

# Intersections of Career Development and Post Secondary Education for Indigenous Students: Exploring the Integrity of Social and Cultural Issues

Suzanne L. Stewart  
Allison Reeves  
University of Toronto

## Abstract

Indigenous peoples in Canada often have unique experiences of finding and keeping work, which are strongly tied to cultural and community identity and histories. This paper explores the relationship of career development with post secondary education. These two facets of life for Indigenous peoples seem to intersect around issues of discrimination, modeling and mentoring, and access to education and career opportunities, which are discussed through a review of literature and the presentation of new data from two Indigenous research projects. Implications for career development and educational practices presented offer concrete guidelines for changing the way universities service the career needs of Indigenous students.

The cultural landscape of Canada is constantly evolving. This evolution is a process in which we interact and learn through features of human knowing and their implications for human change. The concepts of career and formal Western education are integral aspects of change for Canadian Indigenous peoples. Successful careers require interactions between individuals and society at large.

Through individual, group, and class-size interventions, culturally responsive educators need to be trained and capable of meeting the career needs of culturally diverse populations; however, there is a realization that career development models and concepts currently in use are not addressing the challenges of Indigenous peoples in Canada, who represent a broad range of cultural identities (Herring, 1997; Lee, 1995). Post-secondary educators are becoming aware that European-North American (i.e., Eurocentric) cultural values dominate current systems of career development and education, and that these values frequently come into conflict with those of culturally different students, particularly Indigenous students (Lee, 1989; Pedersen, 1991).

The term *Indigenous* is a general term used to describe members of three distinct Aboriginal cultural groups in Canada: First Nations, Métis peoples, and Inuit (Assembly of First Nations, 2002; Health Canada, 2003a). The term Indigenous will be used interchangeably with the terms Aboriginal and Native. First Nations, Indian, Métis, Inuit are also used as specific authors cited have utilized them. *Colonization* refers to the deliberate attempt by Canadian governments to destroy Indigenous institutions of family,

religious belief systems, tribal affiliation, customs, and traditional ways of life through enacted and enforced legal sanctions (Garrett & Herring, 2001). Colonization is marked by cultural assimilation and destruction tactics in the form of residential schools, removal of Indigenous groups from ancestral lands, and cultural genocide (Green, 1997).

## Rationale

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2010) reports that the national rate of unemployment for Indigenous peoples in Canada is 14.8%, whereas the rate of unemployment for the general Canadian population is 6.1%. Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24 have unemployment rates ranging from 12% to over 20%, depending on provincial location, compared to the average unemployment rate for non-Indigenous youth at 6%. Therefore, according to these statistics, Indigenous youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to be unemployed than their non-Indigenous counterparts. The Canadian federal government recognizes Indigenous unemployment as a major concern and in response has enacted equity policies to address hiring of Indigenous workers (Dwyer, 2003), but this action



alone is insufficient in addressing this problem.

Education and employment are directly related: As the amount of education a person attains increases, so does his or her opportunities for employment (Betz, 2006). Recent statistics (Statistics Canada, 2008) indicate that 38% of the Indigenous Canadians population will not graduate from high school; among Indigenous peoples living on reserve, 50% of do not complete secondary school. Given this relationship, the statistics regarding educational attainment for Indigenous peoples as a whole in Canada do not bode well for their career attainment and success.

In terms of post-secondary studies, Indigenous university students represent an elite population within the greater population of Canadian Indigenous peoples. Compared to non-Native Canadian populations, very few Native adults enter and complete post-secondary studies. Statistics show that in the case of status Indians, only 20% of those under the age of 24 have pursued some form of post-secondary education, compared with 42% of their non-Indigenous peers (Junor & Usher, 2004). The gap in university graduates is also wide; in 1996, 6% of Indigenous people aged 25 to 64 had a completed university education. This increased to 8% in 2001. For non-Native Canadians, 23% of the population aged 25 to 64 had a university education in 2001, up from 17% a decade earlier (Statistics Canada, 2003). Thus the actual number of Native graduates remains very small, as Indigenous peoples currently

account for about 3.9% of the overall population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003). These statistics can be understood to reflect the limited access to education that is experienced by Indigenous peoples, which suggests limited possibilities for career development and career outcomes.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (2004) noted this disparity in educational attainment and achievement among Indigenous peoples but has offered no concrete solutions or understandings of the issues. Battiste (1998), a prominent researcher in the field of Indigenous education, explains this disparity in education as resulting from the colonial experience, which has left generations of Indigenous individuals and communities with multiple healing issues, limited access to health care and education, and in a state of economic marginalization.

It is clear that existing data point to an important relationship between career and education that is worth exploring for the Indigenous population for theoretical and pragmatic reasons. Theoretically, academics need refine their understandings of poorly understood processes that underlie the lack of career and educational success for Indigenous peoples. Pragmatically, addressing this crisis state of unemployment for Indigenous individuals both on and off reserve is necessary to address the social inequities faced by this population within the social service and education systems.

## Overview

In a review of the relevant academic literature and through a presentation of the authors' current research on career development and Indigenous education, this paper seeks to identify and describe some of the more salient issues in working with Indigenous post secondary students on career development. The goal of this paper is to clarify the relationship between career development and Indigenous education themes. Also incorporated into the discussion are the experiences of the primary author, a professor in Counselling Psychology and a University Administrator in Aboriginal Education. Dr. Suzanne Stewart carries out research and teaches in the areas of Indigenous career development and mental health as well as Indigenous pedagogies in post secondary education.

Existing literature in this area presents career counselling interventions or theoretical frameworks for working with Indigenous populations within the career development or post secondary contexts. This paper extends from what has been discussed in this literature to synthesize knowledge and experiences of Indigenous peoples regarding careers and post secondary education by revealing research findings on Indigenous graduate student's experiences of supports and challenges in higher education (see Stewart & Reeves, 2009) and on Indigenous youth's narratives on employment experiences (see Marshall & Stewart 2011; Stewart & Reeves, 2011; Stewart, Reeves, Mohanty &



Syrette, 2011). This paper is designed to appeal to academic researchers, as well as post secondary educators and career counsellors who wish to increase cross-cultural consciousness and cultural competency in their work with Indigenous clients and students. Further, through a process of exploration of current intersections between Indigenous education and career development, this paper seeks to generate more research questions around Indigenous education and career.

Therefore, this paper focuses on both the articulation of issues relevant to Indigenous career development as well as future research into Indigenous students' learning and career needs in post secondary education. The current themes around these issues that will be explored here are: Discrimination in the educational setting, modeling and mentoring for Indigenous students, and access to education and career opportunities. A discussion of these issues will be followed by implications for career development models in postsecondary education. In order to give a deeper perspective on the topics discussed here, a brief overview of the historical context of Indigenous Canadians will first be presented.

### Historical context

In examining how Indigenous peoples exist and learn in a society dominated by a culture that is not their own, understanding socio-political historical realities is necessary in order to provide the context for a deeper understanding of the current is-

ues. According to oral tradition, prior to first contact with Europeans in the 16th century, North American Indigenous peoples' societies existed with successful methods of dealing with educational and health challenges. Prior to first contact, the incidence of health and social problems among Indigenous peoples in what is now called Canada was low (Waldrum, 2004). However, contact brought a dramatic increase in physical and mental illness and social problems to Indigenous peoples, as well as a disruption in traditional ways of knowing and living (Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000). Over seven million Indigenous peoples are estimated to have inhabited North America prior to contact in 1492; by 1600, almost 90% of these individuals perished as a result of indirect and direct effects of European settlement. Infectious disease brought from Europe was primarily responsible for this dramatic decrease, followed by a change in traditional diet to one of European foodstuffs as well as direct combat (Young, 1988). Today, health problems, such as diabetes and obesity, continue to exist in Indigenous communities related to diet and epidemiology (Kirmayer et al., 2000). Current social problems viewed as a result of a disruption of traditional living and colonial oppression are described in terms of the social determinants of health, which reflect low educational achievement, poverty, poor maternal health, family violence, inadequate housing, lack of access to health care and education, and high rates of unemployment (Kramer et al., 2000).

Further, implementation of federal government policies in Canada, such as the Indian Act, have attempted to destroy and eradicate Indigenous cultures through the creation of reserve lands, residential schools, and bureaucratic control of all aspects of Indigeniety and individual, family, and community life. In order to accommodate colonial settlement and natural resource exploration, Indigenous settlements were chosen by non-Native federal governments, who forced Indigenous groups off of their traditional lands and onto other territories, often grouping bands together who had previously no history of living together (Dickson, 1997). These groupings were forced to make new social structures and sustainable ways of life, which often failed to be successful. Indigenous groups were also relegated to lands with little or no natural resources, i.e., lands not deemed habitable or desirable for European settlers (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1994). Referring to an example of this relocation, Kirmayer et al. (2000) observe: "The disastrous 'experiment' of relocating Inuit to the Far North to protect Canadian sovereignty—a late chapter in this process of forced culture change—revealed the government's continuing lack of awareness of cultural and ecological realities" (p. 609). In other words, the Canadian Federal government's attempt to move the Inuit to a non-traditional territory was decided based on what would benefit the colonizers rather than what was in the best



interest of the cultural and environmental perseverations of the Inuit, whose identity and way of life was tied closely to their traditional lands.

Through the implementation of the Indian Act, which began in 1872 and continues into today, the colonization, bureaucratization, missionization, and education processes of the Canadian colonial governments, the control of education, healing, and other social and health practices were largely transferred from Indigenous peoples to programs and institutions sponsored by the Canadian government (Malatest & Associates, 2002). Historically, through such colonial processes, traditional teachers and healers were ridiculed and persecuted by the dominant culture and by governmental legislation (Waldram, 2004). Traditional teachers, often Elders or healers in the community, were forced to practice their traditions such as Potlatch, Sundance, and traditional healing in secret or face incarceration by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at the directive of federal law. As a result of this outlawing of traditional cultural practices, which also included speaking Indigenous languages, many Indigenous peoples today no longer avail themselves of the benefits of their traditional cultural skills and knowledge, either because they did not know how to access these services or because they had been taught to mistrust, fear, or condemn their own cultural and healing traditions through residential school teachings. This continues to date to be the case in many Indigenous communities and for

many individuals. Through this process of eliminating the practice of traditional healers and Elders, a great deal of very valuable cultural knowledge has been lost or has been forced to be hidden 'underground'. Currently, such persecution of traditional healing and traditional teachings takes the form of overt and subtle discrimination, which has been cited in past decades as being the most serious challenge being experienced by Indigenous students in post-secondary institutions, where Indigenous forms of learning, teaching, and knowing are not accepted or respected (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

### Current Issues

#### Discrimination

Academic practices are based almost exclusively on Western worldviews and pedagogies that differ substantially from Native ways of being and doing. Further, some researchers have suggested that employing a Western paradigm with Indigenous peoples is a form of continued colonial oppression and discrimination (Gone, 2004). Barnhardt (2002) explains that universities, through the maintenance of an "ivory tower" (p. 241) structure that is based on a hierarchy of knowledge and individuals, remain inhospitable to Indigenous or other non-Western forms of knowledge. Western knowledge is based on a hierarchy of rational or empirical truth with logical positivism held as the ultimate form of true knowledges and all other ways of knowing seen as

inferior or even invalid (Duran, 2006; Lamarche 1993).

Many Western educational practices, including those employed in postsecondary institutions, run almost anti-theoretical to Indigenous philosophies and conceptions of self (Battiste, 2002; McCormick, 1997). These differences create an atmosphere that fosters continued assimilation, in the forms similar to the historical colonial history, rather than healing (or democracy) in Native communities (Malatest & Associates, 2002; McCormick, 1997). For example, Barnhardt (2002) writes,

Native students trying to survive in the university environment (an institution that is a virtual embodiment of modern consciousness) must acquire and accept new forms of consciousness, an orientation that not only displaces but often devalues the worldviews they bring with them. (p. 241)

Indigenous university students are thus forced to accept that their worldview is not acceptable in the academic environment in order to be a part of the institution of higher education. Doing well in school would then mean to leave behind Indigenous worldviews, such as ways of knowing and being, and defer to Western epistemologies.

Postsecondary institutions employ Western research and educational methods in order to define the level of cognitive functions of individuals and to reflect cognitive and educational performance (Thomason, 1999). Assessment tools and educational



testing strategies, such as Western-based teaching and research methods, are biased in favour of non-Native students because peoples from Indigenous groups differ from norms on measures of self-efficiency, career maturity, and self-directed search (Juntunen et al., 2001, Malone, 2000). The current discourse on such competing ways of knowing and the cognitive imperialism of Western education has been well articulated in the literature by researchers calling for a need to bring Indigenous knowledge into the academy (see Battiste, 2002; Kwagley 1995; Malatest & Associates, 2002).

Such articulations point to an implicit denial of Indigenous identity within postsecondary institutions, which reflect a discriminatory process of education. Very few educational or research-oriented or career counselling tests based on the emic (insider's) perspective exist, and there is often objection to this in the literature by researchers who suggest that within and between group differences with Indigenous peoples would make culturally-based educational testing inefficient, as each group might require a specific method of testing.

Specifically, there are several areas of bias in educational testing (such as cognitive or vocational assessments or classroom testing to measure course learning) of Indigenous students that have been identified in the literature. A test itself may not be designed to produce valid information when used with Natives, whose general conception of the self as a collective with

family, extended family, and the community as the whole runs in opposition of Western ideals of individualism (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Secondly, the very idea of testing goes against traditional Native philosophy, in which a method of classifying people on quantitative scales is contrary to basic values such as equality, co-cooperativeness, and collectivity (McCormick, 1997). An educator, or institution, may be biased or racist (whether consciously or unconsciously) and may not be knowledgeable or sensitive to cultural practices of Indigenous people (Malatest & Associates, 2002). Assessment and testing procedures that are designed to measure learning from a Western epistemology can also be biased and therefore discriminatory, because they emphasize factors that conflict with basic Indigenous values. For example, Indigenous students who take timed tests may be penalized because traditional Indigenous philosophy does not value the speed-task completion as a measure of competency. Martin and Farris (1994) identify speed of test completion as a cultural parameter that affects test performance.

Contemporary education theory and practice, including career assessments used in university counseling centres, have largely destroyed or distorted Indigenous knowledges and heritages (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Eurocentric public school systems practice cognitive imperialism through a perpetuation of romanticized myths about Indigenous knowledge, languages, beliefs, and

ways of life (Milloy, 1999). Public education systems in Canada, for example, continue a quest to confine Native students' thought to cognitive imperialism by: (a) denying Indigenous peoples access to and participation in the formulation of educational policy, including curriculum and assessment tools; (b) limiting education to a positivistic scientific worldview; and (c) denying the use and development of Indigenous knowledge in schools (Battiste & Youngblood, 2000; Minnick, 1990).

An important principal in an Indigenous worldviews of teaching and learning is empowerment. Methodologically, this concept has its roots in Paolo Friere's (2003) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Friere (1970/2003) states that the educator's efforts

must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them... The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. (p.61)

Thus, Indigenous postsecondary education is based on Friere's notion of liberating, and that teaching is a practice of freedom, not domination. In practice, an in-



structor from an Indigenous paradigm must take responsibility and leadership in pragmatic ways that reflect notions of respect, incorporation of community, voice, trust, mutuality, authentic communication, and shared interest in learning. Examples of this may include inviting local and visiting Elders, consultants, and healers to be part of classroom discussions and presentations. A post secondary pedagogy in Indigenous contexts must be rooted in a newly founded relationship of trust with the academy because generations of Indigenous peoples have a relationship based on trauma and basic human rights violations due to residential school experiences, as discussed earlier in this paper. Additionally, university research relationships with Indigenous communities have been historically wrought with ethical violations, which now must be corrected through Indigenous protocols to research, community based research initiatives, and the development and implementation Indigenous research methodologies (Smith, 1999). For career development, there is a similar connection, with discrimination and other moral and ethical violations beginning in education or career counseling, and working its way through all aspects of career life. For example, when Indigenous students seek support in dealing with discrimination and racism in the classroom, they are often blamed for being seen as hostile or defensive when in fact they are being scapegoated as the defender of Indigenous stereotypes and products of colonial agendas. From Stewart &

Reeves's (2009) research on Indigenous post secondary success, one participant who had five years of university experience discussed this issue:

[The students] were just laughing [at me], you know. And I had to face that kind of [racism], but it was also invigorating me. And in my papers I wanted to voice what was missing, and finally something mattered—math and science never mattered before. (P.17)

This student described how racism motivated her to find her voice to speak against such oppression and work to eradicate systemic oppression through classroom experience.

#### **Modeling and mentoring**

Part of career development for some Indigenous peoples includes attaining a graduate degree, though little is known about the experiences of Indigenous peoples who complete post secondary education; instead, much of the current literature focuses on the academic failures of Indigenous students. In 2009, Stewart completed a study that examined the narratives of the successes of Indigenous graduate students at a large Canadian University in a large urban centre (see Stewart & Reeves 2009). The small qualitative study showed that mentoring within the university setting as well as in one's personal life was key to their success as students, and that this represented an overall part of their successful career development. One student in the study spoke about the guidance she re-

ceived from her friend, another Indigenous student in graduate school: "He really has supported me through it all, and, the first year of my- of my program last year, the graduate masters program was really hard. Like, if it weren't for [him], I probably would have quit!" (Stewart & Reeves 2009, P.14). Other students in the study talked about being guided and transformed by mentors within the university, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, who they felt understood them, and were "on their side" as unconditional supporters of their cultural and social positions. One participant described a positive learning experience with one professor: "She really taught me [about Indigenous people], you know? We are who we are. End of sentence" (p.18). Another student participant stated that she was able to successfully complete her program of study after changing to a new supervisor with whom she felt accepted and understood as an Indigenous person: "I felt she [my first supervisor] was very rigid. [...] I changed supervisors. [...] That was the key for me. I think what's really important with my supervisor now and my committee now is that they're not forcing me to use an approach or language that I'm not comfortable with" (p.17).

Modeling has been documented in the literature on career development as key to success for peoples of all cultures. What makes modeling unique in the Indigenous context is that there is a special need for it because of the lack of suitable models that exist in the academy for Indigenous



students who come from Indigenous worldviews and positions. For many Indigenous students, key supports, including mothers, partners, friends and professors, assist them in remaining motivated to continue with their program of study when they otherwise feel isolated and unsure. In Stewart and Reeves's study (2009), almost all students interviewed felt they had benefited from mentorship of some kind, making their educational journey feel less challenging and alone.

Research findings have shown that many Indigenous youth feel that inspiration and support from their families and other support systems underpin their connection with their specific Indigenous culture and gives them the motivation to attend university and complete their programs of study (McCormick, 1997; Stewart & Reeves 2009; Stewart et al. 2011). For example, one student in the study by Stewart and Reeves (2009) remarked on role modeling in her life:

You live it. And it's something that's passed down through sharing. It's passed down. [...] Especially that basic value wheel of the kindness, honesty, sharing and faith of strength, you know? That was something that my mother instilled in me at a very young age. You know, she didn't say these are the core values—she, she didn't say you have to be kind to people, she didn't say you have to do this you have to do that. [...] She weaved it within

everything she spoke to us with everything she did with us, you know, she weaved, weaved her mother work, you know into by just, what she did. (p.18)

This participant explained that modeling and mentoring was an integral value in her family and was passed down to her through her mother's actions, leaving a lasting impact on her. Values like these helped to sustain her motivation to complete her graduate studies and continue with career development.

#### Access to Work and Education

It is well documented in the literature that Indigenous peoples across Canada have limited access to both employment and educational opportunities. The figures presented in the opening section suggest that this situation is dire for on-reserve populations. Additionally, recent research by Stewart et al. (2011) suggests that urban Indigenous youth also experience significant barriers to employment opportunities and educational supports. Stewart et al. (2011) completed a study that looked at the employment experiences of Indigenous youth in downtown Toronto. The purpose of the research was to understand the career development of Indigenous youth within urban areas. These youth reported that career supports and services often existed in their communities but were also difficult to access if you did not meet a certain criteria, such as being a student enrolled in full-time studies in a college or university, or being a receipt of some form of

social assistance. Results of the same study also revealed barriers associated with accessing and maintaining employment within Indigenous organizations, both on reserve and in urban areas. Participants spoke of the importance of having the status of a "community insider" in order to gain employment in this sector. Specifically, "community outsiders" felt that they faced barriers such as nepotism and the tendency for individuals to hire within circles of friends, and therefore as a community outsider it can be challenging to gain entry into certain types of work opportunities. The study also suggested that a possible barrier to accessing employment for some Indigenous youth is that non-Native people, who often have competitively high levels of post-secondary education, take many jobs within Indigenous organizations and related work placements, despite often lacking the cultural understandings and sensitivities to successfully complete the work.

Many youth also experience instances of discrimination and racism when working outside of the Indigenous sector, according to Stewart et al. (2011). For example, some youth reported that they would often hide their true ancestry in order to protect themselves from ill treatment and unfair disparaging remarks, and to gain a sense of emotional and physical safety in their place of work. Other youth in both universities and Western workplaces often felt they were treated unfairly (i.e., being singled out as the voice of all Indigenous people, working beyond their job de-



scription, working for unfair wages) due to their identity as an Indigenous person (Stewart & Reeves 2009, Stewart et al., 2011).

Accessing employment and education supports such as academic and vocational services is less challenging for those residing in urban areas (Stewart & Reeves 2009, Stewart et al. 2011). However, what does appear to be lacking are employment opportunities, vocational training and post secondary supports that are specifically geared toward the needs of Indigenous youth within the context of their current needs. Stewart & Reeves (2009) and Stewart et al.'s work (2011) indicate that while some employment opportunities and employment programmes specifically geared to Indigenous peoples are available, these opportunities remain unknown to many and are therefore inaccessible (especially if one is not a post-secondary student and lacks access to resources and information through school). Additionally, while career counselling and support for University students is available, it is often culturally inappropriate for Indigenous students whose career context and needs are different to those of non-Indigenous students.

### Implications

What does Indigenous learning and career mean together today? Western epistemologies have posed questions regarding what Indigenous peoples know or how they think and learn (psychologies), but these inquiries have often been steeped

in biases, racism, and arrogance (Kenny et al., 2004). Is it challenging for contemporary Indigenous peoples to deconstruct Indigenous knowledge and learning because the dominant culture has created mysticism and romance around Indigenous knowledge and learning. A fact remains that in the literature, debates concerning competing knowledge claims could continue indefinitely. For future research, examining specific implementations of Indigenous ways of knowing could offer some insight into understanding what this means for career and education. This could occur through further qualitative examinations of young people's career development or through the evaluation of an Indigenous model of career counseling or community programming.

In Indigenous policy research, for example, the research is holistic and balanced, and the diverse positions on knowledge claims must all be considered in the context of ethical research practice (Erasmus & Ensign, 1998). Knowledge claims are scrutinized for how they can best represent an Indigenous worldview, Indigenous systems of knowledge, and balance in a holistic perspective on policy research. Thus it becomes critical to be aware that all sources of data derived from research in Indigenous communities are ethically questionable if their methodology does not include appropriate attention to an Indigenous cultural and social approach to contemporary research (Hudson & Taylor-Henley, 2001). Thus for career development and

education, approaching these concepts and applications from a cultural and community based framework is necessary.

Colonization has interrupted many traditional ways of living and knowing for Natives throughout the world (Mussell et al., 1993), as discussed earlier in this paper. However, many Native groups today are presently undergoing a profound spiritual renaissance of traditional ecological value renewal and Indigenous ways of knowing—two concepts which are intimately intertwined (Wenzel, 1997). This paper, for example, reflects this return to traditional ways of knowing by its discussion of career development through Indigenous education in the context of an Indigenous paradigm.

Previously in this paper there was a discussion of Indigenous individual learning in terms of an intimate and oral method of communication. Indigenous within group communication and learning is a more complex process to discuss, particularly in the context of post secondary education, which occurs mainly in the Western world. Indigenous knowledge is not a linear concept that remains stable across all Native peoples; it is a diversity of knowledges that is comprised of many layers (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). According to some Elders, those who are in possession of such knowledge cannot categorize it in Eurocentric thinking, partly due to the fact that the processes of categorizations are not part of Indigenous thinking (Kawagley, 1993). Further, Indigenous knowledge is very much a part of



a specific community (i.e., language-based), band, or even family, and cannot be separated from the bearer of such knowledge to be codified into a definition (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). For example, those who possess such knowledge use it in everyday activity and existence and it becomes part of identity within a personal or cultural context, and this is tied closely to relationship with others. Kawagley (1993) identifies these personal cognitive maps as manifesting in humility, humor, observation, tolerance, experience, listening to natural and spiritual worlds, and social interaction. Therefore this contextual and personal facet of Indigenous knowledge is a sensitive area of inquiry, and there exists a caution that discussing it out of context may be intrusive or disrespectful to Indigenous cultures. The implication of these considerations for career development within higher education is that institutions must have a respect for other ways of understanding what career and learning might be, which may not fit within the Western paradigm of educational outcomes. For example, successful learning outcomes may be based not only on test scores for Indigenous students, but on how curriculum and relationships within the classroom has shifted and supported the personal healing journey of the student, and how this impacts the family and community of the student.

One possible way to respectfully understand Indigenous knowledge and ways of being and doing is by removing one's self from a cross-cultural or

multi-cultural lens and embracing a *different* way of thinking. Abandoning Indigenous education and career development from a Western paradigm would mean enveloping a worldview that comes from within Indigenous cultures, such as what is termed in cross-cultural psychology as an emic (insider's) approach. One such worldview is described by contemporary Indigenous researchers as "Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy" (ISP), which is described as being the "inherently political, reformative, relational, and deeply personal approach that is located in the chaos of colonial and cultural interfaces" (Philips, Whatman, Hart, & Winslett, 2005, p. 7). ISP places education in the context of culture, values, relationship, and historical realities. ISP fundamentally identifies and embeds Indigenous community participation in the development and teaching of Indigenous perspectives, or standpoints, and is a multi-faceted process.

This sort of pedagogy is mainly concerned with Indigenous perspectives in education not as an alternative to Western approaches but as a legitimate form of education in and of itself. For example, the first author of this paper brings this perspective to her academic work by virtue of her identity as a First Nations [Yellowknife Dene] woman and her desire to work from an Indigenous perspective in all aspects of her teaching methods. What this means in practice is that she values multiple perspectives on learning and teaching in interaction with students and co-workers, such as linear and non-

linear thinking, differing time orientation, holistic approaches and dualism, and community-based and individual focused connection. Her philosophy and methods of teaching and working stem from her cultural position as well as her keen awareness of the impacts of colonialism and movement toward attempting to articulate and eliminate the negative impacts of colonialism in teaching and learning practices. The foundation of this pedagogical approach lies in relationship, as this is the basis of success for meaningful communication rooted in Indigenous knowledges. As described by Friere, "Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning" (1970/2003, p. 61).

When career development and post secondary education intersect within the context of relationships between students, faculty and counselors, family, and community members, a more effective and successful form of career development will begin to emerge for students, as there is no success in individualism or solitary endeavors within an Indigenous paradigm. In practice, this may mean toppling down the ivory tower, formerly home to only academic and Western experts, by, for example, inviting in community members, Elders, family, and children to be part of the teaching and learning process in the classroom for students within the context of their educational and career development. Further to this, recruiting and employing Indigenous career practitioners and Indigenous faculty who work from Indigenous worldviews is one of first strate-



gies that can be implemented to begin to positively influence career development for Indigenous students. This move to increase the capacity of Indigenous faculty and staff in universities would address the issues of discrimination, the need for modeling and mentoring, and improve access to services for Indigenous students.

### Summary & Conclusion

This paper brought together issues of career development in the context of post secondary education for Indigenous students. A backdrop of colonial history and its impact on the current status of career and educational development of Indigenous peoples provided a contextual understanding of current issues of discrimination, modeling and mentoring, and access to education and career opportunities. These issues were explored through the dissemination of existing literature and through illustrations from two of the authors' current studies on the topic of career and educational development for Indigenous peoples. Discussion of implications provided future directions for research from the issues articulated and concrete solutions for addressing some of the issues identified in the literature and research data.

In conclusion, addressing the career development needs of Indigenous peoples in the context of post secondary education can be understood in terms of how the academy must change to accommodate the needs of the students, rather than how the students must change to meet the

requirements of the university. Many university pedagogical methods and epistemological bases remain rooted in oppressive and colonizing practices that serve to further marginalize, rather than support, Indigenous peoples in successful career development. This can be addressed by respectfully looking to Indigenous peoples to guide them towards non-Eurocentric academic practices that include Indigenous paradigms.

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