

Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism

INDIGENOUSNESS IS AN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTED, SHAPED AND LIVED in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism. The communities, clans, nations and tribes we call *Indigenous peoples* are just that: Indigenous to the lands they inhabit, in contrast to and in contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centres of empire. It is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world.²

There are, of course, vast differences among the world's Indigenous peoples in their cultures, political-economic situations, and in their relationships with colonizing Settler societies. But the struggle to survive as distinct peoples on foundations constituted in their unique heritages, attachments to their homelands, and natural ways of life is what is shared by all Indigenous peoples, as well as the fact that their existence is in large part lived as determined acts of survival against colonizing states' efforts to eradicate them culturally, politically and physically. The challenge of 'being Indigenous', in a psychic and cultural sense, forms the crucial question facing Indigenous peoples today in the era of contemporary colonialism – a form of post-modern imperialism in which domination is still the Settler imperative but where colonizers have designed and practise more subtle means (in contrast to the earlier forms of missionary

¹ 'The Politics of Identity' is an on-going series edited by Richard Bellamy.

² This article draws on analyses and concepts developed in Taiiaki Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, Peterborough, ON, Broadview Press, 2005.

and militaristic colonial enterprises) of accomplishing their objectives.

Contemporary Settlers follow the mandate provided for them by their imperial forefathers' colonial legacy, not by attempting to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous peoples as human *bodies*, but by trying to eradicate their existence as *peoples* through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self. The geographer, Bernard Nietschmann, has demonstrated the need for critical translations of the artificial, state-created identities (such as 'ethnic group') that are imposed on original peoples in this colonizing process of redefinition from autonomous to derivative existence and cultural and political identities. State-imposed conceptions of supposedly Indigenous identity read to Indigenous peoples, from perspectives rooted in their own cultures and languages, not as moves towards justice and positive integration (as the strategy is framed in colonial discourses) but as indicators of an on-going colonial assault on their existence, and signs of the fact that they remain, as in earlier colonial eras, occupied peoples who have been dispossessed and disempowered in their own homelands.³

For example, in Canada today, many Indigenous people have embraced the Canadian government's label of 'aboriginal', along with the concomitant and limited notion of postcolonial justice framed within the institutional construct of the state. In fact, this identity is purely a state construction that is instrumental to the state's attempt to gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system and body politic since Canadian independence from Great Britain – a process that started in the mid-twentieth century and culminated with the emergence of a Canadian constitution in 1982. Far from reflecting any true history or honest reconciliation with the past or present agreements and treaties that form an authentic basis for Indigenous–state relations in the Canadian context, 'aboriginalism' is a legal, political and cultural discourse designed to serve an agenda of silent surrender to an inherently unjust relation at the root of the colonial state itself.

³ Bernard Nietschmann, 'The Fourth World: Nations Versus States', in George J. Demko and William B. Wood (eds), *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the 21st Century*, Philadelphia, Westview Press, 1995, pp. 228–31.

The acceptance of being 'aboriginal' (or its equivalent term in other countries, such as 'ethnic groups') is a powerful assault on Indigenous identities. It must be understood that the aboriginalist assault takes place in a politico-economic context of historic and ongoing dispossession and of contemporary deprivation and poverty; this is a context in which Indigenous peoples are forced by the compelling needs of physical survival to cooperate individually and collectively with the state authorities to ensure their physical survival. Consequently, there are many 'aboriginals' (in Canada) or 'Native Americans' (in the United States) who identify themselves solely by their political-legal relationship to the state rather than by any cultural or social ties to their Indigenous community or culture or homeland. This continuing colonial process pulls Indigenous peoples away from cultural practices and community aspects of 'being Indigenous' towards a political-legal construction as 'aboriginal' or 'Native American', both of which are representative of what we refer to as being 'incidentally Indigenous'.

There are approximately 350 million Indigenous peoples situated in some 70 countries around the world. All of these people confront the daily realities of having their lands, cultures and governmental authorities simultaneously attacked, denied and reconstructed by colonial societies and states. This has been the case for generations: but there are new faces of empire that are attempting to strip Indigenous peoples of their very spirit as nations and of all that is held sacred, threatening their sources of connection to their distinct existences and the sources of their spiritual power: relationships to each other, communities, homelands, ceremonial life, languages, histories . . . These connections are crucial to living a meaningful life for any human being.

In this article, we discuss strategies for resisting further encroachment on Indigenous existence by Settler societies and states – as well as multinational corporations and other elite organizations controlled by state powers and elements of the imperial institutional network – and we focus on how Indigenous communities can regenerate themselves to resist the effects of the contemporary colonial assault and renew politically and culturally. We ask the fundamental question: how can we resist further dispossession and disconnection when the effects of colonial assaults on our own existence are so pronounced and still so present in the lives of all Indigenous peoples?

Colonial legacies and contemporary practices of disconnection, dependency and dispossession have effectively confined Indigenous identities to state-sanctioned legal and political definitional approaches. This political-legal compartmentalization of community values often leads Indigenous nations to mimic the practices of dominant non-Indigenous legal-political institutions and adhere to state-sanctioned definitions of Indigenous identity. Such compartmentalization results in a ‘politics of distraction’⁴ that diverts energies away from decolonizing and regenerating communities and frames community relationships in state-centric terms, such as aforementioned ‘aboriginality’.

Given that Indigenous identities are (re)constructed at multiple levels – global, state, community, individual – it is important to recognize these multiple sites of resistance to state encroachment. The quest for definitional authority goes well beyond state borders; the United Nations, the World Bank group, the International Labour Organization, as well as other global actors, also attempt to determine who is Indigenous.⁵ However, as Taiaiake Alfred has pointed out, ‘. . . demands for precision and certainty disregard the reality of the situation: that group identity varies with time and place’.⁶ How effectively have researchers and theorists accounted for the dynamic nature of being Indigenous?

Theories rooted in Indigenous cultural and spiritual principles, such as the ‘Fourth World’ and ‘Peoplehood’ schools of thought

⁴ Graham Hingangaroa Smith, ‘Protecting and Respecting Indigenous Knowledge’, in Marie Battiste (ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, Vancouver, BC, UBC Press, 2000, p. 211. For examples of classic colonial-liberal discourse with liberatory pretences, see Patrick Macklem, *Indigenous Difference and the Constitution of Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001; Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and ‘The Politics of Recognition’*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992; and Will Kimlycka (ed.), *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

⁵ For more on the global nature of Indigenous identity construction, see Jeff Corn-tassel, ‘Who is Indigenous? “Peoplehood” and Ethnonationalist Approaches to Rearticulating Indigenous Identity’, *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, 9 (2003), pp. 75–100.

⁶ Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 85. For the explanation of his concept of Indigenous identity, one that is often characterized as a sort of strategic essentialism – meaning that it is multi-faceted and flexible, yet rooted in Indigenous cultural ground – see also Alfred’s *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

seem to offer promise. Yet it is ultimately our lived collective and individual experiences as Indigenous peoples that yield the clearest and most useful insights for establishing culturally sound strategies to resist colonialism and regenerate our communities.

COLONIAL POWERS AS SHAPE SHIFTERS

It is important to identify all of the old and new faces of colonialism that continue to distort and dehumanize Indigenous peoples – often pitting us against each other in battles over authentic histories. Colonization is the word most often used to describe the experience of Indigenous encounters with Settler societies, and it is the framework we are employing here. However, there is a danger in allowing *colonization* to be the only story of Indigenous lives. It must be recognized that colonialism is a narrative in which the Settler's power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power. As stated earlier, we live in an era of postmodern imperialism and manipulations by shape-shifting colonial powers; the instruments of domination are evolving and inventing new methods to erase Indigenous histories and senses of place. Therefore, 'globalization' in Indigenous eyes reflects a deepening, hastening and stretching of an already-existing empire. Living within such political and cultural contexts, it is remembering ceremony, returning to homelands and liberation from the myths of colonialism that are the decolonizing imperatives. In their seminal treatise, *The Fourth World*, Manuel and Posluns explained the effects of contemporary colonial processes:

The colonial system is always a way of gaining control over another people for the sake of what the colonial power has determined to be 'the common good.' People can only become convinced of the common good when their own capacity to imagine ways in which they can govern themselves has been destroyed.⁷

From such a Fourth World viewpoint, the 'common good' becomes whatever it is defined as by shape-shifting colonial elites. Nietschmann documents a number of shape-shifting strategies imposed by Settler

⁷ George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*, New York, Collier Macmillan Canada, 1974, p. 60.

states that confront Indigenous peoples on a daily basis – such as creating a bogus ‘we are you’ agenda, calling for a vote to legitimize the occupation, referring to state camps as ‘economic development’ and ‘new communities’, and offering amnesty to resistant military leaders and their forces in order to co-opt their movements.⁸ While some of these shape-shifting tactics may on the surface appear to be subtle, they, like other brutal forms of oppression, threaten the very survival of Indigenous communities.

Consider the government of Bangladesh’s official position, that all of their state inhabitants are ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Bengalee’, despite the existence of 16 different Indigenous communities (collectively referred to as Jumma) in the area of the country known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) alone. In order to implement this ‘we are you’ mythology, Bangladesh, with the assistance of international aid agencies, has engaged in a tactic of ‘swamping’ by initiating a massive ethnic Bengalee settlement of the CHT region since 1971. Consequently, the area has been purposefully overloaded with over 400,000 Bengali Settlers who have dislocated the much smaller Jumma population (approximately 50,000) from their homeland. From comprising just three per cent of the population of the CHT in 1947, Bengalee Settlers now constitute roughly half the total population of the area.⁹

Such new faces of colonialism encroach on Indigenous sacred histories, homelands and cultural practices in somewhat familiar ways, but use diplomatic language and the veneer of free trade to mask ugly truths. The great North African anti-colonial writer Frantz Fanon described this process as an ongoing dialectic:

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.¹⁰

It is these perverted logics and lies that must be confronted now, just as troops were fought courageously with guns and bombs in previous

⁸ Nietschmann, ‘The Fourth World’, pp. 236–37.

⁹ James Minahan, *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations, Volume II*, Oxford, Greenwood Press, 2002, pp. 845–50; Rajkumari Chandra Roy, *Land Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh*, Oxford, IWGLA, 2000.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 210.

eras of the struggle for Indigenous freedom. When lies become accepted and normal, the imperative of the warrior is to awaken and enliven the truth and to get people to invest belief and energy into that truth. The battle is a spiritual and physical one fought against the political manipulation of the people's own innate fears and the embedding of complacency, that metastasizing weakness, into their psyches. Fanon pointed out that the most important strength of Indigenous resistance, unity, is also constantly under attack as colonial powers erase community histories and senses of place to replace them with doctrines of individualism and predatory capitalism: 'In the colonial context . . . the natives fight among themselves. They tend to use each other as a screen, and each hides from his neighbor the national enemy'.¹¹

As Fanon illustrates, these battles occurring amongst ourselves distract us from the bigger picture of decolonization and sap the crucial energy and solidarity that are essential to effective confrontation of imperial power in whatever form it presents itself. Large-scale Indigenous efforts to confront state power by mimicking state institutions (via land claims and self-government processes) only deepen these divisions. For a long time now, Indigenous peoples have been on a quest for governmental power and money. Contemporary forms of postmodern imperialism attempt to confine the expression of Indigenous peoples' right of self-determination to a set of domestic authorities operating within the constitutional framework of the state (as opposed to the right of having and autonomous and global standing) and actively seek to sever Indigenous links to their ancestral homelands.

In Canada, for example, the so-called British Columbia Treaty Process (on-going for over a decade) has been structured to achieve the legalization of the Settler society's occupation of unceded and non-treaty lands that make up 90 per cent of the territory in that province, to have the Indigenous peoples 'surrender their Aboriginal title to the Crown, whereupon it becomes vested in the province'.¹² The secondary goal of the process is to achieve a set of binding agreements that accord the federal and provincial government legal supremacy over First Nations' governments. In

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 306–7.

¹² Taiaiake Alfred, 'Deconstructing the British Columbia Treaty Process', *Balayi: Culture, Law and Colonialism*, 3 (2001), p. 49.

fact, the Nisga'a Nation's agreement, implemented in 2000 – which was the culmination of a negotiation that began much earlier than the current treaty process but which was conducted under the same mandate and objectives – was voted on by only 40 per cent of the Nisga'a people and makes no mention of the word 'treaty' anywhere in the text of the document.¹³

A similar process of 'domestication' of Indigenous issues is taking place in the United States, during this era of widespread institutionalization of the Indigenous–state compacts to legalize gaming enterprises on tribal lands, a process Corntassel refers to as 'Forced Federalism'.¹⁴ As preconstitutional and treaty-holding nations, Indigenous peoples in what is now called the United States have historically been considered to transcend all local non-Indigenous government jurisdictional claims in matters of their homeland's autonomy. However, since the passage of the 1988 Indian Gaming and Regulatory Act (IGRA), and the further integration of Indigenous governments into the state system through the forced federalism process, non-Indigenous governments and officials have increasingly asserted their jurisdictional authority over Indigenous people and the territories of Indigenous nations that exist within arbitrary boundaries established by the colonial state.

How can we refocus and restore the original objective of Indigenous autonomy and nation-to-nation relations between original and immigrant peoples to its orienting primacy? In advocating a break from the colonial path, Nez Percé/Chicana scholar Inés Hernández-Ávila speaks of the power of Indigenous languages in articulating a transformative agenda in Mexico that is 'dignifying, validating and ensuring the continuance of their peoples' languages and cultures'.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴ Jeff Corntassel, '“Deadliest Enemies” or Partners in the “Utmost Good Faith”: Conflict Resolution Strategies for Indian nation/state Disputes in an Era of Forced Federalism', *Ayaangwaamizin: International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy*, 3 (Summer 2003) pp. 141–67. For a further elaboration of this argument, see Jeff Corntassel, *Forced Federalism: Contemporary Challenges to Indigenous Nationhood*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, forthcoming.

¹⁵ Inés Hernández-Ávila, 'The Power of Native Languages and the Performance of Indigenous Autonomy: The Case of Mexico', in Richard Grounds, George E. Tinker and David E. Wilkins (eds), *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2003, p. 56.

Hernández-Ávila's interview with Feliciano Sanchez Chan, a Maya/Yucateco, highlights the need for 'zones of refuge' that are immune to the reaches of imperialism and globalization. These zones of refuge are places where:

knowledge has been historically guarded, exercised and sustained. These zones of refuge represent safe (physical and psychological) spaces where Mesoamerican cultural matrices continue to find expression, even as the advocates of the imaginary Mexico persist in their obstinate project of erasure and substitution.¹⁶

This is a powerful conceptualization of a strategic and cultural objective that remains consistent with traditional goals yet stands against the integrative goals of the contemporary colonial agenda. In addition to creating zones of refuge and other breaks from colonial rule that create spaces of freedom, we will begin to realize decolonization in a real way when we begin to achieve the re-strengthening of our people as individuals so that these spaces can be occupied by decolonized people living authentic lives. This is a recognition that our true power as Indigenous people ultimately lies in our relationships with our land, relatives, language, and ceremonial life. As the eminent Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. asserts, 'What we need is a cultural leave-us-alone agreement, in spirit and in fact.'¹⁷

COMPLACENCY, CORRUPTION AND COMPARTMENTALIZED COMMUNITIES

The scholarly literature on being Indigenous predominantly focuses on identity constructions that reflect the colonized political and legal contexts in which Indigenous peoples are forced to live and operate. Academics tend to examine wider phenomena of what is known as pan-indigenism or focus on theories of individual self-identification; very few are themselves grounded in real Indigenous community life or perspectives. For example, Joane Nagel's work describes 'Red Power activism' as the '... progenitor of an American Indian ethnic rebirth'¹⁸ during the 1970s, and finds that so-called 'Indian'

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁷ Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for your Sins*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1988, p. 27.

¹⁸ Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 113.

resurgence through the American Indian Movement had its roots in urban areas as a direct response to federal assimilation policies of the 1950s and 1960s. However, her work (though making an important contribution) falls short when discussing relationships between urban and reservation communities and overemphasizes the role of urban people in this cultural renaissance. Anthropologist Ronald Niezen attempts to overcome this kind of shortcoming in his study of what he calls 'Indigenism',¹⁹ as he documents the widespread mobilization and unity of Indigenous peoples in global forums as they resist encroachment by the state. However, his work neglects the grassroots dimensions of Indigenous mobilization and emphasizes colonial narratives of 'victimization' and 'grievance' as the cornerstones of Indigenous identity.

Other researchers have examined the identity choices made by individuals as they respond to social, economic and political influences around them. For example, Devon Mihesuah adapted a 'life stages' model, based on the work of African-American scholars William Cross and Thomas Parham, to the identity choices of Indigenous people. In this four-stage, linear process, one strives to reach the 'internalization' stage eventually, where 'inner security about their identity'²⁰ is attained. However, this approach emphasizes interactions with non-Indigenous people in precipitating identity awareness and personal change, and de-emphasizes relationships with communities and family. As Jace Weaver points out, Indigenous identity can only be confirmed by others 'who share that identity'.²¹ Cherokee sociologist Matthew Snipp also notes that the 'boundaries of [Indigenous] populations are best defined in social terms' and where 'human beings are born into a closely linked and integrated network of family, kinship, social and political relations'.²²

In their attempts to establish universal definitions of Indigenous peoples, scholars have rewritten Indigenous histories and imposed

¹⁹ Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003.

²⁰ Devon A. Mihesuah, 'American Indian Identities: Issues of Individual Choices and Development', *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 22 (1998), pp. 193–226.

²¹ Hilary N. Weaver, 'Indigenous Identity: What is It and Who Really Has It?', *American Indian Quarterly*, 25 (2001), p. 245.

²² C. Matthew Snipp, *American Indians: The First of This Land*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1989, p. 27.

political and cultural limits on the freedom of Indigenous people to live lives of their own choosing. For example, Ted Gurr, a prominent scholar in the field of international relations, established the comprehensive Minorities at Risk (MAR) project in 1988, and tracked the activities of 275 ethno-political groups from 1980 to 1999. Upon closer examination, the utility of Gurr's conceptual scheme, which divides Indigenous and ethnonationalist phenomena into mutually exclusive categories, is highly questionable. For Gurr, Indigenous peoples are defined as:

Conquered descendants of earlier inhabitants of a region who live mainly in conformity with traditional social, economic, and cultural customs that are sharply distinct from those of dominant groups . . . Indigenous peoples who had durable states of their own prior to conquest, such as Tibetans, or who have given sustained support to modern movements aimed at establishing their own state, such as the Kurds, are classified as ethnonationalists, not Indigenous peoples.²³

According to Gurr's definition, being conquered and being dominated by another group are preconditions for being considered Indigenous. However, not all Indigenous peoples were 'conquered' militarily by the colonial powers that now dominate them. Treaty-making, rather than outright military conquest, took place in North America on a wide scale between Holland, France, or Great Britain, and the original peoples of what is now called Canada and the United States. Nor are all Indigenous peoples non-dominant, whether one looks at the large populations of Indigenous peoples within certain states, such as Bolivia (66 per cent), or in terms of Indigenous peoples mobilizing to pose a credible political threat to the survival of the state. As Niezen concludes, 'A rigorous definition [of Indigenous peoples] . . . would be premature and, ultimately, futile. Debates over the problem of definition are actually more interesting than any definition in and of itself.'²⁴

What, then, does it mean to be Indigenous, given the colonial legacies of blood quantum measurements,²⁵ state assimilation policies,

²³ Ted Robert Gurr, *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*, Washington, DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000, p. 17.

²⁴ Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism*, p. 19.

²⁵ Snipp, *American Indians*; William T. Hagan, 'Full Blood, Mixed Blood, Generic and Ersatz: The Problem of Indian Identity', *Arizona and the West*, 27 (1985), pp. 309–26.

self-identification as a challenge to community citizenship standards, acceptance of colonial labels of 'aboriginalism', and gendered identity constructions?²⁶ Postmodern imperialists attempt to partition Indigenous bodies and communities by imposing political/legal fictions on cultural peoples. How can we promote balance between political and cultural notions of being Indigenous? Cree/Métis writer Kim Anderson outlines several 'foundations of resistance' for being Indigenous, which include: strong families, grounding in community, connection to land, language, storytelling and spirituality.²⁷ For Anderson, these form a basis for action. However, we believe that the interrelationships between these fundamental principles must be examined further in order to generate a foundation for effective resistance to contemporary colonialism.

Peoplehood models, which discuss the interconnected factors of community, language and cultural practices, appear to have some promise for discussing the adaptability and resurgence of Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples themselves have long understood their existence as peoples or nations (expressed not in these terms but in their own languages, of course) as formed around axes of land, culture and community. Scholars have investigated these traditional understandings and derived theories based on such Indigenous philosophies. The concept of 'peoplehood' has its roots in anthropologist Edward H. Spicer's work on 'enduring peoples'.²⁸ Spicer's discussion of an 'Indian sense of identity' (as distinct from 'ethnic groups') centred on three key factors: their relationship to the land, common spiritual bond, and language use.²⁹ The peoplehood concept was further developed by Cherokee anthropologist Robert K. Thomas, who added 'sacred history' as a fourth factor in community relationships.³⁰ Thomas also described the four peoplehood components as being interwoven and dependent on one another.

²⁶ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, Toronto, Sumach Press, 2000; Devon A. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2003.

²⁷ Anderson, *A Recognition of Being*, pp. 116–36.

²⁸ Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533–1960*, Phoenix, University of Arizona Press, 1962.

²⁹ Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest*, pp. 576–8.

³⁰ Robert K. Thomas, 'The Tap-Roots of Peoplehood', in Daphne J. Anderson (ed.), *Getting to the Heart of the Matter: Collected Letters and Papers*, Vancouver, Native Ministries Consortium, 1990, pp. 25–32.

Current work by the Cherokee/Creek scholar Tom Holm, along with Diane Pearson and Ben Chavis, revives the original peoplehood concept and develops it as the foundational concept framing their view of the ideal direction for Indigenous research and teaching.³¹ Holm and his colleagues view peoplehood as four interlocking concepts: sacred history, ceremonial cycles, language and ancestral homelands. Unlike the multi-part, ahistorical definitions of Indigenouness proffered by most academics and practitioners, the Holm model is predicated on a view of identity that is both dynamic and interconnected: 'No single element of the model is more or less important than the others . . .'.³² Apache scholar Bernadette Adley-Santa Maria illustrates this concept of peoplehood with her grandmother's words: 'If you do not sing the songs – if you do not tell the stories and if you do not speak the language – you will cease to exist as "Ndee" (Apache)'.³³

Building on this notion of a dynamic and interconnected concept of Indigenous identity constituted in history, ceremony, language and land, we consider relationships (or kinship networks) to be at the core of an authentic Indigenous identity. Clearly, it is the need to maintain respectful relationships that guides all interactions and experiences with community, clans, families, individuals, homelands, plants, animals etc. in the Indigenous cultural ideal. If any one of these elements of identity, such as sacred history, is in danger of being lost, unified action can be taken to revitalize and restore that part of the community by utilizing relationships, which are the spiritual and cultural foundations of Indigenous peoples. Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete contrasts this Indigenous sense of kinship and 'ensoulment of nature' with the (relatively) one-dimensional Newtonian-Cartesian perspectives characteristic of European and colonial worldviews: '[Indigenous] people understood that all entities of nature – plants, animals, stones, trees, mountains, rivers, lakes and a host of other living entities – embodied relationships that must be honored'.³⁴

³¹ Tom, J. Holm, Diane Pearson and Ben Chavis, 'Peoplehood: A Model for American Indian Sovereignty in Education', *Wicazo Sa Review*, 18 (2003), pp. 7–24.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³³ Quoted from Hernández-Ávila, 'The Power of Native Languages', p. 62.

³⁴ Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, Santa Fe, NM, Clear Light Publishers, 2000, p. 178.

It follows that for many Indigenous communities, peoplehood, as we are describing it, is seen as an aspiration rather than a recognized present reality. As Thomas states, 'Among some enduring peoples the very absence of, or the losing of, one of these important four symbols can, in itself, become a strong symbol of peoplehood'.³⁵ This somewhat counter-intuitive response to cultural loss further illustrates the adaptive nature and contextual relevance of peoplehood to particular Indigenous communities. This also reinforced our view that the peoplehood concept is a flexible and dynamic alternative to static political and legal definitional approaches to Indigenous identities.

There are obvious strengths of the peoplehood model as a foundation for developing Indigenous cultures of resistance. But where should strategies to generate a resurgence of Indigenous nationhood be focused? Manuel and Posluns's theory of the Fourth World is again instructive, revealing the unifying nature of Indigenous *action* in the struggle against colonialism throughout the world:

My belief in the Fourth World is an act of faith. But it is no illusion. I have told you of the strength of my ancestors. My faith is simply that the strength of the present generation and those who are still coming toward us is no less than the strength of our forebears. The Fourth World is far more of a Long March than an Eternal Resting Place. My faith is that we, and our children's children, are willing and able to take up the burden of our history and set out on our journey. Were there no more to it than that I should ask no more of other men than to let us pass freely.³⁶

For Manuel and Posluns, the Fourth World is founded on active relationships with the spiritual and cultural heritage embedded in the words and patterns of thought and behaviour left to us by our ancestors. The legacies of their struggles to be Indigenous form the imperatives of our contemporary struggles to regenerate authentic Indigenous existences.

A Fourth World theory asserting Indigenous laws on Indigenous lands highlights the sites of ongoing state–nation conflicts while reaffirming the spiritual and cultural nature of the struggle. This is not simply another taxonomy relating Indigenous realities in a theoretical way to the so-called First, Second and Third Worlds, but a recognition of a spiritual 'struggle to enter the Fourth World' and to decode state motivations as they invade under the 'mantle of

³⁵ Thomas, 'The Tap-Roots of Peoplehood', p. 29.

³⁶ Manuel and Posluns, *The Fourth World*, p. 261.

liberation and development'.³⁷ The Canadian historian Anthony Hall describes this as a battle against the 'empire of possessive individualism' and the 'militarization of space': 'the idea of the Fourth World provides a kind of broad ideological umbrella to cover the changing coalitions of pluralistic resistance aimed at preventing the monocultural transformation of the entire planet . . .'.³⁸

While the concepts of peoplehood and the Fourth World undoubtedly provide solid bases for thinking about strategies of resurgence, the question remains: how can these be put into practice? In *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*, the Cherokee sociologist Eva Marie Garrouette discusses the concept of 'Radical Indigenism' as a process of pursuing scholarship that is grounded in Indigenous community goals and which 'follows the path laid down in the models of inquiry traditional to their tribal community'.³⁹ This intellectual strategy entails utilizing all of the talents of the people inside and within a community to begin a process of regeneration.

The larger process of regeneration, as with the outwardly focused process of decolonization, also begins with the self. It is a self-conscious kind of traditionalism that is the central process in the 'reconstruction of traditional communities' based on the original teachings and orienting values of Indigenous peoples.⁴⁰ Colonialism corrupted the relationship between original peoples and the Settlers, and it eventually led to the corruption of Indigenous cultures and communities too. But our discussion thus far has, we hope, illustrated the fact that decolonization and regeneration are not at root collective and institutional processes. They are shifts in thinking and action that emanate from recommitments and reorientations at the level of the self that, over time and through proper organization, manifest as broad social and political movements to challenge state agendas and authorities. To a large extent, institutional approaches to making meaningful change in the lives of Indigenous people have not led to what we understand as decolonization and regeneration; rather they

³⁷ Nietschmann, 'The Fourth World', pp. 235–6.

³⁸ Anthony J. Hall, *The American Empire and the Fourth World*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003, pp. 523, 530.

³⁹ Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003, p. 144.

⁴⁰ Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness*, p. 81.

have further embedded Indigenous people in the colonial institutions they set out to challenge. This paradoxical outcome of struggle is because of the logical inconsistencies at the core of the institutional approaches.

Current approaches to confronting the problem of contemporary colonialism ignore the wisdom of the teachings of our ancestors reflected in such concepts as Peoplehood and the Fourth World. They are, in a basic way, building not on a spiritual and cultural foundation provided to us as the heritage of our nations, but on the weakened and severely damaged cultural and spiritual and social results of colonialism. Purported decolonization and watered-down cultural restoration processes that accept the premises and realities of our colonized existences as their starting point are inherently flawed and doomed to fail. They attempt to reconstitute strong nations on the foundations of enervated, dispirited and decultured people. That is the honest and brutal reality; and that is the fundamental illogic of our contemporary struggle.

INDIGENOUS PATHWAYS OF ACTION AND FREEDOM

Indigenous pathways of authentic action and freedom struggle start with people transcending colonialism on an individual basis – a strength that soon reverberates outward from the self to family, clan, community and into all of the broader relationships that form an Indigenous existence. In this way, Indigenoussness is reconstructed, reshaped and actively lived as resurgence against the dispossessing and demeaning processes of annihilation that are inherent to colonialism.

There is no concise neat model of resurgence in this way of approaching decolonization and the regeneration of our peoples. Nor are there clear and definite steps that we can list for people to check off as milestones on their march to freedom. But there are identifiable directions of movement, patterns of thought and action that reflect a shift to an Indigenous reality from the colonized places we inhabit today in our minds and in our souls. Derived from experience of Indigenous warriors old and new who have generated an authentic existence out of the mess left by colonial dispossession and disruption, these pathways can be thought of as the direction of freedom whether we have in mind the struggle of a single person or

conceptualizing an eventual global Indigenous struggle founded on the regeneration of ourselves and our communities.

These are the mantras of a resurgent Indigenous movement:

- *Land is Life* – our people must reconnect with the terrain and geography of their Indigenous heritage if they are to comprehend the teachings and values of the ancestors, and if they are to draw strength and sustenance that is independent of colonial power, and which is regenerative of an authentic, autonomous, Indigenous existence.
- *Language is Power* – our people must recover ways of knowing and relating from outside the mental and ideational framework of colonialism by regenerating themselves in a conceptual universe formed through Indigenous languages.
- *Freedom is the Other Side of Fear* – our people must transcend the controlling power of the many and varied fears that colonial powers use to dominate and manipulate us into complacency and cooperation with its authorities. The way to do this is to confront our fears head-on through spiritually grounded action; contention and direct movement at the source of our fears is the only way to break the chains that bind us to our colonial existences.
- *Decolonize your Diet* – our people must regain the self-sufficient capacity to provide our own food, clothing, shelter and medicines. Ultimately important to the struggle for freedom is the reconstitution of our own sick and weakened physical bodies and community relationships accomplished through a return to the natural sources of food and the active, hard-working, physical lives lived by our ancestors.
- *Change Happens one Warrior at a Time* – our people must reconstitute the mentoring and learning–teaching relationships that foster real and meaningful human development and community solidarity. The movement toward decolonization and regeneration will emanate from transformations achieved by direct-guided experience in small, personal, groups and one-on-one mentoring towards a new path.

These mantras and the pathways they represent will be put into practice by every person in their own way, in response to the particular context and set of challenges that form each person and community's colonial reality.

Bringing it all together, *being Indigenous* means thinking, speaking and acting with the conscious intent of regenerating one's indigeneity. Each Indigenous nation has its own way of articulating and asserting self-determination and freedom. For example, in Kanien'keha, the word is *Onkwehonweneha*, which translates as the 'way of the original people'. Tsalagi (Cherokee) have the tradition of *Wigaduwaga*, which translates into 'I will always be up above in all things that influence me in life; in the uppermost; for us to follow or emulate'. The Lyackson people have the term *Snuw'uw'ul*, Hopis say *Hopit Pötskwani'at*, and Maori say *Tino rangatiratanga*.⁴¹ As Indigenous peoples, the way to recovering freedom and power and happiness is clear: it is time for each one of us to make the commitment to transcend colonialism as *people*, and for us to work together as *peoples* to become forces of Indigenous truth against the lie of colonialism. We do not need to wait for the colonizer to provide us with money or to validate our vision of a free future; we only need to start to use *our* Indigenous languages to frame our thoughts, the ethical framework of *our* philosophies to make decisions and to use *our* laws and institutions to govern ourselves.

⁴¹ See, for example, Roger Maaka and Augie Fleras, 'Engaging with Indigeneity: Tino Rangatiratanga in Aotearoa', in Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton and Will Sanders (eds), *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 89–109.