Indigenizing the Academy: An institutional case study of one university

Maura Hanrahan

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Abstract: This article explains the process through which Memorial University has been Indigenizing the academy since the establishment of the Presidential Task Force on Aboriginal Initiatives and the Task Force's 2009 report. It begins with a brief overview of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq history, the purpose of which is to contextualize the Task Force, to describe the political, historical, and cultural environment into which it emerged and operated. The article concludes with some best practices identified through the implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

When I was a school child in the 1970s we were taught that there were no "Indians" left in Newfoundland; they had all been killed off by the Mi'kmaq who had been brought over by the French from Nova Scotia for just that purpose. We learned that a few settlers, such as the Peytons of Twillingate, Newfoundland, played a role in this enterprise but it was chiefly the Mi'kmaq who were culpable. The "Mi'kmaq mercenary myth," as Jerry Wetzel (1999) calls it, is baseless. Yet the Mi'kmaq mercenary myth is embedded in Newfoundland culture and it is central to the conventional view of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland[17]: that the Mi'kmaq are imported newcomers and not native to the land[18]. Perhaps schoolchildren are no longer taught that the Mi'kmaq killed off the Beothuk but it is still the Beothuk, not the Mi'kmaq, who are regarded as Newfoundland's legitimate Indigenous people. This conventional wisdom offers the settler regime – the provincial government – political advantages; by positioning the Mi'kmaq as immigrants to the island, the settlers become the true inheritors or owners of the land[19]. In contrast to the living Indigenous peoples of the province, the Beothuk have never and will never file a land claim or cause inconvenience and business disruptions by occupying a hydro-electric development construction site; they pose no threat to the political order.

Mi'kmaq History in Newfoundland

Before the arrival of Europeans, Mi'kmaq and Beothuk called the island of Newfoundland home. For the Mi'kmaq, the island was Ktagamakuk, part of the "foggy district." To their kin to the west, in what is now the Maritimes, Quebec, and Maine, the Mi'kmaq were "the ancients." This might have been a reference to the long tenure of the Mi'kmaq on the island. They practiced seasonal transhumance – moving with the seasons to take advantage of available resources, such as wood and fish. So they might spend winters in the woods near Red Indian Lake in the interior of the island and then gather at Conne River on the South Coast for salmon fishing – and trading and match-making – early in the summer.

---

[17] Some of it was reiterated on a CBC NL radio phone-in show on May 28, 2013 as Ingeborg Marshall disputed the Mi'kmaq contention that they did not have guns during the Beothuk decline and emphasized violence between the two peoples. Citing one Mi'kmaq story, Marshall makes the mistake of ignoring the vast rest of Mi'kmaq oral history.

[18] In the same radio program, Marshall also suggested that the Mi'kmaq came later to the island and pushed the Beothuk out of certain territories on the island.

[19] When I worked with the Quebec Mi'kmaq on their land claim, we were forced to argue against the separatist Quebec government position that the Mi'kmaq had come over from neighbouring New Brunswick. Put forward by nationalist *pure laine* officials in the Quebec government, this viewpoint also positioned Mi'kmaq as immigrants who lacked Indigenous rights to the land.

They also visited extended family and political allies in nearby Cape Breton or the Magdalen Islands, sailing to these places in birch bark canoes. Their economic adaptations and land-use patterns did not include year-round residences in single locales, the dominant European practice. Their residence patterns and the absence of land ownership concepts, and those of Indigenous peoples globally, have led non-Indigenous people to conclude that the land was empty: *terra nullius*, a misinterpretation that became enshrined in law. But Mi'kmaq land extended for hundreds of miles into the Gaspé Peninsula and south through what is now the state of Maine and, while certain groups of Mi'kmaq were associated with particular territories, such as Ktagamakuk, movement was central to their culture and survival. In the words of anthropologist Charles Martijn (1989), Newfoundland was part of the Mi'kmaq "domain of islands."

According to Mi'kmaq history, which is oral rather than written, there was intermarriage as well as the occasional skirmish with the Beothuk. The intermarriage would have been normal and pragmatic for small groups adjacent to each other whose territories probably overlapped. Exogenous marriage would have been necessary for group survival and health as well as political and economic alliances. Santu, who had a Beothuk father and a Mi'kmaq mother and lived into the twentieth century, sang a Beothuk song for anthropologist Frank Speck in 1910, providing a late example of Beothuk-Mi'kmaq intermarriage – and positive relations. There may well be Beothuk blood running through the veins of some Mi'kmaq and possibly other Newfoundlanders, as is frequently claimed, but, as a cultural entity, the Beothuk no longer exist. Theirs was the fate of many Indigenous nations in the Americas; for instance, 24 small nations died out on the Northeastern Seaboard of the United States (Benson, 2000). The Beothuk met their demise because of violent encounters with settlers who were seeking revenge for the Indigenous people's resistance to the theft of their land. They also fell prey to tuberculosis, the foreign disease that lay claim to Shanawdithit, the young woman who was kidnapped by settlers and is known and romanticized as the last of the Beothuk[20]. The impact of the loss of access to the coast and its abundant food sources, such as mussels and salmon, must not be underestimated; increasingly, the Beothuk began to suffer from hunger and malnutrition, which weakened their constitutions and resistance to European diseases. Interestingly, the Mi'kmaq hold that Sylvester Joe, the Mi'kmaq guide who took William Epps Cormack across the island to find any remaining Beothuk, actually made sure to avoid Beothuk encampments; Joe protected the Beothuk, as experience had demonstrated that further contact with Europeans would do the survivors no good.

In his paper, Rainer Baehre traces the contributions of scholars, especially those at Memorial's Grenfell Campus, to researching Mi'kmaq history. Baehre cites valuable work but much remains to be written. There is a plethora of work on the Beothuk (e.g. Hewson, 1975; Holly, 2003, 2000, 1980; Marshall, 1996, 1989, 1988, 1981; Pastore, 1993, 1992, 1989, 1987; Such, 1978; Winter, 1975), who are, perhaps not surprisingly, romanticized in popular song and the visual art of Newfoundland. Meanwhile, this friendly view does not extend to the Mi'kmaq; over the years I have been told stories of woods companies in Central Newfoundland forcing Mi'kmaq workers to eat their lunch outside, even in the coldest weather; they were not welcome in the warm lunchroom. In Corner Brook, it is said that the pulp and paper company refused to hire Mi'kmaq men. In a coping mechanism that Indigenous and other racialized people all over North America adopt, Mi'kmaq tried to blend in. Mothers told their children not to tell

[20] At the millennium *Telegram* readers voted her the most notable Aboriginal person in the province's history. After celebrated artist Gerry Squires saw a vision of Shanawdithit in the Central Newfoundland woods, the provincial government funded a statue in her honour

their teachers of their origins. Men who needed work hid who they were. It became easier to do this as intermarriage with the descendants of settlers escalated and the Mi'kmaq phenotype became less common. In the urban areas in particular, notably Corner Brook, many Mi'kmaq suffered a great deal of cultural loss. Largely because of the school system, the Mi'kmaq language disappeared. But other families, especially those in rural communities on Newfoundland's West Coast, such as Flat Bay and St. George's, retained elements of Mi'kmaq culture and continued to identify and be identified as Mi'kmaq. Elsewhere, Mi'kmaq families knowingly and unknowingly passed on Mi'kmaq culture to their children.

When Newfoundland became Canada's tenth province in 1949, the *Indian Act* was not applied (Hanrahan, 2003); the *Act* is a deeply flawed colonial document but there was no valid reason it should not have applied in Newfoundland as it was in other provinces; the government's motives for not doing so are suspect, as Wetzel (1999) has explored elsewhere, and reflect a policy thrust toward assimilation. The absence of the *Indian Act* bestowed certain advantages on the Mi'kmaq (and the Innu) but it also meant that their Indigenous rights were not recognized[21]. The Federation of Newfoundland Indians was established in the 1970s, alongside the Labrador Inuit Association, as we saw in Amarjit Singh's piece, as were parallel Indigenous political organizations across Canada, largely in response to Ottawa's 1969 pro-assimilation *White Paper* and *Citizens Plus*, known as "the Red Paper," published in 1970 by the Indian Association of Alberta under Harold Cardinal's leadership. It was not until 1984 that the Mi'kmaq of Conne River were registered as Indians under the *Indian Act*, achieving the recognition for which the province's First Nations had long fought (Hanrahan, 2003). It was expected that the recognition of other Mi'kmaq communities would follow in short order but this did not happen until, after a decades-long campaign, the landless Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band was created in 2011. The subsequent history of the Qalipu band is beyond the purview of this paper but it must be stated that, mainly because of the federal government's changing regulations about membership, what was once an occasion for celebration is now largely a source of division and controversy with an uncertain outcome.

Here I am delving into the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq story because, like certain other Newfoundland stories, it is my own. One happy outcome of the formation of Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation was that, for perhaps the first time since colonization, people of Mi'kmaq descent felt free to publicly assert their identity. The Innu, the Nunatsiavut Inuit, and the Southern Inuit have their own stories, all replete with active ongoing attempts to minimize and even deny their Indigenous rights. For instance, the Southern Inuit land claim has not yet been accepted for negotiation, despite a wealth of archaeological, historical, and anthropological evidence and repeated government assurances that this land claim would be dealt with. Meanwhile, there is a stream of media reports focusing on the social pathologies that erupt in the Innu communities of Natuashish and Sheshatshiu, with rare attempts to contextualize these pathologies (Claxton-Oldfield and Keefe, 1999).

The academy

Unless it makes a concerted effort to do otherwise, the academy is automatically part of the ongoing colonial project; rooted in Western values, traditions and practices and peopled by the descendants of settlers (Kuokkanen, 2007), it cannot be otherwise. We – and here I am speaking as a member of the academy – rarely acknowledge, let alone value Indigenous pedagogies and epistemology. We teach from

[21] Although Inuit are not under the *Indian Act*, the omission would have similar repercussions for Labrador Inuit and their descendants.

a Western perspective, often without even realizing it. When we include other perspectives, often through a limited cultural diversity framework, we reduce Indigenous people to merely a colourful part of the Canadian cultural mosaic, ignoring their constitutional place, the relevant legislative frameworks, and their political aspirations. We also obscure the inequitable power relations that continue to characterize Canadian society (Razack, 1998).

We can tend to view Indigenous peoples as subjects of research (Clark, 2004) and in so doing sometimes cherry pick Indigenous organizations, choosing to work with the better-known or better-resourced groups or those who have been "recognized" by government (although there is no real consensus on of even understanding of the meaning of the word 'recognition' in the context of Indigenous peoples in Canada[22]).

There are still times when, often unknowingly, we in the academy fail to honor and respect Indigenous cultural values and practices. We may not notice when Indigenous students enter the academy in disproportionately low numbers and then drop out in disproportionately high numbers. We usually expect Indigenous students to conform to Western values, practices and expectations rather than learning from the perspectives they bring to the classroom or their theses. Somewhere along the line, many of us bought into the idea that the academy is inextricably at odds with Indigenous ways of learning and knowing, with their emphasis on ancient wisdom. The academy is, after all, the place where new knowledge is generated. But we forget that the academy is also the repository of old knowledge and that Indigenous knowledge has applicability for contemporary society. We need to go deeper than scratching the surface here, as Indigenous knowledge is difficult to translate and, when de-contextualized as it usually is, it can come across as simplistic and abstract to the point of meaninglessness. Sometimes, thinking that they have unlimited resources to pay student tuition, we view Indigenous organizations as sources of wealth – for us, for the academy.

The Presidential Task Force on Aboriginal Initiatives

They might not have articulated these things in the same way I have but the members of Memorial University's Presidential Task Force on Aboriginal Initiatives recognized these issues and envisioned alternative approaches. They knew that, as Jacqueline Ottmann writes in this special issue, "Building a transformative process involves a series of stages, including (but not limited to) identifying shared philosophy and values, establishing conditions and planning for change. Led by Evan Simpson, a philosopher and then Memorial's Vice-President (Academic), the Task Force included representatives from faculty, senior administration, the two Mi'kmaq organizations (Miawpukek First Nation at Conne River and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians), the two Innu bands (Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation and Mushuau Innu First Nation), NunatuKavut Community Council, and the Nunatsiavut Government. It held both internal and external consultations aimed at improving Memorial's relationships with the province's Indigenous peoples. As the only university in the province, Memorial has a special obligation to the people of the province. Deeply aware that the university needed to do more to live up to its obligation to Newfoundland and Labrador's Indigenous people, the Task Force members titled their 2009 report "A Special Obligation." A specific plan for this university, I note that the Task Force report was one in a long line of reports and plans published in Canada by such organizations as the Assembly of First Nations, the Alberta Government, and others cited by Ottmann.

[22] Does recognition mean federal funding, a settled land claim, the acceptance of a land claim for negotiation by the federal government, being named in the Constitution, or something else?

Throughout the Task Force report, the authors stressed the need for immediate action. Their recommendations relate to the themes of early intervention, academic programming, student support services, and the coordination of efforts. The report is not perfect; it overuses the term "success" which connotes individual ambition and goals, notions that are at odds with some Indigenous world views. The report refers to the need for a "welcoming" environment, which might imply that Indigenous people are guests. The report is also focused on the St. John's Campus of Memorial University, by far our largest campus, yet we are a multi-campus university with teaching taking place at the Marine Institute in St. John's, Grenfell Campus in Corner Brook, the Labrador Institute in Goose Bay, Labrador, and Harlow Campus in Essex, England, as well as smaller sites like the Bonne Bay Marine Station in Western Newfoundland. These deficiencies in the report are easily overcome, especially as President Gary Kachanoski and Memorial's senior leadership are committed to the multi-campus model and to implementing the Task Force recommendations on all our campuses. In broadening the report's application, we are attempting to live up to the spirit of the Task Force and this goal is made more achievable by the 22 clear recommendations offered in the report.

Aware of the truism that "if everyone is doing it, no one is doing it," the Task Force called for the hiring of a special adviser for Aboriginal affairs. In 2011, I became the first special adviser, responsible for initiating and facilitating the implementation of the recommendations on all our campuses. What follows is a summary of some of the mainly structural changes thus far implemented.

Support Services

- The hiring of an additional Aboriginal Liaison Officer on the St. John's Campus
- The conversion of the two staff positions in the Aboriginal Resource Office from temporary to permanent positions
- The hiring of an Aboriginal Liaison Coordinator for the Grenfell Campus
- The establishment of a highly visible Aboriginal Resource Centre on the Grenfell Campus
- MOUs between the Grenfell and St. John's campuses and two Indigenous organizations to provide housing throughout students' time at university (instead of only for the first year)
- An MOU between Student Services, specifically the Aboriginal Resource Office, and the St. John's Native Friendship Centre
- External and internal consultations and discussions with donors that should lead to the transformation of a centrally located existing building into a clearly identifiable Aboriginal Centre on the St. John's Campus
- The establishment of Indigenous student councils on the St. John's and Grenfell campuses
- New scholarships, including the Dr. Evan Simpson Aboriginal Entrance Scholarship, named after the chair of the Task Force
- A $500 bursary from the Faculty of Medicine for Indigenous students to assist with the costs of doing the Medical College Admissions Test
- More funding for Indigenous graduate students through the School of Graduate Studies

Early Intervention

In terms of early intervention, the Task Force's emphasis was on role modeling. Planning is underway for an Aboriginal Ambassadors Pilot Project that will see Southern Inuit students in grades 6-12

introduced to engineering concepts using culturally appropriate methods. This project is a partnership with NunatuKavut Community Council and the College of the North Atlantic. In addition, the Faculty of Education is in the process of hiring a research associate and an instructor to develop and deliver a community-based teacher education program in Labrador; other faculty members will take part. This is a partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government, Memorial's recent partner on the national award-winning Inuit Bachelor of Social Work program, eloquently described in the article by Ellen Oliver and her colleagues, and the Faculty is engaged in discussions with Mamu Tshishkutamashutau (the Innu School Board) regarding Labrador-based teacher education programming for Innu students.

Academic Programming

Our academic programming initiatives include what is now the most comprehensive designated program for Indigenous students of any Canadian university. This program began with designated seats in our Faculty of Medicine. As we worked to expand the program, our deans and Indigenous leaders strongly agreed that students must meet the same admissions criteria as other students to qualify for one of the undergraduate or graduate seats in Visual Arts and Environmental Policy at Grenfell, Medicine, Nursing, Social Work, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Human Kinetics and Recreation at the St. John's Campus, and all programs at the Marine Institute, including Nautical Science, the highly competitive Remote-Operated Vehicle program, and others. These seats are protected as a special program by the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission. Grenfell Campus' Aboriginal Initiatives Committee, made up of faculty, students and Indigenous community members, are looking at the possibility of an Indigenous Studies minor as well as an Aboriginal stream in Leadership Studies. Work towards enhanced academic programming in Aboriginal Studies is being done on the St. John's Campus.

Other Initiatives

Other initiatives that follow from but go beyond Task Force, moving the institution toward cultural safety, include:

- The development of a kullik-lighting and smudging policy (the kullik is the Inuit lamp)[23]
- The publication of this special issue of *The Morning Watch* with its theme of Indigenizing the academy
- The stationing of faculty members at the Labrador Institute; LI shares these positions with the Marine Institute, the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Medicine, and other academic units at Memorial
- The institutionalizing of honoraria paid to Elders and others in Indigenous communities as well as administrative support from Finance and Administration staff for faculty and staff conducting business in remote Indigenous communities
- A celebratory event on our Grenfell Campus which featured a visit and talk by Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, which was webcast to the St. John's Campus and the Labrador Institute
- The use of Indigenous place names on our convocation materials (e.g. Miawpukek First Nation versus Conne River, which appears on provincial maps)

[23] This is the first time there has been such a policy for kullik-lighting in any Canadian university.

As we celebrate our strengths and gains, we remain aware of our weaknesses as an institution and not all our initiatives have met or will meet with success; for instance, we have not yet been able to mount the mentoring program called for by the Task Force. Yet the university has made significant commitments in terms of resources to bring about the recommendations of the Task Force and to go beyond these recommendations. As Clark (2004) says, and as was reiterated at the May, 2013 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Summit at the University of Regina, "we resource what we value" (213).

In terms of Indigenizing the academy, Memorial University is a work in progress, like most Canadian universities and, as stated previously, most of our changes have been structural and, at this early stage, not necessarily transformative. Yet a great deal of change has happened in a short time, mainly because of the commitment of individuals leading academic and non-academic units, as well as at the most senior administrative levels. Our students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, especially our student unions, have played a central role in advancing initiatives. The strong attachment to Memorial's special obligation to the people of the province is another factor in our success thus far. As I go about my work, the special obligation is referenced as a cornerstone for many staff and faculty here.

In general, we are at the initiation phase. We are at the implementation phase with some initiatives. There are some hopeful signs that we will reach the institutionalization phase – for instance, the conversion of the Indigenous support positions to permanent jobs. My goal is transformative change through which Indigenous world views and approaches would be a valued part of the education for all our students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. In other words, I would like to see our classrooms decolonized and the people in those classrooms reconciled – big dreams and, yes, radical.

In my position, I regularly experience painful moments of encounter when the historical and cultural realities of Indigenous people are minimized or denied or faced for the first time, sometimes with a great deal of emotion. I have learned that information and awareness are themselves insufficient to bring about change. Knowledge rarely transforms people for the real problem is, as Wilson (2007) has stated, resistance to knowledge. Many people, inside as well as outside the academy, are invested in their misunderstandings of Indigenous cultures and histories and Canadian history and the intersections between these. The moment of encounter may be painful because it is stirring something in people's hearts and shaking their beliefs or assumptions; this may lead to change but we have to admit that it might not. If our work is to be effective, we need to understand and accept this – for one thing, it will help us direct our energies to those targets which are more likely to lead to transformative change. It will also help us identify allies and supporters, necessary to continue the work. Allies will emerge. At Memorial, the student unions on all our campuses have become strong allies. Non-Indigenous and Indigenous social work students at Memorial recently produced a video in 2012 that illuminated areas this university lags in, notably the material evidence of the living Indigenous cultures of the province. Their work is helpful as we construct spaces in the academy that will honour Indigenous peoples.[24]

---

[24] The proposed Aboriginal Centre on the St. John's Campus, with its highly visible location, should go some way toward changing this. The Mi'kmaq community in Western Newfoundland, including Idle No More, regularly uses the new Aboriginal Resource Centre on the Grenfell Campus as a gathering place.

Best Practices identified through implementing the Task Force

This leads me to discussion of what we have learned from the journey the Task Force began. What are the best practices? What works and what doesn't? Below is some general advice that I hope will be useful; it draws on experiences at several universities and reflects my own perspective, not that of Memorial University itself.

Organizational Capacity and Resources

Recognize the differences between Indigenous organizations, especially in terms of capacity. Some organizations are full governments with ministers, departments, and appropriate staff spread through their homeland and even beyond. Meanwhile, some Indigenous organizations lack even the core staff they need and therefore might find it difficult to provide the resources needed to engage in partnerships with the academy.

We in the academy need to recognize these differences and make provisions for Indigenous organizations that are not well staffed. Ideally we should create mechanisms for them to be involved either through external grants or internal funding, creative use of existing resources, or other ways. It is incumbent upon us to remember that we are one of many, many outside entities trying to get the attention of Indigenous organizations. This list includes developers, municipalities, provincial governments, the federal government, mining prospectors, regional health authorities, educational boards, and so on. If our overtures don't get responses right away or ever, it may not mean that there is no interest on the part of the Indigenous organization –the problem might be capacity.

Research with Indigenous People

I refer readers to Jacqueline Ottmann's macro-points about Indigenous people as subjects of research. Here I would like to make a specific point about working with Indigenous communities. Most universities hold seminars and workshops on how to approach Indigenous organizations and communities – what not to do and so on – so that researchers will enhance the chances of their projects succeeding. In these sessions there is a great deal of emphasis on cultivating relationships, which is right and proper, and certainly most researchers want to do the right thing. Relationship-building, however, takes time that junior faculty working toward tenure may not have. To me the best approach for researchers is to engage in research that is of value to Indigenous peoples. If researchers can work on issues that Indigenous organizations want to tackle, then this will initiate projects and the necessary relationships will take root and grow. We are doing things backward if we come up with a research idea ourselves, present it to an Indigenous audience, and expect their strapped organization to devote time to it or even to approve it. In addition, we are better reflecting Indigenous cultural values if we focus on community needs. Finally, the Tri-Council Policy Statement II calls for researchers to do work that will benefit Indigenous communities; Chapter 9 is very helpful in this regard.

Relationships and Communication

Relationships are vital and should be the linchpin of everything we do with Indigenous organizations and communities. If not, it will likely be an uphill struggle for projects and partnerships. The best way to start a relationship is to respond to community needs; again the Tri-Council Statement is useful and a thorough reading of Chapter 9 on Indigenous peoples is required reading.

Ottmann asks: "How is Indigenous thought – philosophy, ontology, and epistemology – informing our policy and curriculum and how is it guiding our actions?" A first step toward such transformation is consultation and many in the academy genuinely seek Indigenous views on initiatives, etc. In terms of communication, it isn't wise to send off a letter addressed to the chief or the president asking for input on this or that university initiative and expect a response. Think creatively about other ways to get real communication going. Friendship Centres, located in many Canadian cities, are often good places to go for advice on how best to communicate meaningfully, respectfully, and appropriately. University staff working in Indigenous Affairs are also sources of advice. I have often sat down with members of various university committees or units and brainstormed with them about the best way to begin a conversation with Indigenous organizations, bearing in mind, again that the organizations are all different. An email to a particular Indigenous organization staff member might work best in one case, while another might require a phone call to request a visit. Some may have protocols or other formalities while others may not.

In meetings or teleconferences, silence is not necessarily agreement. We don't have to rush to fill the silences. "Let the silence work" was the mantra of one person I worked with. And he was right: those silent times gave people a chance to reflect, they were spaces into which innovation and creativity often began to reveal themselves.

The need to let silence work applies not just to conversations; it also relates to actual processes. Things take time. As universities work with Indigenous communities, there will be times of inaction, sometimes lengthy. We often joke about "being on Aboriginal time" as speed is not generally valued in Indigenous cultures. Often it looks as if progress is terribly slow or even that nothing is happening. But things generally come together at the right time, when everyone is ready, and this is as it should be.

Cultural Diversity

Recognize the cultural diversity and differences among Indigenous peoples. Some communities, some First Nations in particular, value protocol but other communities place less emphasis on it. A little bit of research beforehand can help out here, utilizing the relevant university staff, Friendship Centre staff, or faculty who have worked with particular communities. In my experience, students may or may not want to be asked for advice; it may depend on your relationship with particular students (I will return to this point). The significant cultural differences between Indigenous cultures impact practices. For instance, both Mohawk and Mi'kmaq smudge in circles but the latter go in a clockwise circle while the former use a counter-clockwise pattern.

Realism and Focus

As I mentioned, not every initiative will work. This has universal applicability but it is especially relevant when initiatives involve external partners as there are so many variables, most of them outside the university's control or even sphere of influence. When it comes to working with Indigenous peoples, change is necessary *within* universities although we tend to focus our attention outwards. We rely on

various consultation processes related to specific initiatives. We could benefit by stepping back and thinking more along macro lines – about ourselves and our institutions. My advice is to keep focus inward on what we as the academy can do differently; if we continue to expect Indigenous people and organizations to conform to our agenda, we are continuing the colonial project.

Nowhere is this truer than in the classroom where we need to ask what kind of experiences we are facilitating for our Indigenous students. Here I have some simple tips for faculty and instructors. It is not helpful to ask an individual student to articulate "the Inuit position" or "the Metis experience." Students usually experience pointed questions of this nature as embarrassing and alienating. It is different if a student offers his or her opinions or if there is an existing relationship with the instructor that facilitates such discussion. Another practice that causes damage is to question the authenticity of a student's Indigenous heritage. This happens all too often to Indigenous students who do not "look" Indigenous. Even if they are judged to "look" Indigenous, students have been told here and in other Canadian universities that their culture is dead in the modern world and so on. No student should be put on the defensive in this way. Our student services staff find that Indigenous students are resourceful and resilient and can successfully stick handle the challenges of housing, childcare, academics, and finances; it is the experience of racism, subtle and not subtle, that drives them to leave the academy.

Classrooms must be culturally safe spaces but, perhaps surprisingly, many Indigenous Studies classes are not. In teaching Indigenous Studies and about Indigenous topics, instructors have to be aware of and sensitive about the interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Indigenous students sometimes feel like objects of study in class discussions; this dynamic can be avoided through careful facilitation on the part of instructors, with awareness being a good first step.

Acknowledgment and Celebration

Many Indigenous initiatives, big and small, at the academy work well. Yet when this happens, the temptation is to turn our attention to the next initiative and keep our noses to the grindstone. Why not acknowledge and celebrate when things go well? The visit of Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin to Memorial's Grenfell Campus, funded by our Vice-Presidents Council, was an entirely positive event, one that drew the community to the university. Mi'kmaq men and women opened Obomsawin's talk with the Mi'kmaq Honour Song and Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Vice-Chief Kevin Barnes said a prayer. The 200-seat room in which Obomsawin spoke was packed with standing room only. The evening and Obomsawin's time with students and faculty the next day brought Indigenous culture into the academy, where it was clearly honoured. It gave Grenfell leadership the opportunity to celebrate the new Aboriginal Resource Centre, the Housing MOU, and other initiatives that were well underway. Acknowledgement need not always occur on such a grand scale but it ought to occur.

Related to this is the need for self-care, necessary for anyone involved in work aimed at transformative change or for Indigenous scholars and staff within the academy. This involves building and utilizing support networks and setting aside time for meaningful activities, such as drumming and singing and taking part in community activities whenever possible.

Students

On a more subtle level, with few exceptions and without even meaning to, we frequently expect Indigenous graduate students to conform to the rules of the academy, and bit by bit to leave their perspectives and approaches behind. No wonder so many capable Indigenous academics drop out (Roland, 2009). We need to understand more about this process, how it happens, and how we can change it. Fortunately there are signs that point to new ways of doing things; Dr. Alfred Metallic, who is Mi'kmaq from the Gaspé Peninsula, wrote and defended his PhD thesis in Mi'kmaq, surely one of the true founding languages of Canada – although this was quite possibly the first time a university graduate thesis was accepted in a language other than English or French in a Canadian university (York, 2012). Metallic's thesis defense took place in his home community, attended by numerous community members, and was video-conferenced to York University, an institution that is all the richer for this approach. Metallic himself has found ways to incorporate Western and Indigenous knowledge systems while benefiting his community, which is consistent with the Mi'kmaq values the Elders expected him to uphold throughout the process.

There is a resource imbalance and a power imbalance between the academy and Indigenous peoples. As academics, we know this but we need to go further and think about what it means in terms of our working relationships on a daily basis. What are the compromises we make or the compromises Indigenous peoples are forced to make as we build relationships? How are Indigenous students altering or adapting their world views and their habits to accommodate the academy? We ought to remember that many of our Indigenous students are already bi-cultural, possessing the ability to negotiate at least two perspectives every day, when they arrive on our doorsteps. This in itself is something of value they bring to the university experience. Sometimes when I am part of the painful moment of encounter I sense people's fear of yielding power, as Alfred Metallic's supervisors so successfully did. But, as hard as it may be, there is freedom in giving up power. What would happen if we embraced Indigenous knowledge and transformed our approach? What would happen if we decolonized the academy? How would we all benefit? It is up to the academy to keep asking these questions and searching for answers.

References

Benson, D. (2000). "Dutch Arses and Cargo Cults", *TickleAce: A Journal of Literary and Visual Art*, 37 (2000), 70-86.

Claxton-Oldfield, S. and Keefe, S. (1999). Assessing Stereotypes about the Innu of Davis Inlet, Labrador. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 31 (2), 86-91.

Hanrahan, M. (2013). "A Story of Invisibility: The Reaction of the Print Media to the Formation of Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation", 21(1) 61-82.

Hanrahan., M. (2003). The Lasting Breach: The Omission of Aboriginal People From the Terms of Union Between Newfoundland and Canada and Its Ongoing Impacts. St. John's, NL: Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Hewson, J. (Apr., 1968). Beothuk and Algonkian: Evidence Old and New, *International Journal of American Linguistics*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 85–93.

Holly, D.H., Jr. (2003). A Historiography of an Ahistoricity: On the Beothuk Indians. *History and Anthropology*, 14 (2), 127-140.

Holly, D.H., Jr. (2000). The Beothuk on the Eve of their Extinction. *Arctic Anthropology* 37(1), 79-95.

Holly, D.H., Jr. (1980). Killing of the Beothuks. *Canadian Heritage*, December, 11-12.

Kuokkanen, R.J. (2007). *Reshaping the university: Responsibility, Indigenous epistemes, and the logic of the gift.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Marshall, I. (1996). *A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Marshall, I. (1989). *The Beothuk of Newfoundland: A Vanished People.* St. John's: Breakwater Books.

Marshall, I. (1988). Beothuk and Micmac: Re-examining Relationships. *Acadiensis,* 17, 52-82, 1988.

Marshall, I. (1981). Disease as a Factor in the Demise of the Beothuk Indians. *Culture* 1(1), 71-77.

Martijn, C.A. (1989). An Eastern Micmac Domain of Islands. *Actes du Vingtième Congrès des Algonquinistes.* Ed. W. Cowan. Ottawa: Carleton University, 208-231.

Pastore, R.T. (1993). Archaeology, History, and the Beothuks. *Newfoundland Studies* 9 (2), 260-278.

Pastore, R.T. (1992). Shanawdithit's People: The Archaeology of the Beothuks. *Atlantic Archaeology.*

Pastore, R.T. (1989). The Collapse of the Beothuk World. Acadiensis, 19, 52-71.

Pastore, R.T. (1987). Fishermen, Furrier, and Beothuks: The Economy of Extinction. *Man in the Northeast,* 33, 47-62.

Razack, S. (1998). Looking white people in the eye: gender, race and culture in courtrooms and classrooms. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Roland, K.A. (2009). Examining the under-representation of Aboriginal scholars in the Ontario professoriate: Implications for faculty recruitment and retention. Windsor, ON: University of Windsor Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Collection. Retrieved from http://web4.uwindsor.ca/users/r/roland1/research.nsf/inToc/52DBEF898ED3E3A5852576160055108F?OpenDocument.

Such, P. (1978).*Vanished Peoples: The Archaic Dorset & Beothuk People of Newfoundland.* Toronto: NC Press, Toronto.

Wetzel, J. (1999). The Hidden Term of Union: Executive Summary – Confederation and Federal Abandonment of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq. *Newfoundland Quarterly,* 92 (4): 23-28.

Wilson, T.S. (2003). Moving Horizons: Exploring the Role of Stories in Decolonizing the Literacy Education of White Teachers. *International Education* 37 (1), 114-131.

Winter, K.J. (1975). *Shananditti: The Last of the Beothuks.* North Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd.

York University (2012) PhD. student defends thesis in Mi'gmaw language, a York first. http://www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=15936. Retrieved May 8, 2013.