Discourses We Live By
Narratives of Educational and Social Endeavour

Edited by Hazel R. Wright and Marianne Høyen

What are the influences that govern how people view their worlds? What are the embedded values and practices that underpin the ways people think and act? Discourses We Live By approaches these questions through narrative research, in a process that uses words, images, activities or artefacts to ask people – either individually or collectively within social groupings – to examine, discuss, portray or otherwise make public their place in the world, their sense of belonging to (and identity within) the physical and cultural space they inhabit.

This book is a rich and multifaceted collection of twenty-eight chapters that use varied lenses to examine the discourses that shape people's lives. The contributors are themselves from many backgrounds – different academic disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, diverse professional practices and a range of countries and cultures. They represent a broad spectrum of age, status and outlook, and variously apply their research methods – but share a common interest in people, their lives, thoughts and actions. Gathering such eclectic experiences as those of student-teachers in Kenya, a released prisoner in Denmark, academics in Colombia, a group of migrants learning English, and gambling addiction support-workers in Italy, alongside more mainstream educational themes, the book presents a fascinating array of insights.

Discourses We Live By will be essential reading for adult educators and practitioners, those involved with educational and professional practice, narrative researchers, and many sociologists. It will appeal to all who want to know how narratives shape the way we live and the way we talk about our lives.

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21. Decolonizing and Indigenizing Discourses in a Canadian Context

Adrienne S. Chan

Adrienne S. Chan describes her role, when working in Canada, to embed decolonized perspectives and better include Indigenous peoples within community. The funded study uses collaborative ventures to facilitate greater awareness of assumptions and difference and promote greater cultural awareness between groups and within institutions.

In Canada, we have been engaged in a discourse of ‘indigenizing’ as a means of addressing our work and relations with Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, or the First Peoples of Canada. In particular, many educational institutions have taken up the discourse of indigenizing as a part of their mandate. In this chapter, I describe the ways in which the discourse is complex, and the approaches taken by a research team to begin to address some elements of decolonization and indigenization. At the core of the discussion and debates are the ways in which individuals and groups have divergent ways of speaking about these contested and binary discourses.

Indigenizing is a process of prioritizing the social and cultural contexts of Indigenous peoples into curriculum, practices (Yishak & Gumbo, 2015), structure, and everyday discourses (Van Wyk, 2002), particularly in a country which is immigrant settler based. Indigenization may also refer to Aboriginal peoples with reference to other countries such as, South Africa; and ‘Africanization’ with respect to the curriculum and to promote culture (Obanya, 1999). Our project can be viewed as an ‘indigenous project’ (Smith, 2012, p. 147), one which centres identity
and cultural action with Indigenous peoples. Indigenization is therefore considered within a post-colonial context (Findlay, 2000) and, in an educational context, challenges accepted dominant knowledge and discourses (Todorova, 2016).

Decolonization is ‘a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels’ (Smith, 2012, p. 21). It invokes an examination of hegemony, our participation in colonialism as immigrants and settlers, and the dissolution of traditional forms of institutional power. For Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, I suggest it is a troubling discourse that often examines a painful, colonized history. For educational institutions, decolonization is particularly complex and problematic since it challenges the way in which we teach, conduct research, and relate to each other as colleagues and with students. Decolonizing research requires a shift from the power of the researcher to the self-determination (Smith, 2012) of the communities in which research is conducted. It is a term that is used in examining empire (Pollath, 2018) and, while institutions are not empires, they do represent a political realm that can challenge the sovereignty of administrations and suggest returning governance to peoples who were subjects of colonization (Crossen, 2017).

As a concept, decolonization, has been present in my work for several decades; ever since my doctoral studies when I engaged in narratives with Indigenous women, who worked as advisors and counsellors in the university system, and their stories. Smith (2012) influenced my work and my thinking about decolonization research, which is critical to my examination of self as a non-Indigenous person who is a Canadian as a result of migration. The narratives of my research were also part of my examination of my own relationship with Indigeneity. The theme of colonization was a strand that wove through the narratives of my work and signalled the complex and historical nature of the past, which was still a part of the present in the everyday workings of the women and in their positions in the university. Decolonization can be, in and of itself, a concept that is difficult for settlers to examine. I use the term settlers, as, due to its colonial past, Canada is viewed as a settler nation, a country of immigrants. Moreover, the hegemony of colonization has given Canada a legacy of genocide and a host of economic, political, health, and social issues.
In recent years, there have been numerous initiatives putting indigenization at the centre of change, and as a contrasting, but potentially corresponding, approach to the legacy of colonialism. Some of these discussions have compelled academics and communities to begin and continue to grapple with the ideals and notions of decolonization for it requires an adherence to certain understandings of the impact of colonialism. Taiaiake Alfred describes colonialism as:

...best conceptualized as an irresistible outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation — a disconnection from land, culture, and community — that has resulted in political chaos and social discord. (Alfred, 2009, p. 52)

From the age of Empire, we have been subject to colonialism, dispossession, and colonial legacies.

Background

There are two foundational documents that provide context for indigenization and decolonization: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report (Canada, Erasmus & Dussault, 1996) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (TRC, 2015). Both documents refer to the tragic history of Canadian treatment of Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report was one of the pivotal documents broadly circulated to bring historical and contemporary issues to the attention of the Canadian public and into the Canadian education system, and thus required some sectors to attend to the effects of colonialism. There were many levels of Canadian government, and requisite bureaucracies that had, to this point, been allowed to avoid, obfuscate, and ignore, the need to address the impact of colonialism and bring forward a decolonization agenda. The Commission report is important in terms of timeline and provides a context of the work Canada has, and has not, completed in over two decades.

This Royal Commission began their work in 1991, and held 178 days of public hearings, visited 96 communities, consulted many experts, commissioned multiple research studies, and reviewed numerous past inquiries and reports. The Commission stated that Canada is a country
that stands for ‘peace, harmony, and justice’, and that the policy of assimilation had violated these central tenets. The Commission also asserted that we must continue to pursue justice to address the historical injustice and genocide. Aboriginal peoples had limited life chances; their lives were compromised by a history that continues to result in a lower life expectancy, more illness, human, health, and social issues are common (e.g., family dysfunction, alcohol abuse, poor water and sanitation systems, poverty). Aboriginal peoples have had a lower rate of high school completion, and of adults attending colleges and universities. There was and continues to be an over-representation in the child welfare and prison systems of Aboriginal peoples.

The efforts of decolonization can be significant when justice is a fundamental value behind the work. Thus, the history of colonization and the work of decolonization are tied to the examination of the power of the colonizer and the legacy of that power, in which we are still entrenched. Park (2015, p. 21) argues that within ‘the context of settler colonialism, the goal of transitional justice must be decolonisation’. The history of settler colonialism was consistent with assimilation and the elimination of Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, their culture and practices. Park further argues that transitional justice includes the grieving of the deaths of Indigenous peoples, and to do this means to mobilize politically. Death and genocide are political events that cannot be ignored. Corntassel and Bryce (2012) make a case that decolonization and restitution are inextricably linked. It is therefore necessary for us to take up the decolonization project and consider compensation as a necessary part of transformation. This engagement requires recognition from the state and state systems that support national goals and policies.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015) reported nineteen years after the Royal Commission. Like the Royal Commission work, the process of the TRC involved hosting national events, gathering documents and statements about residential schools and their legacy, funding truth and reconciliation events at the community level, recommending commemoration initiatives to the federal government for funding, establishing a research centre for records and documents, and submitting a report with recommendations. The Commission received over 6,750 statements from survivors of residential schools,¹ members

¹ Residential schools became policy in 1876, whereby thousands of children were taken from their homes and separated from their parents and families for long
of their families, and other individuals who shared their knowledge of the residential school system and its legacy (2015, 26). The Commission report made 94 recommendations as Calls to Action. These focused on numerous areas including child welfare, education, language, health, justice, reconciliation, settlement agreements, and apologies. At the core of the TRC Report is the necessity to act in the name of justice and equity. While both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Royal Commission emphasize colonialism and decolonization, little reference is made to ‘indigenization’, although it may be implied.

Indigenization can be described as the process of infusing Aboriginal/Indigenous knowledge and perspective into the structural layers of an institution (Camosun College, 2019). This means that Indigenous knowledge is not marginal but central to the work of the institution. Indigenization may take a culturalist perspective, where the multiple cultures, languages, broader worldviews and practices are its main focus. For some proponents, indigenization is seen as less political than decolonization. For others, indigenization and decolonization are part of the same political and educational project. The work of indigenization has been established within a wider move to indigenize the academy, addressing the curriculum, courses, pedagogy, hiring practices, the physical spaces on campus, resources, research activity, to centre Indigenous practices more assertively in the university, and recruit and sustain Indigenous or Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. A Canadian publication, University Affairs, noted: ‘some universities had already recognized a need to put Indigenous cultures, histories, languages and knowledge on a new footing within the academy,’ and ‘in the end, indigenization is not a series of tickable boxes, but a process moving at a different pace in each community that has taken it up’ (MacDonald, 2016).

Indigenization plans and strategies are taken up within an inclusive framework for the academy—a worthy approach, although not without contentious aspects. Inclusion in the university system has had historical challenges with regard to the culture of the institution (Chan, 2005). Institutional culture is a complex system of values and periods of time. The schools were established for the purpose of eliminating culture and language, as a part of Canada’s policy of assimilation. Many students were abused physically, mentally, and sexually while in the schools. The last residential schools closed in the 1960s.
behaviours, thereby making any changes multi-layered and difficult. Culture shifts in any institution are difficult and political, requiring an examination of the values and assumptions within the institution (Schein, 1997), and may be strongly contested (Suransky & van der Merwe, 2016). While there is no universal agreement, indigenization generally seeks to create a new culture within the academy. This culture fosters understanding and promotes content that is based on history, heritage, and cultural pedagogy. In this new culture, there is a recognition of the centrality of Indigenous curricula and content for and with Indigenous peoples — thereby suggesting that all Canadian students should engage in awareness of Indigeneity. One of the goals of indigenization in universities is the aspiration to be more productive in supporting Indigenous students to succeed. To achieve this, universities need to create an academy that values and embraces our Indigenous peoples and recognizes that many of us live and work on the unceded territories of Indigenous peoples. This process therefore requires a shift in institutional culture; a central step to achieving indigenization. Universities are required to engage in transformational work in order to achieve indigenization, to set goals to create and foster a new, shared value system. A move away from individual or small group values to shared ones will be of wider benefit to the institution (Adams, Martin, & Boom, 2018), but such change requires a willingness to deal with difficult issues and controversies.

In my own work, the tension between decolonization and indigenization is relevant and pronounced. Decolonization and indigenization are both personal and institutional. It has become essential to me as a non-Indigenous person who works in the academy and in the community that I focus on both processes and examine both discourses. This work includes engaging with others to create a movement of culture change. If we do not examine both discourses, we are at risk of only seeing one perspective, of lacking the fuller spectrum and contexts of how to succeed. I suggest that this view is similar to the debates that surround multiculturalism and anti-racism. Multicultural approaches have tended to engage in a pluralistic and cultural approach, ‘Critical multiculturalism’ has been more political, and anti-racism engages in cultural debates and the discourses of power. In my work, I believe it is necessary to engage with the discourses of
power and the hegemony that have created inequality, marginalization, and resistance (Chan, Dhamoon, & Moy, 2014). We engage with the uses of power in the curriculum, the classroom, and in the institution as we all play a role in this power dynamic, whether it is acknowledged or not. Foucault (1980), as we know, asserts that power is a circulating force that exists in all of the corridors of our mind, thought, and in our everyday interactions.

The relationship between decolonization and indigenization is complex. There are many principles that educators subscribe to that are more difficult to adhere to. Siu, Desai, and Ritskes (2012, p.ii), for example, suggest: ‘Decolonization does not exist without a framework that centers and privileges Indigenous life, community and epistemology’. In my own university, there are articulated goals for meaningful collaboration, dialogue, engagement; to increase capacity; to create a culturally safe environment and develop responsive programs. (UFV, Indigenizing the Academy, 2012). While these goals are embraced, there has been less discussion of decolonization within this framework. Notably, many of us will assert that decolonization is pivotal to the success of indigenization.

The Study

The purpose of our research and our research team was to build resilience among Aboriginal youth as a means of suicide prevention, by engaging in activities focused on their association with the land and cultural identity. Building resilience was identified within the context of understanding the nature of strength and capacity, and connection to the land. The idea of place (i.e., the land) and belonging is considered key to identity within Indigenous cultures (Neville et al, 2014; writing on Australia). A good deal of research indicates that the community, the family and individual resiliency are protective measures against suicide (Dion Stout & Kipling, 2010; Kirmayer et al., 2011).

The research objectives were to develop an Indigenized research process; to create a knowledge library (sítel-basket) of First Nations or Indigenous land-based resiliency; and to develop and support a youth resilience strategy in collaboration with Seabird Island Band. Seabird Island is a recognized band within the context of First Nations. It is located in Agassiz, British Columbia, Canada, is situated on the unceded
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territory of the Stó:lō peoples, and has a self-governance system under an elected Chief and Council, its own school, services, and health unit.

The research objectives were developed through a lengthy consultative and collaborative process; the people in the Band were engaged in the discussions from the time the team was conceiving designs for the project. Thus, resiliency is something that we wanted to identify and build from. As a researcher working in the academy, this also brings the work I am doing into the university discussions and debates — an essential element to ground the university in the reality of community work. The research team was committed to the research being community based and community driven.

In our research we initially used the term First Nations but later preferred Indigenous. First Nations is a term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are neither Métis nor Inuit. Aboriginal is broader, referring to the first inhabitants of Canada: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Indigenous is a term used to encompass a variety of Aboriginal groups. It is most frequently used in an international, transnational, or global context. Indigenous peoples can be used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands, ones who have been affected negatively by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by other peoples (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc, n.d.). Aboriginal and Indigenous are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this chapter, the term Indigenous will refer more specifically to aspects of identity and culture.

The process of the research was developed in an organic way because of the nature of the relationships with the community, but with the key goal focus on suicide prevention at the primary level. The work with the Band, the Elders, and the Band youth workers at the site of the community were pivotal, necessary, and always acknowledged. Permission was given, by the Chief, the Band, and their own research council, for us to work on this project with and for them. We worked with the Band to develop a Guiding Group, comprised of Elders, community members, and a youth worker. The Group provided essential direction and feedback. This meant that at any given point, our activities might change to ensure participation and understanding, and that the research would be community- rather than researcher-driven.
Funding constraints required that at least two researchers came from the University: one named as the principal investigator and one to be an emerging scholar. In order to be true to the community and to the values behind Indigenous research, our team was comprised of two researchers who were Indigenous, paired with two researchers who were not Indigenous. Thus, one of the community researchers and one of the university researchers were Indigenous and I was one of the non-Indigenous researchers. This partnership gave us a strong working relationship with four primary investigators as researchers. It forged new relationships for us that provided us with remarkable insights and collective thinking. The idea of working in this collaborative way is part of two-eyed seeing (Martin, 2012), which allows us to benefit from two worldviews (two pairs of eyes) and does not privilege Western perspectives.

Our work as researchers is historicized by trauma, pain, and the weakened social and economic fabric of these Indigenous communities. Suicide is acknowledged as one of the results of the devastation of Indigenous communities (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1995). This context has set the stage for suicide and related mental health challenges in our communities. Acknowledging trauma and the legacy of colonialism, our team worked with community partners with a focus on the prevention of harm. The cultural narratives of Indigenous peoples were, and are, paramount to working with communities. We believe that the stories of the people were instrumental in reshaping lives and futures, important as youth suicides were a regular occurrence. The precepts of primary prevention are to engage in healthy work with the youth so our objectives were focused on building (potentially reconnecting) identity, reclaiming culture, and engaging in activities and dialogue that promoted healthy ways of being, through a number of activities: our work as a team; the processes, struggles, and discussions we had about decolonization and indigenizing; working with the Band; engaging in activities with youth.

All of these activities would be documented through field notes, minutes, and recordings. The documentation with youth would mainly occur in stories that the youth could tell, but also documentation of the experiences on the land (e.g., video, audio). Focus groups and community consultations were a part of the data collection process,
but we did not use these terms, as they are antithetical to Indigenous processes and research. The privileging of language, how we named things and how we discussed them, was all part of our learning and developing work.

At an early stage in the research, I became aware of the tension between decolonization and indigenization. Indigenous Research Methods (IRM) require a commitment to decolonization, to doing no further colonial harm, and strengthening Indigenous ways of knowing. Our methodology was to be guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and principles. IRM refer to principles that privilege a worldview consistent with Indigenous knowledge and writings. One of our goals was to indigenize the team, and our methodology required that we should not privilege the objectives of the work over the needs of the peoples we were working with. The premise was that while we were conducting research and had research goals, our work with people was paramount and took primacy. The relational process was key to our work and needed us to have an understanding of the nature of the complexities we were drawn to.

With my team members, I became responsive and respectful to the project — never forgetting four Indigenous principles that we drew from and committed to: friends working together; reciprocity; everything is connected — land, air, water, fire, spirit, creatures; and ‘looking back is looking forward’. The principles were developed in consultation with Elders on our research team. We returned to the principles regularly to remind ourselves of the commitments we had made. Elders, youth, and youth workers were engaged as part of the research team. This was one small step to the decolonization and indigenization process. Central to the team was the issue of having voice at all levels of the research, including individuals who had been rendered voiceless by history. Our research team meetings were always evolving. Agendas for meetings had to change as issues arose, and we had to respect the developing nature of the work. The core research team members were consistently present, but some members moved away from the team. When new members joined, we revisited the principles and process that we were engaged in; it was a recursive, reflective process.

My own position as part of the academy, and as a non-Indigenous person was one of tension: I claim my racial heritage as Chinese,
which I believe provides me with some understanding. I have my own experiences of colonialism and racism as a third generation Canadian. Nonetheless, I was challenged to see myself through the eyes of others many times. This necessitated an understanding that being part of the academy meant being a part of the institutional problem of colonization. This issue would arise repeatedly during the course of the research. I was challenged to consider my role as a researcher, to be true to the principles of the work, and continuously reflect on my words and actions as a non-Indigenous person. Such tensions and challenges were part of the lived experiences within the research project and continue to inform my work in the university.

Centrality or Things Falling Apart

I offer two examples that represent different themes in my work: ‘Learning about decolonization methodology and Indigenous Research Methods’; and ‘The warrior and the outsider’. These are considered before discussing attempts to achieve a decolonized mind (wa Thion’o, 1986).

**Learning About Decolonizing and Indigenous Research Methods**

In order to ground ourselves in decolonizing methodology and Indigenous Research Methods, we had a facilitator, external to the team, work with us in order to begin working through the issues of decolonizing, indigenizing, and challenging our assumptions. From the beginning of our work, all of our meetings took place at Stó:lō Nation (Chilliwack, BC), either in the Elders meeting room, or in the Gathering Place. We would sit in a circle, and we would begin with an acknowledgment of the land and territory. To acknowledge the place and space, is to be grounded in knowing where we are, how we come to be on this land, and how we come to be engaged in this work, and in the gathering of partners and collaborators. The facilitator worked with us for two days in the Gathering Place. On the first day we spent together in workshop, we were asked to unpack the notions of research and what we know. Researchers in our team, Elders, students, and witnesses participated in the sessions. Within Indigenous cultures and practices,
it is common to have witnesses observe and participate in sessions and provide us with feedback at the end of the day. The two days allowed us to continue our process of building trust and sharing our experiences. There were concerns that this process should not recolonize people; that self-determination, resilience, and healing are all part of the work we must be engaged in.

It was late in the morning of the first day when discussions took place that acknowledged that indigenizing could not take place without decolonization. An example of this was the notion of a knowledge basket (sitel-basket). We came into the research believing that we had to find and fill a knowledge basket. As discussions moved forward, we were asked to consider that we each already had a basket, and some elements of knowledge in our basket. In particular, Indigenous members of our team would have special knowledge, but certainly all of us had something. This salient point underlined how we had been unaware of our own knowledge, stemming from the colonial past. This was particularly important for some Indigenous participants in the workshop, who had historically been told that their knowledge did not count because, as Foucault (1980) claims, recognized knowledge is part of the power-knowledge nexus (Foucault, 1980) and central to our epistemological beliefs. In future meetings, we came to better understand the role of the knowledge-keepers: the community members and Elders, part of the process of decolonization.

It is within the power-knowledge nexus that one of the frictions lies between decolonization and indigenization. While decolonization and indigenization are not binary, they can be seen as separate. The idea of indigenizing ourselves as researchers requires us to examine our place in the colonialism spectrum. Corntassel and Bryce (2012) suggest that decolonization and restitution are elements of the transformation of our relationships with Indigenous peoples. This can only be achieved if we acknowledge our actions, goals, and relationships. Our research had the potential to transform our relationships and play a significant role in decolonizing by virtue of acknowledging Indigenous knowledge. This was, and is, a personal journey that must be taken with intention and with relationships. The process of building the research team required us to be reflective of what we know and what we think constitutes knowledge.
The Warrior and the Outsider

As a non-Indigenous person, I may be viewed as an outsider and part of the colonizing discourse. The notion of outsider was strongly felt in the decolonizing and Indigenous Research Methodology workshop, where I was accused (I do not use this word lightly), of being part of the establishment of colonialism and therefore unable to participate in the work of decolonization as long as I worked in a university. The person who challenged me in this way was a self-proclaimed warrior. In the moments when I was blamed as a colonizing agent, I understood the pain of being isolated. I could never know what the warrior thought or felt, I only heard the words. The sting of the lashing directed at me evoked a defensive position on my part. This took some time for me to understand and absorb. At the end of the day I had to debrief and reflect, at length, with one of my fellow researchers. My commitment to a decolonizing discourse calmed me, but my feelings of being attacked complicated my ability to move forward at the time. Ultimately this exchange helped me consider whether or not I can work with Indigenous peoples as someone who is inside the university. It also reaffirmed the need to examine my part in the colonial past and present. My reflections gave me a pause to return to a belief that it is possible for me to be an ally, a collaborator, without being from the nation or race, and without myself being a warrior. These types of questions and self-examination are an important and necessary part of working in Indigenous community-based research.

Indigenous people often use the term: ‘all my relations’, for as Wilson (2008) states, relationships do not merely shape reality, they are the reality of Indigenous life and Indigenous research. For Wilson, Indigenous epistemology is the formation of ideas through relations. In the moments of exchange I experienced with the warrior, however threatened I felt, he was telling me something about relations. It was important for me to understand the nature of relationships with Indigenous peoples in more than one way. After two days in the workshop, I felt that the warrior’s position was less strident towards me, although this was never directly stated. He was at the workshop to learn as well, and to examine decolonization. Perhaps we had, in a microscopic way, begun to build a relationship.
Being an ally is a possible strategy to link decolonization to indigenization. As with culture change, becoming an ally is linked to values and reflective examination (Chung, 2016). Becoming an ally also requires a fundamental belief that people who do not have the same experiences can support us and our work. In this way, it is possible that White people can be allies in working with people of colour in the work of anti-racism and anti-oppression. Similarly, I argue that there is room for non-Indigenous people to be allies with Indigenous peoples — but not always. Kowal (2015, p. 95) suggests that it is possible for White people who are anti-racists to work with Indigenous peoples and they can come to understand the generational trauma that is part of the legacy of colonization and racism.

The path to collaboration can be disturbing, just as the journey to decolonization has its difficulties. The research required an examination of my role with the team. I offered to withdraw from the project if my co-researchers thought there was no place for me. This was explicitly discussed at a team meeting. The feelings and thoughts that arose out of the incident with the warrior will not be forgotten. I imagine I represented many things to him, and perhaps he did not even ‘see me’ for who I was. However, the ability to decolonize is a high ideal. In retrospect, I believe the warrior was true to his beliefs through his own work. I continue to work with the research team and they have affirmed my participation.

The conceptions of warrior, outsider, and allies are pertinent to indigenizing and decolonizing work within the university. Within an established institutional culture, change will require an examination of insiders and outsiders, who is willing to leave and who stays, and who advocates for change, as well as a consideration of values and behaviours. Allies must be cognizant of power and be aware of who have a voice and are heard. All of these elements are part of the commitment to indigenization and decolonization.

Decolonizing the Mind

Language is tied to land through story. Strength [is there] when learning language and strength for ancestors, too. (Youth participant, N21L)
In his seminal work on decolonizing the mind, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1996), makes a compelling argument about language and culture. Ngũgĩ contends that language is both an instrument for empire-building as well as a potential counter narrative and tool of resistance for those who have been colonized. As part of our research, we spent much time seeking the words and phrases in Halq’emeylem, which is the language of the Stó:lō peoples. This was done and normalized, in order to respect and acknowledge the powerful role of language as it forms an important part of identity. At the beginning of the research team meetings we began with a Halq’emeylem prayer (i.e., acknowledgement) that came from the Elders, important as language is symbolic. Although only a part of the work, it is representative of what the colonizers stole from a generation of peoples through assimilation. The act of using Halq’emeylem words can indeed be an act of defiance, and respect. Indeed, our work with youth referenced the use of language, and re-learning the traditional language.

As with language, place (i.e., the land) and belonging are considered key to identity (Neville, Oyama, Odunewu, & Huggins, 2014). For this work, the research was place-based and on the land: we worked with the youth in their territory. There was never a question about where the meetings or the work would take place; it was always at a Stó:lō meeting place or on the territory of the Band. This can be interpreted as decolonizing because of the power based in the territory. It can also be interpreted as indigenizing by placing the Stó:lō peoples and their culture at the centre of the work.

The nature of academic work is often situated in the university, and the requirement to reach out to Indigenous peoples was fundamental to our success. In our research and work with Indigenous communities, we rarely asked Elders to come to us. As much as possible, we went to their sites, and paid them the respect that was their due. However, there is a potential contradiction for the academy. The university acknowledges the land and that it is unceded territory. Nevertheless, the university is situated on that land. In the work of committees and curriculum, there is sometimes an expectation that Elders are to come to the university. This remains an unresolved tension between the ideals of decolonization and indigenization.
Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have argued and put forward challenging ideas that have been part of my epistemological and personal evolution about decolonization and indigenizing. Acknowledging the colonial past is part of a step to creating a change in our work with and for Indigenous peoples. To be of value, such decolonization work must be accepted by non-Indigenous people and a trajectory established that we work towards, as allies. Research can create such alliances. I acknowledge that a good deal of our discourse in the research focused on decolonization rather than indigenization because the power-knowledge relationship continues to be at the centre of the work. Orientalism (Said, 1978) made it possible to see and to treat peoples who were not Western as ‘other’. Decolonizing and indigenizing research means acknowledging the possibility of othering — and working to prevent the objectification of people and their knowledge. This principle is the place where researchers have the opportunity to build relations and act in respectful or reciprocal ways. The dimensions of power in the Western nations made orientalism possible, and it is therefore important to recognize the role of power in domination and othering. As an academic, someone who is engaged in knowledge, I have learned from these relationships. I am responsible for acknowledging power and the place of power in the research. Indigenous Research Methods attempts to address this responsibility but indigenizing as a broad activity has much work to do. The power of language, knowledge, how we name ideas and concepts and how we discuss them continues to be a necessary part of our work, within the research, with the community, and with the university.

In examining and attempting to address colonialism and the legacy it has left, Corntassel and Bryce (2003) suggest that the discourse of Indigenous rights has its limits. Seeking to recover the land and some form of justice is only part of the struggle. As Park (2015) claims structural justice must occur before we can achieve decolonization. We must address systems, policies, and land claims, and make fundamental shifts in ways of thinking: decolonizing thought.

The work of this research is both personal and social (Evans, 1993). It is also institutional and gives us pause to think about how we can indigenize our university. Indigenous ways of knowing and
Decolonizing knowledge are central to the work of indigenizing. I continue to contend that indigenizing cannot take place without decolonization. In indigenizing our research methods, we must take into account decolonization and the elements of power that exists in the research relationship. If those who work towards indigenization accept and understand the role of place and power, then it may not be necessary to use the word decolonization but this must remain at the heart of indigenizing work. Indigenization in isolation is unlikely to succeed.

While focusing on Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, this chapter has implications for researchers working with other marginalized groups and communities. The history, oppression and continued marginalization of Indigenous peoples are key elements to our work and the recognition that we live in the present day through the context of our history. The context of our history shapes how we tell our stories and the ways in which we communicate with each other. From my experience and vantage point, Indigenous peoples have much to teach us about community, valuing Elders and family, and how to listen to each other. The unrecognized elements of our own colonization, and the colonization of other peoples, are also ever-present social and political forces in this work.

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References


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