of the university curriculum in order to accommodate weaker students. In Côté and Allahar’s words, “while it is laudable to get the disadvantaged to attend universities, it is an insult if the university experience does nothing *for them*. And to do something *for them*, it must do something *to them* – transform them in some way to add value to how they were before attending university” (Côte_ and Allahar 2007 117).³⁸ If students receive credentials without being asked to engage in new ways of thinking, without developing new skills in knowledge development and dissemination (listening, reading, writing, and speaking), why encourage them to spend the time and the money to pursue a university education at all? If university graduates have not developed the skills that are typically associated with

³⁸ Emphasis in original.

a university education, then equalising access to university will not have a parallel impact on access to meaningful employment. Either employers will find themselves hiring graduates who are not actually qualified for the work required of them (this is one argument often brought forward critics of affirmative action) or else hiring patterns will not change at all.

Let me be clear: when I argue that universities should enable a “transformation” in their students, I do not mean that all students should be assimilated into whitestream ways of thinking. Instead, this transformative process should provide these students with opportunities to develop the skills that they need in order to apply their knowledge toward transformative change for their nations or their communities. Students should graduate with the skills and the background they need to evaluate the context of their communities’ realities, and the tools they need to engage with the interests involved. It will be interesting to see whether current initiatives to develop culturally-relevant public schools in some communities in Canada, for Indigenous students in Prince George, BC and for African-Canadian students in Toronto, Ontario, for example, are successful in bridging this educational gap.

From here, I will discuss my own suggestions for change. My suggestions are modest; I am not expecting to change the university with my MA thesis. At its core, the university is made up of people, and people are already changing. New ideas rise and decline in popularity, old ideas are rediscovered and given new life, people speak out against racism and injustice and sometimes the institution is able to listen and to do what it can to adapt.

My goal in this section, then, is not to provide a model that will solve all of the problems I have discussed, but instead to add my own voice to a discussion that is

probably as old as the university itself. It is important to remember, also, that some groups benefit from the system as it is; this is a reality that must be acknowledged in any initiative to work toward change. Still, I believe that there are steps that can be taken, some easier than others, to ensure that the university, as an institution, is a more welcoming place for Indigenous students and students from other minority groups. In the sections that follow, I will bring forth suggestions to work toward addressing racism, to work toward creating democratic university governance structures, and to work toward connecting universities with the communities where they are situated.

Racism

All arguments about whether people from non-Western cultures should participate in the university aside, the reality remains that an increasing number of Indigenous and International students are enrolling in Western universities. These universities are actively recruiting such students, and as long as racism remains an issue in these institutions, these students that we are trying so hard to recruit will remain at a disadvantage in achieving success, however they choose to define it, in their post-secondary education. No institution can be entirely free of racism. All anti-racist work is a process of continual self-awareness, and involves a willingness to re-evaluate one's own role in and benefits from the structures of power that make racism so ubiquitous. In other words, it is far more productive when individuals are willing to recognize that they sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, perpetuate forms of societal racism but that they are working on overcoming these actions or these ways of thinking, than when individuals deny that racism is a problem in the places where they live and work.

In anti-racism work it is important to avoid focusing on awareness campaigns (marches, poster campaigns, etc.) at the expense of concrete action. Of course raising awareness is important, but such campaigns tend to draw participation from those who are already aware ('preaching to the choir') while the people that the campaigns attempt to address respond either by ignoring the campaign completely or by developing more hostile forms of denial.

A "racism in your face" campaign, organised by students at the University of Victoria in November of 2007 provoked just such a reaction. The campaign featured posters that displayed statistics and quotations about racism in North America. Letters to the editor in the *Martlet*, the UVic student newspaper, opposed the campaign. As one student wrote: "Racism is already quite dead to every intelligent and open-minded Canadian... The vast majority of this campus is made up of intelligent and nice people, and we don't need to be patronised by your posters" (Brown 2007). Another letter the following week thanked Mr. Brown for illustrating why mobilisation around racism is necessary, "the idea that racism is obsolete, and that its only contemporary incarnations are the explicitly racist actions of 'uneducated, hateful bigots' is a popular fallacy [that holds] a particularly powerful currency among 'intelligent and open-minded Canadians'" (Warbeck 2007).

Although this poster campaign sparked a debate, it was not the kind of debate that necessarily encouraged anyone to re-examine their own opinions. Instead of such campaigns, it might be more productive to organize workshops or training for individuals who are aware that some of their behaviour is problematic but are uncertain how best to change – professors who want to learn how to incorporate resources or voices from other cultures, for example, but who are unsure how to do so without dabbling in appropriation.

It will be interesting to see whether the LE,NONET Project's pilot version of this kind of training, discussed in Chapter Four, is successful in addressing this need.

Voices for Change recommends making cultural sensitivity training available for all students and employees; provided that such training is designed with input from outside the whitestream; this is an excellent suggestion. As I discussed, the LE,NONET Project is currently developing one such training module with an Indigenous focus that will soon be available to staff and faculty. *Voices for Change* notes that anti-racist activists propose making such training for “unlearning racism” mandatory for first year students. I think it can be dangerous to make such training mandatory. Although some individuals who resent being told to take such training (because they are sure that they are not racist) end up learning from and responding well to the ideas the training presents, others are likely to become even more hostile to anti-racist ideas, and their presence may prevent the class as a whole from engaging with these issues in a positive way.

Voices for Change also recommends that the University focus on building a greater representation of visible minorities in all parts of the University community, but does not lay out concrete suggestions for implementing this recommendation. This may not be easy. Often Indigenous people and people of colour are reluctant to self-identify in employment or university applications because of their past experiences with racism, even when the application states explicitly that such information will only be used in attempting to ensure employment equity or for statistical purposes to track the institution's success in increasing its diversity. For example, the LE,NONET project has

found that approximately half of Indigenous students choose to self-identify on their university applications.³⁹

Another barrier to the retention, promotion, and tenure of faculty and staff of colour and Indigenous faculty and staff is that, as I have discussed, they often find themselves doing advocacy work, acting as unofficial counsellors for students of colour, and being asked to help committees meet “diversity quotas.” While such work consumes a considerable amount of time, it is not always recognized in hiring, promotion, or tenure decisions. The University could take two obvious steps to rectify this situation.

The first step could be to increase the number of staff hired to do anti-racist advocacy work on behalf of students and other staff, or hired as counsellors for such students to alleviate some of the burden on staff and faculty for whom such work is not part of their official mandate. Such new hires should be people of colour or Indigenous people; as *Voices for Change* observes, many students are not comfortable approaching a white person for anti-racist advocacy or for counselling dealing with issues of racism because the students do not want their claims to be met with denial. The second step that the University could take in addressing this issue would be to develop a policy of acknowledging student and faculty participation in anti-racist work or on committees that aim to represent diversity in their membership when making hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions.

³⁹ There are probably many reasons why Indigenous students would choose whether or not to self-identify. Some may be making a political statement; they do not want the university to know that they are Indigenous because they feel that it is not the university’s business. Others may feel conflicted about their Indigenous identity and may not feel comfortable identifying as Indigenous at the time of their application. Still others might worry that their application might be subject to racism, in spite of the statement that their decision to self-identify will not affect their chance of acceptance (in fact, the individuals responsible for admissions are not informed of any such self-identification, but applicants may not be aware of this). All of these reasons are my own speculations, and if the reader is interested in this question, I would suggest referring to LE, NONET reports when they are published.

The University of Victoria's administration is already looking seriously at its policies for engaging in consultation with Indigenous communities. Currently the administration is working to ensure that such consultation does not place unreasonable demands on the community members who agree to work with the university in this capacity. It may be difficult to achieve this balance, but there are simple steps that should be taken in developing productive relationships. Universities who are calling on community expertise should ensure that the consultation process is respectful of the experts' time. Meetings with community members must be scheduled well in advance and communicated clearly to best accommodate the members' busy schedules; although this seems like common sense, this kind of planning does not always take place. Providing food at meetings that are scheduled during meal times, providing parking passes or other transportation arrangements, and providing directions (including campus maps) for participants who do not often travel to the campus are all simple steps that go a long way in establishing productive relationships with community members.

Racism is a difficult issue to address on a university campus. The forms of racism that are the most common on campuses are often very subtle, and there is a great deal of denial among whitestream campus populations. Still, especially in a university that has a specific policy of recruiting international and Indigenous students,⁴⁰ racism is an issue that needs to be addressed at all levels, with regular re-evaluation of progress to ensure that initiatives are effective.

⁴⁰ See the 2007 Strategic Plan (15) Objective 2 "To actively recruit and retain outstanding students from diverse regions and backgrounds and to remove all barriers to admission and retention other than academic and creative potential" and 3 "To increase the number of Indigenous students graduating from all faculties at UVic, building on our commitment to and our unique relationship with Canada's First Peoples."

Mandates and Change

Although I do not think it is possible to mandate understanding, empathy, or a sense of responsibility with regard to Indigenous issues, some specific policy changes would demonstrate a commitment to enhancing UVic's relationships with Indigenous communities. The University should continue to support programs that increase Indigenous student retention, graduation, and academic and personal well-being during their time in university. These programs acknowledge that many Indigenous students must overcome significant barriers prior to attending university, and as a result, may arrive in university without the same set of resources as other students. Indigenous students and faculty should be included in consultation processes to determine the most effective programs to meet Indigenous students' needs. Similarly, existing programs for Indigenous students, whether specific Indigenous student counselling services, or the undergraduate minor in Indigenous Studies, must receive sufficient funding to be effective.

Although UVic has hired a number of Indigenous faculty in recent years, of the university's approximately 720 full-time faculty, only 14 are Indigenous, and of these only three (all males) have tenure. The University should aim to hire a number of Indigenous faculty at least proportionate to the five percent of the population of British Columbia that is Indigenous. This is not to say that faculty should be hired on the basis of Indigenous identity alone; clearly unqualified individuals should not be hired, regardless of identity. Regardless, the number of excellent Indigenous scholars graduating from PhD and post-doctorate programs is increasing rapidly, and these scholars have much to contribute to any number of academic disciplines.

These and similar policies are essential if universities are to move beyond tokenistic relationships with Indigenous peoples. No doubt Indigenous staff, faculty and students, and likely their allies as well, can suggest any number of creative ways of opening up Indigenous spaces on a university campus. Some of these changes may involve risk, but there is the potential, as well, that opening up these spaces in new ways could benefit the university community – or university communities – as a whole.

A Vision (but not a model)

I am reluctant to propose a new model for what I would consider to be the perfect university. Not only is any model bound to lose its relevance eventually, the very idea of conforming to a set model removes both individual and community responsibility to think critically and to challenge one's own assumptions. Perhaps this is why research models or models of government or environmentalist models that are created to challenge the mainstream are so often co-opted according to the interests that they set out to deconstruct. Instead of trying to fit the university to some new idea to follow in the religious/nationalist/corporate "progression," it is time to recognize that we do not really need to make transcendental claims about the university's function. Rather than trying to build the University of the Future, why not focus on making each university relevant to its local circumstances, both in physical space and in time? As Bill Readings writes,

Change comes neither from within nor from without, but from that difficult space – neither inside nor outside – where one is. To say that we cannot redeem or rebuild the university is not to argue for powerlessness; it is to insist that academics must work without alibis, which is what the best of them have tended to do (Readings 1996 171).

Co-optation will always be a danger. If a university conforms to a corporate model, it may be particularly easy for the school's public relations department to use so-called

radical or subversive scholars for the far-from-subversive purpose of marketing the school to a niche group of students. Thus, student sustainability movements, anarchist professors, or Indigenous scholars who put forth fundamental critiques of the state may be allowed to flourish on a superficial level while the institution as a whole continues to function in accordance with policies that subvert these groups' work.⁴¹ Of course not all scholars, not all students, hold the same political views, and not everyone will agree on policy issues; this is the foundation of academic debate. But when a university *promotes* itself with regard to sustainability, or as an institution of choice for Indigenous students, then its administration, its faculty, its staff, and its students should be aware of this potential for what I call institutional hypocrisy, in which policy decisions may be made according to criteria (e.g., profit margins) that are more conducive to running a business than to supporting engaged and creative scholarship.

At this time, I believe that there are two obvious steps that universities can take in order to work toward becoming relevant to their local context. The first is to ensure that the university's governance structures become places of civic engagement, that is, places in which the people who are affected by the universities policies – including faculty, staff, students, and members of local communities⁴² – are able to engage with, and have some amount of control over, the way that the university runs. The second step is to encourage both faculty and students to pursue research that is influenced by and relevant to community needs. I describe both in some detail below.

⁴¹ I need to acknowledge that even this kind of situation, in which not all university policies mesh with the ideals of all faculty and students is to some degree idealised. Particularly in the United States, but to some extent in other countries as well, censorship has resurfaced as some professors have lost or been denied tenure on the grounds because of work that the state considers to be subversive; Henry Giroux has written extensively on this issue. Such actions by university administrations are violations of academic freedom, and reflect the broader context of the post-9/11 era in which it seems that “security” is beginning to supplant “freedom” as the cardinal value in American rhetoric.

⁴² To clarify, I am referring to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities here.

Governance Structures and Civic Engagement

If universities are to be spaces in which students can learn to engage with the “real world” issues of their time, if students are to learn to become democratic actors in their own milieus, then universities themselves must be democratic institutions. Let me clarify, here, that when I use the term *democracy*, I am not referring to electoral politics or representative democracy, but to direct, or deliberative democracy, whereby institutions and power relationships remain open to public debate; where public institutions exist because the public wants them to exist; and where such institutions change when those subject to them decide that change is necessary.

Historically, universities have not been democratic institutions. As I discussed in Chapter Two, most of today’s universities were founded by specific, usually elite, groups to achieve specific goals. Universities’ goals, however, are changing. Rather than training the children of society’s elite to become the next generation of society’s elite, universities are becoming more accessible, partially as a result of decades of struggle by students, by faculty, and by people outside the ivory tower who believe that it is important to change the university’s role in shaping broader society.

There is no question that many universities today are not particularly democratically governed. Some or all positions in a university’s governing body may be elected, but electoral politics cannot be equated with civic participation. M’Gonigle and Starke explore university governance structures in some detail in *Planet U*. They offer examples of problematic power structures: that a large proportion of a university’s operating budget is derived from student tuition, while students have very limited representation on policy-making bodies, for example. Many university departments also rely on sessional instructors to teach up to half of the department’s courses, for a relatively low salary, yet

sessional instructors have no status at all within governing structures. As a result, when buildings and parking lots replace athletic fields or forests on campuses, students are sent a message that they are powerless with regard to decisions that affect their educational experience, particularly when the bulldozers move in during the winter break after months of protest.

As M'Gonigle and Starke document, some universities have taken encouraging steps. Harvard, for example, employs a sustainability coordinator as a free-floater within the institution's power structures. Rather than being part of a standard university organisational hierarchy, subject to a series of vetoes from above, the person who holds this position is accountable to both faculty and facilities management, and holds an open mandate. Thus, the person who holds this position has the freedom to build new relationships, and to enable new dialogues among groups that might not otherwise come together. This kind of free-floating position has the potential to harness creative energy, not only for sustainability coordinators, but for staff pursuing anti-racism work in universities as well.

Following the UVic tree-sit in 2003, in response to the resulting mobilisation of students, faculty, and staff, the University of Victoria struck a task force, chaired by Marsha Hanen, to review its planning structure (M'Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006). After eight months of consultations, the Hanen Report, *Planning Possibilities*, recommended completely revising the university's planning structures, including creating an "office of integrated planning and sustainability" that would bring together various staff and faculty groups on campus, and to create more transparent and inclusive planning bodies that include more elected positions. All of the recommendations shared an overall

goal of overcoming the “fractured, adversarial” aspects of the university, particularly “the separation of the administration from other segments of the university, including faculty and the neighbouring community” (M’Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 166). UVic’s President publicly accepted the report’s recommendations, and a new Campus Plan was ratified, but in practice, M’Gonigle and Starke argue, little has changed structurally: “no elections, no new planning office, no possibility for real deliberative dialogue” (M’Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 185).

Perhaps it is just that change takes time; perhaps these changes are in the works, and ten years from now, the University of Victoria will embody the report’s recommendations. Perhaps, though, this is a situation in which, as M’Gonigle and Starke write, “an institution cannot act, and therefore turns an opportunity for change into an exercise in public relations” (M’Gonigle, Starke, and Penn 2006 187). Of course, the publication of *Planet U*, and its subsequent popularity, has likely raised general awareness of many of these issues, both at UVic and among broader academic communities. This heightened awareness, particularly if it inspires more students to engage with these questions, may further incite UVic’s administration into action; time will tell. Regardless, if engaged students receive the message, time and time again, that in spite of raising their voices – whether through tree-sits or letter-writing campaigns – their concerns are not reflected in the policy decisions that affect them, then it should not be surprising if graduates do not carry this engagement through to their post-university lives.

Community Engagement

Another area with tremendous potential for the transformation of a university into a place that is locally relevant is the emerging field of community-based research. Rather

than the current trends among some scholars to pursue work that is over-specialised, and that, as a result, is relevant or even comprehensible to only a very small group of highly-educated individuals, universities should be encouraging research initiatives that forge or develop connections among academics and members of communities outside of the ivory tower. One such example is the Office of Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria, which I discussed in Chapter Four.

As I discussed, any such initiatives need incorporate awareness of the power dynamics inherent in almost any research relationship. As Lee Maracle cautions, specifically for whitestream scholars working with Indigenous communities, there is no way to completely escape these power dynamics. In spite of this reality, it seems to me that although Community-Based Research is far from perfect, it is certainly better. Community-Based Research projects are able to connect specific community-based groups, many of whom are involved in the types of civic engagement mentioned previously, with the specific knowledge and expertise that academics both access and develop. As a result, such research relationships have the potential to become true partnerships, reciprocal relationships formed around sharing; academics gain particular information about the needs, and the strengths, of community groups, and such groups may hold practical knowledge about civic engagement that provides insight far beyond what could be developed through more traditional research methods. Similarly, these groups gain access to the theories, or the language, or the policy information they need in order to more effectively direct their efforts. Academics, as well, might learn to depend less on departmental jargon, and might therefore learn more accessible forms of communication.

In order for such initiatives to reach their potential, some steps are necessary both for the individual academic/researcher, and for any university hoping to encourage such initiatives. At an institutional level, universities that hope to become sites of social transformation must actively encourage academics and students to engage in these forms of broad, reflective, community-based scholarship. The reality of working with community is that such research takes time if it is to be done well. This means that a community-based academic might not be able to crank out the same number of publications per year as a researcher who follows more traditional methods; according to current standards for hiring and tenure decisions, this places such academics at a significant disadvantage (Pocklington and Tupper 2002). Thus, if a university hopes to encourage community research partnerships, and to attract academics who will engage in such partnerships, it must adjust its hiring standards accordingly, taking both the quality of the research and the extent of an academic's community involvement into account.

Perhaps publications could also be evaluated in part according to their accessibility. Not only would this keep the research accountable to the communities involved, it could also serve to broaden the academic peer review process, which Pocklington and Tupper (2002) argue is becoming increasingly meaningless because research has become so specialised that even an academic's colleagues within the same department might not be able to engage effectively with any particular publication.

On a related note, faculty should similarly have incentives to fully engage in aspects of their roles as professors beyond just research and publication. A "publish while others perish" approach to hiring and tenure decisions likely discourages some faculty from devoting time to developing mentoring relationships with their undergraduate, or even

with their graduate students. This is a waste of a tremendous opportunity for cross-generational learning that universities should embrace, since they are one of the few sites in contemporary Canadian society where such relationships naturally occur. Similarly, if universities are to be receptive to civic engagement within their governance structures, faculty should not be prevented, by the many other demands on their time, from being involved in campus decision-making. Students often have a great deal of energy to devote to activism, but students are transient; faculty and staff could play a vital and complementary role in providing some continuity within decision-making processes.

If individuals want to ensure that their projects are as respectful as possible of the community members involved, they need to take seriously a kind of “academic responsibility” to complement the academic freedom that is so important both to research and to knowledge-dissemination. Specifically, if a whitestream academic aims to pursue research with an Indigenous community, he or she must do the hard work involved in building a respectful relationship with members of that community, based in reciprocity and mutual trust. There are no short-cuts for such a relationship. Learning local protocols and working according to the community’s research guidelines are important, but there is no step-by-step guide to set a good research relationship in place. Academics need to acknowledge that there are some aspects of Indigenous community life that Indigenous peoples do not want to discuss, or that they do not want to discuss with outsiders.

Perhaps most importantly, whitestream academics should not try to pursue research in Indigenous communities without first shifting their gaze inward. As I discussed in Chapter Five, most Canadians, even within the academy, know little or nothing about whitestream-Indigenous histories and contemporary realities. Compounding this

ignorance are several layers of denial. Of course it would not be productive to retreat into academic navel-gazing, but the reality is that most of us within the whitestream have a lot to learn about our own histories, and our own positions within local, state, and global systems of power, and it is vital that we do this work. If we do not, then even research projects with the best of intentions are likely to reproduce or compound the power dynamics that we are attempting to avoid.

Closing words

I have endeavoured to be honest about many of the problems with contemporary Canadian universities as sites of decolonisation and resistance, and I think that there is no question that the people who choose to work within these institutions have real work to do in addressing these issues. Still, it is my intention to draw attention to these barriers in order that academics, administrators, and students can direct their work toward change as effectively as possible. Ultimately, I believe that universities have tremendous potential.

Universities are unique among Western institutions because they are sites that bring together complementary ideas: academic freedom with expertise, the energy of youth with the knowledge and experience of professors, local spaces with ideas that have global implications. Thus I believe that universities could be sites with tremendous transformative potential for society as a whole, if dedicated scholars agree to work together to engage with the challenges of our time.

First, though, there is work to do in building community – among scholars in different departments; among professors, students, staff, and administrators; and between scholars within universities and people in the communities where these institutions are situated. This work requires cooperation, humility, and courage, but a number of scholars today

are already providing inspiring examples through their teaching, their research, and their community engagement. We would do well to learn from, and share these examples, so that universities may continue to be transformed, one warrior-scholar at a time.

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