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C Colonialism: When will it End?

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Colonialismo: ¿cuándo terminará?

Resumen. Se examina cómo la imposición de la colonización cambió la forma de vida de la gente. Este proceso no terminó con la independencia de las colonias o con la creación de Estados-Naciones autónomos como Canadá o las repúblicas de Centro y Sudamérica. Sistemas similares de colonización, de opresión, existen todavía contra los pueblos indígenas en nuestras sociedades. Para los pueblos indígenas del llamado Tercer Mundo esto se convierte en 'colonialismo interno' y para los países desarrollados en 'colonialismo de asistencia social'. Este artículo sugiere la necesidad de reforzar los estudios indígenas para otorgarles una voz a las víctimas mediante el reconocimiento de sus contribuciones y para lograr la capacidad académica y de investigación de los Estados-Naciones y agencias internacionales relacionadas con los pueblos indígenas.

La academia no tiene el lujo de una elección. Los estudios indígenas deben dirigirse en esta dirección si la academia no quiere renunciar a su integridad y principios.

Palabras clave: colonialismo interno, colonialismo de asistencia, estudios indígenas, genocidio.

Abstract. This paper examines how colonization changed aboriginal peoples' ways of life. This process of imposition did not end with the independence of former colonies or with the creation of autonomous nation-states such as Canada or the republics of Central and South America. Similar colonizing systems still oppress indigenous peoples in our societies. For indigenous people of the so-called Third World these became 'internal colonialism' systems and for those in developed countries, 'welfare colonialism'. This paper suggests the need to reinforce the academic discipline of Indigenous Studies, in order to give a voice to the victims while recognizing their contributions, and to provide the academic capacity and research to aid nation-states and international agencies relating to indigenous peoples.

Key words: internal colonialism, welfare colonialism, indigenous studies, genocide.

With only three years remaining before the end of the 'Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004)' as proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 48/163 in December 1993, in numerous ways these peoples (allow me to pluralize) continue to be maintained in a state of dependency, oppression and/or sheer extermination. At the outset I must

deal with the concepts of 'people' and 'peoples'. Despite the large number of Indigenous nations on this planet, the United Nations chose the denomination: 'Decade of the World's Indigenous People'. This phrase lumps these peoples into an amorphous cluster just as many of them became 'Indians' shortly after Columbus' stumbling upon the so-called New World. Thus, on the basis of their status as

Indigenous, all of these distinct nations together are termed 'Indigenous people' and denied the term 'Peoples'. This, by definition, is discrimination.

Incidentally, the 'United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance' took place in Durban, South Africa in late August and early September 2001. At the Preparatory Regional Conference of the Americas for this event, held in Santiago, Chile, the Ambassador of the United States of America delivered a remarkable statement accepting the term 'Indigenous peoples'. This was then accepted by the other states and incorporated into the final document of the conference. At last the nation-states of the Americas recognized Indigenous Peoples as peoples. Although this recognition is subject to the interpretation of 'peoples' as established by the General Conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 which entered into force September 5, 1991, it is step forward nevertheless.

There is little doubt that Indigenous peoples suffered drastic alterations to their ways of life by the imposition of alien structures in the process known as colonization. We need to understand, or at least to investigate, the processes by which Europeans colonized as they did and we also need to learn about the processes by which Indigenous peoples allowed such colonization to take place. Nor did the workings of colonization for Indigenous peoples end with the independence of former colonies or with creation of autonomous nation-states such as Canada or the republics of Central and South America. Similar structures of oppression continue to exist in the relations between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples in contemporary societal structures. For Indigenous peoples of the so-called Third World these contemporary structures became internal colonialism and for Indigenous nations in the developed countries, welfare colonialism.

Indigenous nations have been compelled to leave their lands and coerced to speak the language of their colonial invaders as well as to adopt their Christian religion and capitalist mode of life. The need to re-establish Indigenous sovereignties and self-determination for Indigenous peoples—as defined in the United Nations—is vital if they are to recover their sense of identity and dignity in this heterogeneous world. However, one must note that today even in dominant societies, self-determination seems evermore relative given the current economic, social and political conditions of the world. In effect, social collectives within the boundaries of a nation-state can define themselves as a 'people' in whatever way they wish to be recognized, but political recognition and acceptance of their status as a

people are granted or withheld by the rest of society or by the established institutions. The dominant society acts in the capacity of colonizer by using its hegemonic power to grant or withhold this recognition or acceptance. However, the recognition of cultural diversity within nation-states is very much part of the new trends foreseen for the turn of the century and Indigenous peoples are an important part of that diversity.

This paper will examine the continuous legacy of colonialism for Indigenous peoples through a theoretical perspective. It will relate to this the need to evaluate and reinforce the interdisciplinary framework of the discipline of Indigenous Studies as one of the elements to work with Indigenous organizations and individuals towards a real decolonization.

1. Colonialism: A Theoretical Perspective

Unfortunately the only existing theoretical frameworks used to analyze the conditions of Indigenous People are products of either European or Eurocentric scholarship, which cannot fully address Indigenous reality from the perspective of direct Indigenous experience. As such, these frameworks are of limited help in understanding the situation of the First Peoples (Burger, 1990:16). The differing philosophies and cosmologies of Eurocentric origin are sometimes incompatible with those of the First Peoples, which often contain worldviews opposite to those of Europeans. Eurocentric theory tends to explain other cultures and peoples in terms of its own norms and values and for this reason fails to arrive at accurate analyses or valid proposals to remedy the problems of the Indigenous peoples.

To explain: on the one hand, for Indigenous peoples life interactions operate in a number of intertwined and interdependent situations. The basis of all interaction is found in a number constant relationships of everything forming the 'creation'. It can be suggested that these relationships function within five discernible categories or spheres: political, economical, social, cultural and spiritual. These interactions are both internal and external to any given community or group. Interdependency means that all aspects are related in such a manner that if change occurs in one part, it affects all the other parts. This is the basis of a circular (or all encompassing) approach to life.

On the other hand, a Eurocentric way of making sense occurs in a lineal and usually compartmentalized manner, which advances in an evolving, rigid, unidirectional march. The past, the ancient, appears primitive and somewhat lesser. The modern, or present, seems progressive, inevita-

ble and superior (Blaut, 1993). The premise is: only when those who live in the past are given the opportunity to progress, to advance, to be ‘civilized’, will they cease to be backwards. Economist D. Seers illustrated the use of the European mode as a norm of measurement when he stated that “... inequalities within and between countries could and would in one way or another be reduced eventually, bringing an homogenized, modernized world within the reach of the next generation” (Pajestka, 1980: 7).

Such a proposition follows a lineal evolutionary approach in which societies develop step by step through predictable successive stages.

Seers’ assumption is not borne out in fact. Even the current concept of ‘countries’, especially in the Third World, involves nation-states that created and imposed their own borders. In general, such arbitrary borders engulf or split up various Indigenous nations, which theoretically –for some, irremediably– are condemned to disappear (culturally, economically, politically, socially, spiritually and biologically) under the enormous force of ‘progress’. Given these circumstances, it can be argued that Indigenous peoples survive in a state of constant attack, struggling to simply exist and to return to living under their own self-rule.

Among the many existing theoretical frameworks, dependency theory is one of several theories that may be applied with caution to the current circumstances of Indigenous peoples. Dependency theory was developed in opposition to the social evolutionist, or ‘modernization’, point of view. Canadian sociologist Marie-Anik Gagné in *A Nation within a Nation* noted that the theory was reshaped by North American and European scholars, the ‘core’. However, dependency theory was originally developed in Latin America, the periphery, in the 1960s by “... scholars native to semi-peripheral areas [Dependentistas]. It did not become ‘respectable’ until it was ‘denied’ and taken to the core, where it was transformed into world system theory and was reexported to the periphery” (Gagné, 1994: 8). Dependency theory treated the Western concepts of development and underdevelopment as interdependent events or functional positions within the world and within the economies of individual countries rather than as stages along an evolutionary ladder. It took into consideration “... both the internal and the external factors of dependency” (*ibid.*), namely the expansion and development of one group of countries at the expense of the economies of others (Berstein, 1973: 76). At the same time, regions, societies or groups of

people are put in an unequal power relationship in relation to others within the same Nation-State. Therefore, the most powerful region or group directs and controls others towards its own interests and the less powerful region or group is inhibited from sustained economic growth and becomes marginalized within the nation-state. The basic situation of dependence keeps these poorer countries and groups of peoples socially, politically, economically and culturally marginal and exploited, because investments, political decisions, control of resources and development of technology are controlled by alien powers for their own enrichment. Dependency theory can be applied to Indigenous peoples because it proposes to examine “... the interdependence of the political, economic, and social structures, not only with respect to internal structures but also by determining the effects of external structures” (Gagné, 1994: 5).

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America and the large cities of the formerly colonized countries became the centers for economic, social and political activities while pauperized remote, usually agricultural, areas became the periphery which grew ever more marginal-yet peripheries are under constant pressure to assimilate to the cultural patterns of the core. Peripheries contribute raw material, natural resources and/or cheap labor in exchange for manufactured goods from the centre (*ibid.*: 5-26). Citing T. Dos Santos, Blomström and Hettne note that dependence is understood as

... a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of interdependence between the two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion,

which can have either a positive or negative effect on their immediate development (Blomström and Hettne, 1984: 64).

This situation is repeated within existing nation-states. In the case of the Americas, Indigenous peoples are clearly located within the *dependent* sectors of society.

Unlike the peoples of Europe, Indigenous peoples did not come to their modern social, economic and political condition linearly from a historical background of *undevelopment*. The natural development of the Indigenous peoples was interrupted resulting in a widespread condition of underdevelopment today. This underdevelopment is a direct result of the imposition of unfavorable alien economic and social controls imposed on Indigenous peoples, first by European powers and then by the succeeding nation-states, which kept them dependent. These impositions are "... a fundamental trait of the process of underdevelopment" according to Blomström and Hettne (*ibid.*: 3).

It is necessary to recall that Indigenous peoples were, before the advent of the Europeans, in control of their own geographical, architectural, cultural, spiritual, social, political, economic, environmental, aesthetical and historical space. Any superficial analysis of contemporary conditions shows that much of that space has been lost or reduced to minimal levels as a result of the colonization process. This design continues for Indigenous peoples. In other words, these peoples still face forcible, long-term occupation of their shrunken territories as well as the rest of their former Indigenous space.

Indigenous peoples' current plight also depends on the global social, political and economic conditions in the rest of the world because of the historical unfolding of world capitalism and its movement toward *globalization*. As S. Amin noted in *Accumulation on a World Scale*:

Capitalism has become a world system, and not just a juxtaposition of 'national capitalism'. The social contradictions characteristic of capitalism are thus on a world scale, that is, the contradiction is not between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat of each country considered in isolation, but between the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat (Gagné, 1994: 14).

Nearly all aspects of life today are dictated by this dominant capitalist system. Even strong and ancient cultures such as the Chinese, the Russian and others seem to be

succumbing to the popular culture invasion led by the 'American way of life' expressed graphically in the 'big Mac' or 'Coke'.

One of the most important struggles for Indigenous peoples is the one to control and direct their own intellectual production. Indigenous peoples have expressed it clearly in international forum:

The extension of colonialism in all its expressions continues to take away our ancestral knowledge, cultural and spiritual practices, our economies and traditional forms of life of our peoples, as well as our cultural and intellectual patrimony, of which our spirituality, sacred places and those of historical significance, the health practices and important pharmacological knowledge, and also human, animal and vegetable genetic codes, are part (Conferencia Ciudadana, Santiago. December 4, 2000: 2).

One of the main characteristics of discriminating practices is the attitude of categorizing all of those who do not

fit the universalizing discourse and image of the core as somewhat lesser. This process is known as 'othering' (Noël, 1994: 11-45). There is a need to defend peoples' culture from the colonial and neo-colonial practice of creating and maintaining an artificial and self-serving image of the 'other'. Edward W. Said gave a superb description of the ruling colonial or neo-colonial mind. Although speaking of *Orientalism* (the Western image of the Oriental), Said's words could be applied to *Indianism*, the Western image

of the Indian or the set of ideas the ruling classes and groups hold about Indigenous people, as

... rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction ... but also a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is* a manifestly different ... world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative

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linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, text, values), power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do) (Said, 1979: 12).

In this sense, one could apply Said's proposition to the concept of *Indianism* being a "... considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture" (*ibid.*), as nothing other than a vision and interpretation within a Western construct of the world rather than an explanation or a description of what Indigenous peoples may really be.

Using the dependency theory, the conditions of internal colonialism (when labor of an Indigenous population is important) and welfare colonialism (when Indigenous labor becomes redundant), were set up within the political, social, cultural and economic background of the colonial era. Ian Roxborough noted in his book, *Theories of Underdevelopment* that:

If an analysis of the relation between developed and underdeveloped societies that focused on the processes occurring in the developed half of the equation produced a theory of imperialism then if attention was systematically focused on the other half of the equation, the underdeveloped societies, a theory of dependency would be produced (Roxborough, 1983: 42).

Whereas the concept of internal colonialism was used earlier, especially by Latin American politicians and activists, the prevailing understanding of the term developed a scholarly connotation during the early mid-1960s, predominantly in the works of the Mexican sociologists Pablo González Casanova and Rodolfo Stavenhagen (González, 1965; Horowitz, *et al.*, 1969; Stavenhagen, 1965; Kahl, 1968). Both they and their followers realized that colonialism as a social, political and economic phenomenon exists not only in the international sphere, but is also repeated, in different degrees, at the intra-national level. These scholars proposed that internal colonialism as a theory considers as well the interrelationship of the two spheres, or that "... internal colonialism is part of, and intimately linked with, external colonialism, that is, imperialism" (Cockcroft *et al.*, 1972: XX). In 1972, Dale Johnson provided a most thorough and precise definition of internal colonialism, describing its forms of political, social, and mainly economic control:

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Economically, internal colonies can be conceptualized as those populations who produce primary commodities for markets in metropolitan centers, who constitute a source of cheap labor for enterprises controlled from the metropolitan centers, and/or who constitute a market for the products and services of the centers. The colonized are excluded from participation or suffer discriminatory participation in the political, cultural, and other institutions of the dominant society (Johnson in Cockcroft: 277).

Some Indigenous nations, for example, were drawn to produce the primary commodities for the fur trade while others produced those of the ubiquitous agriculture, fishing, mining and logging; and always they were a source of cheap labor. Indigenous peoples have been historically excluded from participation in decision-making and the institutions of the dominant society. Despite the pressures, most Indigenous peoples have preserved their culture, language and customs in a way that has maintained a society within a society. Johnson added:

An internal colony constitutes a society within a society based upon racial, linguistic, and/or marked cultural differences as well as differences of social class. It is subject to political and administrative control by the dominant classes and institutions of the metropolis. Defined in this way, internal colonies can exist on a geographical basis or on a racial cultural basis in ethnically or culturally dual or plural societies (Not all of these criteria need to apply in order to classify a population as an internal colony) (*ibid.*).

Discrimination and policies of assimilation have produced constant conflicts because of the clashing interests between these Indigenous peoples and the dominant societies they live in.

There are still pressing issues to be solved internally by nation-states: the right to land and autonomy of Indigenous

peoples, the right to protect natural resources, the right to territory and citizenship –realizing the need to conjugate the *Jus Sanguinis* and the *Jus Soli* (in other words, Indigenous nationhood as first and foremost: Cree, Yanomami, Aymara, Maya, etc. and in second place their nationality as Canadian, Brazilian, Bolivian, Guatemalan and so on)–, the right to maintain Indigenous cultures, to speak their own language, the right to be part of the decision making process in everything affecting Indigenous communities and the right to exercise their own laws as unique peoples. These conflicts reflect the fact that Indigenous peoples are actively struggling against exclusion from the political, social and economic processes that provide tangible basis for recognition as a people.¹

Based on several other UN Covenants, the Charter, and General Assembly resolutions, the 1993 Martin Ennals Conference on Self-Determination, in one more international attempt to seek agreement on the question of who make up a ‘people’, confirmed the definition in the 1990 UNESCO final document from the meeting of Experts on Further Study of the Rights of Peoples in Paris. UNESCO defined a ‘people’ (with the right to self-determination in international law) as:

1. A group of individual human beings who enjoy some or all of the following common features:
 - a) a common historical tradition
 - b) racial or ethnic identity
 - c) cultural homogeneity
 - d) linguistic unity
 - e) religious or ideological affinity
 - f) territorial connection
 - g) common economic life;
2. The group must be of a certain number who need not to be large (e.g. the people of micro states) but must be more than a mere association of individuals within a state;
3. The group as a whole must have the will to be identified as a people or the consciousness of being a people –allowing that groups or some members of such groups, though

1. In the Regional Conference of the Americas Preparatory to the World Conference Against racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance held in Santiago, Chile, December 5-7, 2000, the Nation-states recognized “Indigenous peoples have been victims of discrimination for centuries, and we affirm them equal and free in dignity and rights and that they should not have to suffer any kind of discrimination, particularly if this is based on their origin and Indigenous identity”. Paragraph 22. WCR/RCONF/SANT/2000L1/Rev.3 - my translation.

sharing the foregoing characteristics, may not have the will or consciousness; and

4. Possibly, the group must have institutions or other means of expressing its common characteristics and will for identity (Self-Determination. Final Report: 3-4).

It can be strongly suggested that Indigenous peoples worldwide meet these criteria, yet they are not fully recognized as ‘peoples’ by the United Nations because nation-states still deny them recognition.

The exclusion of Indigenous peoples has existed since contact. Paraphrasing Eduardo Galeano, Indigenous territories have been regions of ‘open veins’, because from the time of the conquest to the present these have been bled of their wealth and transformed into capital benefiting Europe, then the United States and the local nation-state. In *Open Veins of Latin America: Five centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, Galeano stated:

Everything: the soil, its fruits and its mineral-rich depths, the people and their capacity to work and to consume, natural resources and human resources. Production methods and class structure have been successively determined from outside for each area by meshing it into the universal gearbox of capitalism ... each area has been assigned a function, always for the benefit of the foreign metropolis of the moment, and the endless chain of dependency has been endlessly extended (Galeano, 1973: 12).

Social and political structures of domination within countries, the big cities and the ports benefit from “... its sources of food and labor” and resources, maintaining large segments of the population in dependency (*ibid.*).

The other aspect of dependency is welfare colonialism. Whereas many Indigenous nations in developed countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States of America preserved their self-respect and certain autonomy, the development of a welfare society pushed them even further to the margins of society. Indigenous peoples fell under state financial assistance and control, which transformed them from self-sufficient hunters and providers into a society which felt inadequate and hopeless. Among policies and aims for assimilation one of the most important is the provision of social services for Indigenous peoples forcing them into the market economy. This measure precluded that First Peoples in the developed countries could maintain and develop their own mode of production. By and large, these peoples were also kept from entering the labor force. In 1977 Robert Paine coined the concept of welfare colonialism, a notion that applies when the centers of power dispen-

se with the Indigenous labor force, when settlers begin encroaching on Indigenous lands forcing them off their lands either by treaty or repression and when the state assumes wardship of the Indigenous population (Gartrell, 1986: 11). Beverley Gartrell agrees on the need to apply a variant term to the condition of internal colonialism of Indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. She noted that welfare colonialism is “recognizably colonial, yet fundamentally unlike any other colonial situation seen before” (*ibid.*). Whether under the burden of internal colonialism or welfare colonialism, social relations in the Americas have been based on European and Eurocentric domination and exploitation. An important consequence of this domination is the resulting discrimination against some social groups and the creation of two levels of cultures, which are mutually exclusive (Horowitz *et al.*, 1969: 33).

A historical understanding of the ethnic discrimination suffered by Indigenous peoples is mandatory because the struggle against it is an inherent component of the ideology of the current Indigenous movement toward greater autonomy (von Oertzen *et al.*, 1990). For Indigenous peoples, an abrupt turning point in their lives was their ‘discovery’ by Europeans. First Peoples and non-Indigenous state relations developed out of the history of colonization and largely exploitative and discriminatory depletion of natural resources. Whether ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘welfare colonialism’, the resulting conditions for these Indigenous nations as well as their relationship to the nation-state imposed on them, have been the results of that history.

As stated earlier, Europeans converted the Natives’ autonomous and self-sufficient economies into wealth production for others. The international division of labor, status and position which developed between rich and poor countries, was reproduced internally within the different nation-states between the dominant culture and Indigenous peoples. If we relate the economic, social and political circumstances of what became known as the ‘Third World’ to Indigenous peoples, we can understand why some writers employ the term ‘Fourth World’, a term coined in the early 1970s and formally used for the first time at the UN sponsored International Non-Governmental Organizations Conference on Indigenous peoples and Land, September 15-18, 1981 (Goehring, 1993: 5). The term was used to describe and interpret the concept of internal and welfare colonialism practiced by the nation-state as a whole against the Indigenous peoples.

It is assumed that Indigenous peoples are dying peoples and cultures because they are weak in comparison with the ‘thriving Western civilization’. Colonialism has been a direct

and indirect exploitation of resources and peoples considered inferior or primitive; internal or welfare colonialism has maintained a structure of economic, political, social, military and other relations imposed by the dominant system of former colonies on Indigenous peoples. The system of internal and welfare colonialism are relations which have maintained Indigenous peoples within the framework of the capitalist system, but simultaneously, marginal to it. The poverty of Indigenous peoples was created by the plundering and pauperization of traditionally Indigenous lands and resources; by changing Indigenous ways of life in the very process of colonization, and by the modern exploitation First Peoples have experienced under the modern nation-states.

The structure of internal colonialism shows itself, first, in the fact that Indigenous nations have been obliged to ‘belong’ to the system of international and national capitalist division of labor, which maintains Indigenous people dependent on foreign capital and on the State. Second, that foreign and state capital retains important positions (obtained during colonization) for the control of their economies. An examination of the history of the Indigenous peoples reveals that the imposed social, economic and political system affected them along several lines:

- a) The subordination of the whole economy of the colonized people and land to the interests and requirements of alien capital, of a foreign capitalist economic system (fur trade, mega-projects, mining, plantations, and the modern maquiladoras).
- b) A direct incursion of foreign capital into the economy of the regions in question through the establishment of enterprises and other venues of the capitalist mode of production that, usually, remained as an alien growth on the local economy. Historically, Indigenous peoples have not been considered as owners of land, that is, as having any Aboriginal title.
- c) The slow penetration of capitalism into the traditional economic and social structure of local societies and the life of the Indigenous population under control of the state, conserving the condition of dependency. The new industrial-agrarian growth of colonized nations such as those in Latin America became an appendage of the world capitalist mode of production that exercised its influence over production, distribution and redistribution of wealth in the pauperized Indigenous communities through the capitalist world market.

2. Toward De-Colonization: Education

The struggle against colonization, obviously, implies the process of de-colonization. It is in this process of education (realization of the problem and the search for solutions)

that academia could play a vital role of empowering individuals to become decolonized. Academia, it can be suggested, should prick the conscience of societies to free themselves and to expansively accept human diversity. Thus, the creation of the academic discipline of Native Studies in the late 1960's in Canadian Universities is somehow a response to the needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples. After 32 years of existence and expansion, the discipline now needs to be revisited in order to evaluate its purposes.

However, this is not an easy task because the colonial mentality and philosophy permeate everything.

Eurocentrism and its belief in its superiority, in its explanation of the developmental patterns of progress, and in its synthesis of individualism, rationalism, and scientism, has made modern scholarship unable to grasp the crisis or to resolve it. The Eurocentric synthesis has had such preeminence in the minds and affairs of nations, education systems, and societies that for centuries it has been unanimously accepted as the only means of ensuring a viable future under the banner of modernization. Eurocentric intellectuals have abandoned ancient truths, values, and ways of life, and have accepted Eurocentrism as their measure of progress. Today the Eurocentric synthesis of ideas and values seems no longer able to offer a sure guide to human survival (Henderson and Battiste, 2000: 23).

Yet, there is hope and therefore the feasibility of change and adaptation to the local realities in order to seek solutions to the conundrums created by the still existing colonization.

What is the role of the interdisciplinary framework of the Discipline of Native Studies before the situation Indigenous peoples face? The first element to consider here arises from the assumption that Indigenous Studies is in fact a discipline. The very concept of 'Indigenous Studies' suggests analysis, investigation, history, review, deliberation and criticism: in short, research and methodologies which, by and large, have been done by external 'experts' for Indigenous peoples. Seen this way Native Studies connotes an interest from outside Indigenous populations to present to other outsiders how things function or do not, among these somewhat 'other' distant people. A swift survey of the published academic works used in Indigenous Studies curricula in Canada reveals that the great bulk of these works are researched and written by historians, anthropologists, educators, lawyers, geographers, sociologists,

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etc., some of whom may be Aboriginal by birth but none of whom use methodology or approach from anything other than a non-Aboriginal discipline. Blair Stonechild and Don McCaskill noted in 1987 that the historical origins of Indigenous Studies "lie in universities attempts to rectify past failures by establishing programs which would accurately reflect the Native experience in Canada and attract Native people into universities" (Stonechild and McCaskill, 1992: 2). The latter statement begs the question: was Indigenous Studies created to attract Native people to the established disciplines or was it created with a view to eventually becoming a discipline in its own right? Commenting on future developments for the discipline of Native Studies on the tenth anniversary of the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, Department Head Frank Tough observed:

It would seem illogical to accept the need for Native Studies at the University –in other words– a recognition that Native Studies is at the very least filling gaps left by the academy, if not seriously engaged in critical and corrective perspectives, but then insist that faculty, by default or through a lack of planning, should be recruited from other disciplines. Similarly, it would be hard to imagine today that any established discipline would accept a situation in which all of its core faculty obtained their academic qualifications in other disciplines (Tough, 1998: 60).

Perhaps an illustration would make the point more clearly. Would any college of engineering dare to offer to train engineers, with a faculty of mathematicians, physicists, chemists, sociologists, but not a single engineer? Such a college would be a laughing-stock, and no serious engineering student would register there. In other words, Tough is conclusively proposing that Indigenous Studies become a discipline in its own right, especially after thirty-one years of existence in Canada as a multidisciplinary mongrel.

Indigenous peoples are expecting and demanding full recognition. This recognition includes the right to Indigenous land, political and economic power, and public services such

as health, education, social and judicial substructures in harmony with specific needs and respectful of Indigenous culture. Today there is little doubt that Western history needs to be retold through the eyes of the colonized. This is one of the very reasons why Indigenous Studies came to be, in the late 1960's and early 1970's. But how is Indian/Native Studies as discipline going to develop if we use the paradigms, methodologies, tools, theories, and applications of non-Indigenous academia? How are we to educate Indigenous students if we continue to depend on the other disciplines while in practice negating our own? As the African/American poet Audre Lorde said: "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house". I strongly concur with Maori educator Linda Smith who stated that "Indigenous peoples represent the unfinished business of decolonization" (Smith, 1999: 7). My conviction is that a correctly-conceived and correctly implemented Indigenous Studies program would make possible great strides toward that decolonization; in fact this might well be the litmus test of such a program. Surely Indigenous Studies needs to address the situation of Indigenous peoples in terms of providing paradigms to solve the plight of Aboriginal people. Indigenous Studies cannot be just another academic discipline; it must defend the peoples it deals with.

The reality is that Indigenous Studies is still treated academically as something to be done for others. The approach of 'othering' is still prevalent in the very conceptualization of academia. Thus, we find Indigenous studies, Women's studies, Ethnic studies, Afro-American studies, and so on. The multi, or inter-disciplinary approach to these subjects can be construed as a manner in which to expand universal knowledge; yet, at the same time, it is a manner of keeping the subjects being studied marginalized from the 'real' disciplines such as history, geography, anthropology and sociology, for example. Academia has been based on assumptions, beliefs and notions of superiority, which acted and still do act to the detriment of Indigenous populations and other marginalized populations around the globe. Political, social and economic systems, based on those assumptions, have constantly put Indigenous populations, cultures and systems under permanent stress. Maori educator and researcher Linda Tuhiway Smith advocates that Indigenous Studies practitioners should look at Western research "through the eyes of the colonized". Tuhiway Smith also points out the pitfalls in discussing "research methodology and Indigenous peoples ... without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices" (*ibid.*: 2). Already in the late

sixties Brazilian educator Paulo Freire demonstrated that methods of oppression cannot serve the liberation of the oppressed (Freire, 1970 and 1996).

On the other hand, once Indigenous Studies truly becomes a discipline in its own right, an obvious area of focus should be the international field. The issues and tribulations of Indigenous peoples worldwide are rather similar. At present the planet is still undergoing a process of economic integration mostly based on the neo-liberal idea of 'globalization'. This integration demands, in certain ways, the establishment of a continental (if not global) discussion regarding not only economic matters, but also social, cultural, environmental, political, and spiritual matters, in order to address the multiple and compelling issues facing societies today such as:

- the enormous and constantly growing gap between rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor people within those countries;
- the degradation of the environment and loss of biodiversity;
- the destruction of cultural heterogeneity, especially the incessant attacks on Indigenous means of life and cultures mostly in the name of so-called economic development, but also by legislation, mass media invasion, religious sects or even drug cartels.

There is no doubt that there is a growing need to recognize Indigenous knowledge, autonomy and Indigenous participation, not only within the Nation-states Indigenous peoples find ourselves, but also in the different actions and forums in the international arena and, especially, to stress the need to pay attention to those aspects that continue to be a priority for our Peoples: land, territories, resources and autonomy or self-governance. Therefore, in Indigenous Studies as a discipline *and as a step contributing to decolonization*, we must acknowledge the significance of Indigenous knowledge. This is not to speak of tokenism; it is to speak of a genuine recognition of, and incorporation of, Indigenous knowledge. The very first priority of Indigenous Studies as an international field should be to establish an international discussion on ethical issues relating to land tenure and territories of Indigenous peoples. Among the most urgent are the issues surrounding the exploration for and extraction of natural resources and, in particular, investment and development activities known as mega-projects, or euphorically termed 'economic development'.

Indigenous Studies as an international field must cover a number of aspects which, in cases, are an expansion of Indigenous struggles within the nation-states' boundaries. One

of the most important issues is the aspect of political recognition. Indigenous Studies could and should provide the academic capacity and research to aid nation-states in their relations with and legal provisions for Indigenous peoples.

One of the major issues for Indigenous Studies is the advocacy for ethnic diversity within a state as a basic principle that contributes to the peaceful and harmonious development of human society. For Indigenous peoples this is inextricably connected with conservation of the environment and biological diversity. Ethnic diversity represents the interests of preserving and developing Indigenous cultures in accordance with Indigenous principles of living. This interest can also be understood in the text of

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numerous national and international agreements which can assist toward a better understanding of humanity regarding the importance of adopting strategies for the environment and learning respect for the fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples. Marie Battiste and James Henderson remind us that Indigenous peoples “were the unofficially colonized peoples of the world, the tragic victims of modernization and progress”, and they add: “In every state and educational system, we were underrepresented or, more often, ignored” (Battiste and Henderson, 2000: 2).

Ideally, traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples should become incorporated into the curriculum and daily life of countries with Indigenous populations. According to information from diverse international organizations, the world population of Indigenous peoples is approximately 500 million, which includes more than 4,500 different ethnicities that are distributed across Asia, Africa, America, the Arctic regions, and the Pacific Ocean. These data are estimates but they provide a general idea of the rich cultural diversity contained within the community of Indigenous peoples. At most, this wealth has been used as a considerable part of the resources that have enriched just a few. Invariably, whenever a part of the knowledge of Indigenous peoples has been converted

into knowledge that can be used to earn wealth, these benefits have not been returned for development to those who have generated the knowledge. In fact biopiracy is today so rampant that the very word has entered the common lexicon. As Battiste and Henderson state, “To exclude Indigenous peoples from the dialogue of culture, equity, and fairness is to further cognitive imperialism and systemic and direct discrimination—thus enlarging the pool of development’s victims” (*ibid.*: 17).

Indigenous Studies as an international field could play a crucial role in proposing a number of recommendations to nation-states as well as to the so-called international community, such as:

- a) respect the traditions and customs of Indigenous peoples in all development efforts;
- b) analyze the impacts of a project on the potentially affected community and involve the people in the assessment and decision making;
- c) use appropriate means of communication to inform Indigenous peoples about projects in their area;
- d) take into account the concerns

of ‘wise elders’, women, youth and children during decision making;

e) ensure national governments and local ministries help to protect the rights of the Indigenous peoples in their jurisdiction. This is essential for the continued survival of Indigenous peoples (ILO, 1989: 28).

Conclusion

Over the past five centuries, Indigenous peoples have proven how resilient they are. Yet, there is no doubt that these peoples do not wish to continue just ‘surviving’. They want to live a dignified and full life. This paper has contended that Indigenous peoples are still in a state of colonization under the existing nation-states in which they live. This paper has also contended that Indigenous Studies, as an academic discipline, has the responsibility of leading and accompanying the formal and complete de-colonization of Indigenous peoples in conjunction with Indigenous organizations and individuals.

To fail to do so is to become inescapably complicit with genocide. De-colonization is the only solution to stop the genocide against Indigenous peoples. Recalling the 1948 Convention on genocide we must point out that this is

considered a crime under international law. The convention states that the following acts are acts of genocide:

- (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (UN Resolution 260 AA (III), 1948).

As long as Indigenous peoples continue to face physical killings, systemic bodily or mental harm from nation-states, or any of the conditions listed in the Convention, they are not only still colonized but they are in fact being victims of genocide as condemned by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

Academia really does not have the luxury of choice. There is only one direction for Indigenous Studies to take, if the academy is not to yield up its aspirations to integrity and principle.

ergo

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