

## **REFRAMING LIBERAL EDUCATION: CODE-SWITCHING AND DECOLONIZING THE UNIVERSITY**

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Would reframing Liberal Education aid in the decolonization of the university? What would that look like? What would we hope to accomplish? And how would we even begin?

I'd like to begin by describing two seminal events that shaped how I think about epistemological differences and how to foster greater awareness among members of the university community. Each involved the development of Indigenous programming at two different institutions where I held senior administrative positions. The first, at OCAD University in Toronto, took place during the first meeting of the National Advisory Council for the nascent Indigenous Visual Culture Program. Council membership read like a who's who of Indigenous Canadian artists, writers, architects, filmmakers, and tribal leaders, and they were grilling the university leadership, including the president and myself, about various facets of the program. They were not going to let their names stand in support of anything but a well-considered program that supported first and foremost the interests of Indigenous students. At the end of a full day of discussion, but before breaking for dinner, one member stood up to address the university leadership and faculty members present: "The proposal sounds very good on paper," she said. "But if you manage to do all the things you say you will do, have you really thought about how it will change OCAD? Is OCAD ready for this?" The questions hung there in the air for a long minute until the president, thankfully, responded, "Well, we *have* to be."

The second event took place at Mount Royal University a few years later at the end of the first meeting of the newly reconstituted Advisory Council for Iniskim Centre and the unveiling of an ambitious new Indigenous Strategic Plan. This council comprised tribal leaders and elders from across the large geographic territory of Treaty Seven. The tone of the meeting was one of quiet listening by council members, with a few polite questions—that is, until just before the appointed end of the meeting time. One elder had not yet arrived and we assumed she was not able to make it. But then she and her small entourage entered after struggling up the stairs to this tucked-away

meeting room. After the welcoming protocols, she sat at the end of the table, made a few comments on the plan that made clear she had read it, and then she began to tell us a story. It was a long story, which distressed a few people present because it was getting late. I can't recall all the twists and turns, but the narrative ended with a dream her grandmother told her about how, as a young woman, she was standing on a beach watching a storm roll in. The huge waves were capped by white men's heads that bore the names "Socrates," "Plato," and "Aristotle." Her grandmother felt great fear for she knew these white men and their ideas would soon inundate the land and overwhelm her people.

In both cases, I did not know how adequately to respond in the moment. But they both stuck with me and, as I said, have shaped my thinking about the goals of a liberal education and how best to incorporate non-Western cultures and epistemologies into the curriculum. Just adding an Indigenous history course here or a sociology course there are helpful, but hardly constitute the full answer. Additionally there are multiple non-European ethnic categories in the populations of Canada and the United States that must also be considered. Clearly the situation varies considerably between Canada and the US, and also between provinces and states or even individual post-secondary institutions. Although the data below are drawn from different census years, the broad picture and contrast remain pretty much the same.

**Figure 1: Major Racial/Ethnic Groupings in the U.S. and Canada**

<b>U.S. 2019 Census Bureau Estimates*</b> <b>Total Population: 328 M</b>		<b>Canada 2016 Census Data**</b> <b>Total Population: 35 M</b>	
Non-Hispanic White#	60%	Non-Hispanic White# ○ incl. Francophone 23%	73%
Hispanic/Latino	18.5%	Asian (East 6.3% + South 5.6% + Filipino 2.3%)	14%
Black or African American	13.4%	Aboriginal	6.2%
Asian (East + South)	6%	Hispanic/Latino	4%
Native Americans + Alaska + Hawaiian Natives	1.5%	Black African/Caribbean	3.5%

\*US Census Bureau

#Including Middle East/North Africa

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>

\*\*Statistics Canada Census Data

#Extrapolated to include MENA

Statistics Canada. 2017. *Canada [Country] and Canada [Country]* (table). *Census Profile*. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed February 18, 2021).

These census numbers do not, of course, include international students, who have, especially in Canada, come to occupy anywhere from 5-6% up to 25-30% of an institution's program seats. In 2019, students from two countries were dominant with 34% from India and 22% from China. The US, despite the Trump administration's inhospitable policies, still attracted the largest number of international students worldwide (1.1 million compared to Canada's 642,000), also predominantly from China and India.

What all these numbers demonstrate, of course, is what every North American postsecondary faculty member has witnessed in the classroom for many years: we are not teaching a homogenous body of students. In many cases fewer than half are actually of European heritage and share what I'll call here the Western mindset. How many radically different ways of thinking are represented in each classroom or in each institution as a whole? I would suggest at least three or four. But, you may say, we are higher education institutions in a Western nation (more about that in a minute). Most faculty have been educated at Western institutions and have no other way of framing their discussion than in the spirit of the Western tradition, characterized among other things as individualistic, democratic, liberty-minded, tolerant, progressive, rational and scientific.<sup>1</sup> In fact, students come from abroad specifically to learn and experience the Western worldview.

That would be fine if we were talking simply about exchange students. But as the organizers suggested when dreaming up this conference, we are on the cusp of one of the greatest migrations of peoples across the globe due both to political upheaval and climate change. We are looking at long-term, deep changes to the population and to our way of life. On top of that—really preceding these more recent immigrations—Canada must come to terms with accommodating, not assimilating, its Indigenous population and has made commitments to faithfully address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action; and both the U.S. and Canada must rethink how Black Lives Matter also in the academy. Both nations also have generations-old Asian communities (Chinese, Japanese, Indian, among others) who have mastered the Western mindset and English language but nevertheless do not share a common heritage with their fellow citizens. Does their own heritage not matter to them and to us, as well? It should.

To return to the notion that we—Canada and the U.S.—are “Western” nations, that is, are the inheritors of a continuous cultural legacy (Appiah calls this transfer of knowledge “the golden

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<sup>1</sup> This specific list is from Kwame Anthony Appiah, “There is no such thing as western civilisation,” *The Guardian*, 9 November 2016.

nugget”) that stretches from Ancient Greece to Rome through the Christianization of Europe to the settlement of the New World to present-day North America, is no longer a defensible argument. In a 2016 excerpt from his BBC Reith Lecture, *Culture*, Kwame Anthony Appiah pointed out the most obvious historical inconsistencies to this “golden nugget” narrative, particularly as the core of a Western culture defined in opposition to Islam: “Because the classical inheritance it identifies was shared with Muslim learning. In Baghdad of the ninth century Abbasid caliphate, the palace library featured the works of Plato and Aristotle, Pythagoras and Euclid, translated into Arabic.”<sup>2</sup> Not only did the Arab world translate these texts, they absorbed, taught, commented on, and maintained this body of knowledge, this “nugget,” for future generations: “In the centuries that Petrarch called the Dark Ages, when Christian Europe made little contribution to the study of Greek classical philosophy, and many of the texts were lost, these works were preserved by Muslim scholars. Much of our understanding of classical philosophy among the ancient Greeks we have only because those texts were recovered by European scholars in the Renaissance from the Arabs.”<sup>3</sup>

Whether we agree with Appiah’s contention that there is no such thing as Western civilization and never was, the descendants of white Eurocentric Christian settlers who fought France and Britain for the rights and freedoms so eloquently expounded in the Declaration of Independence are no longer as homogenous as they once were. We also can no longer ignore two significant facts, no matter how hard we try: 1) the new republic was a slave republic, built on the backs of black Africans imported solely as forced labour, and 2) the establishment of white settlements entailed largely decimating the Indigenous population while denying them the same “inalienable” rights they had demanded for themselves when the great Shawnee chief Tecumseh proposed an autonomous, self-governed territory for a multi-tribal confederacy of Native Americans in 1811.<sup>4</sup> America may have survived the Civil War of 1861-65, legislatively banned slavery and finally endorsed the civil rights of its Afro-American and other minority communities; it may have embraced immigration from around the globe to build a dynamic economy that allowed it to surge into world leadership in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; but now the myth of American Exceptionalism as a force for good in the world has all but collapsed—especially in the wake of the Black Lives Matter

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<sup>2</sup> Appiah, “There is no such thing as western civilization.”

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/tecumseh>, accessed 17 February 2021.

(BLM) movement, the insurrection at the U.S. capitol in January 2021 and the subsequent acquittal of Donald J. Trump.

When the National Association of Scholars commissioned Stanley Kurtz to write his report, *The Lost History of Western Civilization*<sup>5</sup> in 2019, they were looking for a strong argument to restore Western Civ courses and programs to what they were 30 to 50 years ago. What Kurtz provides is a tedious, if accurate analysis of what could be called the Western Civ curriculum in American colleges from the founding of the colonies through their “dismantling” over the past 30 years at the insistence, he claims, of leftist students and faculty. This is premised on a narrowly American-focussed concept of Western culture that is as blinkered in its view of the world as his namesake’s in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*<sup>6</sup> (and Coppola’s film *Apocalypse Now*<sup>7</sup>). The report concludes that the cultural divide in America today is a direct result of college history departments replacing Western Civ courses with postmodern multicultural fare. That college curricula have had a profound effect on social and political forces is likely true, especially over time, but not necessarily as Kurtz and the NAS would have us think.

It should be noted that Canadian history departments have also revamped their Western Civilization courses, but less as a result of pressure from “leftist” faculty or student activists than from broad recognition of the changing face of the student body—which I suspect is largely the case at U.S. institutions, as well. By the time the Truth and Reconciliation Commission delivered its final report and 94 calls to action in December 2015, many colleges and universities had already begun to diversify and internationalize both the curriculum and the faculty, and in that context also began developing broader Indigenous programming. Over the past year, BLM has also resonated in Canada and spurred overdue curricular and hiring considerations while lending renewed urgency to fulfilling promises made to Indigenous communities. This type of curriculum reform is an ongoing process that should not be confused with the dilemma of how to address declining student interest and enrolments in the Humanities more broadly.

If culture is at heart shared values, customs, and understanding of the world, it is also not static. Not unless there are no advances in knowledge, no intrinsic advantages in commerce beyond one’s own culture, and no interest in learning about other people and civilizations. The thing about

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<sup>5</sup> Stanley Kurtz, *The Lost History of Western Civilization*. A Report by the National Association of Scholars, 2020: 152 pp.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 1902.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Ford Coppola, Director, *Apocalypse Now*, 1979.

values is that, as Jane Jacobs<sup>8</sup> went to great lengths to point out, they need to be fostered or they can be lost. Appiah agrees: “Values aren’t a birthright: you need to keep caring about them.”<sup>9</sup> None of this is to suggest that the study of Western Civilization is not relevant nor that the classical liberal arts curriculum is not still central to our expectations of student performance. **This is especially true of the Trivium—rhetoric, grammar and dialectic (or logic)—which persists in our demand for essays that reflect articulate and focussed critical analysis and cogent argument leading to a well-reasoned conclusion. But in 2021 is this narrow, disciplined way of thinking the best we can hope for or demand of our students? [???**

Returning to the census data in Figure 1, the largest (though declining) ethnic category of Non-Hispanic/Latinx White is hardly a homogenous group with the same shared values, customs, and understanding of the world. They have as little in common with each other as they do with their American Revolutionary forebears. Is there a common denominator that makes all these groups American? What about Canada? I’ve spoken of the U.S. and Canada almost as if they were identical. The Canadian-American author Clark Blaise described the difference as less one of substance than of texture.<sup>10</sup> But there *are* differences. For one thing, we have La Belle Province, the “distinct society” of Quebec with its own unique French dialect and culture, and we are officially a bilingual nation. For bilingual universities like Laurentian in Ontario and the University of New Brunswick, this comes with heavy costs. While both the U.S. and Canada value freedom of the individual, equal rights, democracy, and the rule of law, the most significant difference is that Canadians privilege group welfare over American individualism, which plays out in health care and access to higher education. Both nations, as the census data shows us, are highly multicultural. We are immigrant nations. Just ten years ago the census documented more than 200 languages spoken in Metropolitan Toronto, each representing a distinct culture, and no doubt major U.S. metropolises can boast similar diversity. How that diversity is valued is perhaps a little different between the two countries. But most important are the shared values that hold each nation together. And most important to our deliberations: truly shared ways of knowing about the world, of creating new knowledge, and of tackling—collaboratively across cultures—the biggest issues confronting humanity today.

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<sup>8</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead*,

<sup>9</sup> Appiah, “There is no such thing...”

<sup>10</sup> Clark Blaise, *A North American Education*: a book of short fiction (Doubleday, 1973).

The clear link between Western cultural values and the aims and objectives of a liberal education in North America cannot be denied. Indeed these same values and principles undergird all of our social, political and economic institutions, from the heart of government to the judicial system to the education system to the halls of industry and finance. But things are changing, not because a handful of students and faculty at Stanford replaced a Western Civ requirement with a global civ course, not because post-modern theory undermined our collective search for the truth, but because we have not heeded Jacobs's warning. In view of how multicultural our populations and respective student bodies are; in view of the miscommunications that regularly occur both internationally and domestically; in view of the commitments that we in Canada have made to our Indigenous communities; in view of the declining relevance of current liberal education programs among students and funders—why would we not choose to do whatever we could to reframe these programs to embrace the multiple worldviews in our midst?

Walter D. Mignolo suggests, indeed stresses, in his latest book the “urgent task of reconstitution of categories of thoughts and praxis of living destituted in the process of building Western Civilization and the idea of modernity.”<sup>11</sup> Quoting one of his students—“Colonialism is over; but coloniality is all over”<sup>12</sup>—Mignolo's mission is to champion the colonized, what he calls the “destituted.” This is not as overwhelming as it sounds. If we focus on the liberal arts and view it as a locus of change rather than primarily the legacy of one intellectual and cultural heritage, what means could we use to reframe the curriculum—with the aim of strengthening, not undermining our institutions? This is not Jenga. The goal would not be to pull out and discard the foundational stones or overwrite the Western worldview with another. It would not be to privilege one worldview over another; nor would it be to attempt an amalgamation of all individual worldviews. Rather it would be to identify whatever aspects might be held in common while highlighting and relating the major differences to one another. It would be an exercise in mutual respect and understanding.

Of course multicultural programs have been around for quite a while. The main issue Stanford students had with the replacement for Western Civ was too much diversity: “Students griped that the many courses under the Culture, Ideas & Values umbrella didn't have any overarching rationale and that each course failed to integrate Western and non-Western

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<sup>11</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*, [publication details and page citation].

<sup>12</sup> Mignolo, Interview [find details]

materials.”<sup>13</sup> This is a common complaint about multicultural, intercultural and, in fact, interdisciplinary courses and programs—and it’s not surprising. Teaching such a course requires faculty to stretch beyond the comfort zone of their discipline, their expertise, and most are reluctant to do so.<sup>14</sup> But the biggest obstacle is not faculty interest; it’s administrative red tape and disciplinary silos, both of which make faculty involvement a risky enterprise. Which brings me to the concept of epistemic communities.

Initially defined by Peter M. Haas as a network of experts or professionals with a shared understanding of a problem central to their domain that can only be solved through international policy implementation, epistemic communities have been operating in the international relations sphere since at least the 1980s. One of the earliest and most successful was the epistemic community (EC) convened to help address the rapidly evolving and dangerous situation of ozone layer depletion. Not only did the community of scientists share a common belief in the cause of the problem, they also agreed on the solution and were able to lay out the range and implications of possible policies, including inaction, to bolster their recommendations in each of their respective countries or regions. This example led Haas to identify four key aspects of the network of knowledge-based experts that comprise an EC:

they have

1. a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members;
2. shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes;
3. shared notions of validity—that is, intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and
4. a common policy enterprise—that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence.<sup>15</sup>

While the early applications of ECs were primarily science-based, e.g., related to climate change (acid rain, fisheries, whaling) and health crises (HIV, epidemics, pandemics), the past twenty years

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<sup>13</sup>Mark Bauerlein, “How a revision of the Western Civ curriculum resulted in no curriculum at all,” *Inside Higher Ed*, February 19, 2020. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/02/19/how-revision-western-civ-curriculum-resulted-no-curriculum-all-opinion>. Accessed February 25, 2021.

<sup>14</sup>Those who do, generally find it a demanding and rewarding (if undercompensated) exercise. The best program of this ilk I’m aware of is the Arts One program at the University of British Columbia, now in its 53rd year.

<sup>15</sup>Peter M. Haas, “Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination (Winter, 1992), p. 3.

or so have seen a proliferation of educational settings make use of them for, among other things, managing K-12 experimental curricula,<sup>16</sup> blending Western and Indigenous approaches to science teaching,<sup>17</sup> as well as determining how international study abroad can contribute to advancing knowledge in a given discipline.<sup>18</sup> Over time, this wider range of applications has broadened Haas's strict definition and also raised the question of the differences (and relationship) between epistemic communities and, for example, communities of practice and learning communities.

Learning Communities—or more specifically Professional Learning Communities (PCL)—as well as Communities of Practice (CoP) evolved in 1990s, primarily inspired by Senge's popular book *The Fifth Discipline*.<sup>19</sup> PCLs are more typically found in schools and school systems, led by principals with required participation by teachers, with the goal of increasing student achievement while building collaboration among teachers. Communities of Practice are groups of practitioners, either in a business or non-profit organization or broader community with the goal of sharing best practices and/or testing out a new tool or resource in the interest of advancing the field of practice.<sup>20</sup> An epistemic community (EC) may evolve from a PCL or CoP, but differs on three fronts: 1) the group of experts may comprise both academicians and practitioners located throughout a region, country or more often across the globe, 2) they share a common concern central to their field of expertise, including a shared belief in the cause(s), solutions, and inherent dangers of inaction, and 3) the end goal is to enshrine their shared knowledge and beliefs in policy.<sup>21</sup> Any of the three types of community may generate new knowledge in the course of their work and all of the three are likely to encounter cross-cultural differences and intercultural miscommunications.

There are three recent studies, two from Australia and one from Sweden, that can provide us with some guidance on how to use the EC model at the postsecondary level. All three sets of

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<sup>16</sup> Joshua L. Glazer and Donald J. Peurach, "Occupational Control in Education: The Logic and Leverage of Epistemic Communities," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 85 No. 2 Summer 2015, 172-202.

<sup>17</sup> Ray Barnhardt and Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Alaska Native Ways of Knowing," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Vol. 36, Issue 1, 8-23, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Hovey, "Study Abroad, Global Knowledge and the Epistemic Communities of Higher Education," March 2005, SelectedWorks of Rebecca Hovey, [http://works.bepress.com/rebecca\\_hovey/4/](http://works.bepress.com/rebecca_hovey/4/)

<sup>19</sup> P.M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1990.

<sup>20</sup> DWL Development without Limits, "PLC's and CoP's—Oh My!" <https://www.developmentwithoutlimits.org/news/2019/10/22/plcs-and-cops-oh-my/>; S. Blankenship and W.E.A. Ruona, Professional learning communities and communities of practice: a comparison of models, literature review, 2007. Retrieved 5 March 2021 at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED504776.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Haas, "Introduction," 1992; and Hovey, "Study Abroad," 2005.

researchers share the view that “[i]n Western tradition, specialised knowledge became a barrier for social learning necessary to address complexity ... This also affected non-Western countries whose local knowledge has become inaccessible through the increasing dominance of Western discourses and technologies.”<sup>22</sup> But the central problem each was addressing differed. In Australia, Sharon K. Chirgwin and Henk Huijser describe their exploration of a “both-ways approach” to teaching critical thinking while honouring Indigenous ways of knowing at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in northern Australia.<sup>23</sup> In a different region of northern Australia, Top End, a collective of practitioners which has become known as TopEndSTS, representing a wide range of disciplines—community development, literature, archaeology, intercultural engagement, linguistics, law, governance studies, science and technology studies and education—works with Aboriginal knowledge holders “in place” on Aboriginal land to apply Science and Technology Studies (STS) to a variety of research projects. STS is a field of research that “unpicks the assumptions embedded in Western knowledge traditions, and provides resources for new forms of situated interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research work.”<sup>24</sup> The third group based in Sweden proposes a conceptual framework for analysing complexity of co-production settings. Specifically they examine three specific barriers to understanding within groups of urban planning professionals and academics: first, communication gaps caused by such things as language constructions (linguistic diversities), second, transdisciplinary spaces where the languages of different epistemic communities of practice become a barrier, and third, cultural misunderstandings that are difficult to articulate in words.<sup>25</sup>

I’ll spend the remainder of my time describing in greater detail the both-ways project and suggest in my conclusion the threads we can draw from the other two examples for our project of re-framing liberal education. The both-ways philosophy is founded on the metaphor of Ganma, a process that “occurs in a space where fresh water (Yolngu knowledge) and salt water (non-

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<sup>22</sup> Varvara Nikulina, Johan Lindal, Henrikke Baumann, David Simon, and Henrik Ny, “Lost in Translation: a framework for analysing complexity of co-production setting in relation to epistemic communities, linguistic diversities and culture,” *Futures*, July 2019, 1-26. Accessed at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334586329>.

<sup>23</sup> Chirgwin S.K., Huijser H. (2015) Cultural Variance, Critical Thinking, and Indigenous Knowledges: Exploring a Both-Ways Approach. In: Davies M., Barnett R. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137378057\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137378057_21)

<sup>24</sup> C. Bow, H. Verran, L. Norrington, M. Christie, “Editorial: Working with multiple knowledges in Australia’s Top End,” in *Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts*, Special Issue: Collaborative Knowledge Work in Northern Australia, Number 26 – November 2020, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Nikulina et al, 1-2.

Aboriginal knowledge) come together in a briny lagoon. ... So too with both-ways—there is no need to compromise either epistemological position, but rather a new space can come into being that supports the creation of new understandings and knowledge.”<sup>26</sup> Chirgwin and Huijser identify critical thinking as central to the Western approach to knowledge creation and hence an essential skill required by Indigenous learners seeking a graduate degree in Australia. A review of various definitions of critical thinking from Dewey to Glaser to Bloom to Moore,<sup>27</sup> concludes that all “implicitly approach critical thinking as an *individual* skill that can be assessed on an individual level,”<sup>28</sup> which does not correspond to the approach in many Indigenous contexts where knowledge is treated as communal. What then are the chief considerations when teaching critical thinking skills to Indigenous students? Chirgwin and Huijser suggest two streams: 1) Is critical thinking in its Western guise appropriate in Indigenous contexts and, if so, how? 2) Is the written essay the only appropriate means of assessing these skills? Are there visual or oral forms of expression that can fulfill this role?<sup>29</sup> The second is easier to deal with (more or less) once the first has been resolved. The “both ways” approach employs three key elements or frameworks, as appropriate:

In the first instance, in acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of Indigenous worldviews, holistic or integrated examples are used that are situated in Indigenous contexts and may provide links to, for example, ancestral knowledge and country. Second, the method of learning through observation is respected, by providing examples that are first observed and discussed in a group, before the trainee researcher undertakes the exercise individually. Communal learning has been found to be particularly effective as a first stage. Third, methods or skills are not introduced in an isolated or abstract manner, but by initially using real-life examples that are familiar to the students. Once mastered in an everyday manner, the skills is practiced and reinforced using research examples.<sup>30</sup>

One can imagine such an approach working effectively—more effectively than current teaching methods—to other cultural groups (e.g., Chinese, African) or mixed cultural backgrounds, including Western students.

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<sup>26</sup> Chirgwin and Huijser, p. 336-37; first noted in M. Bat, C. Kilgariff, and T. Doe, “Indigenous Tertiary Education—We’re All Learning: Both-Ways Pedagogy in the Northern Territory of Australia,” *Higher Education Research and Development* 33 (5) 2014: 871-886.

<sup>27</sup> J. Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (revised edition), Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933; E. Glaser, *An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking*, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941; B. Bloom et al, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. Vol. 19. New York: David McKay, 1956; T. Moore, “Critical Thinking and Disciplinary Thinking: A Continuing Debate,” *Higher Education Research and Development* 30 (3): 261-274.

<sup>28</sup> Chirgwin and Huijser, p. 339.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

One of the key observations of the “both ways” researchers at Batchelor Institute, is that most students are keen to understand Western ways of thinking and to use it to their advantage: “Ironically while critical thinking can be seen as a Western skill, those Indigenous graduates who acquire it will be better placed to challenge any residual colonial legacies that may still dominate the academy and society.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, by acquiring the skill to adjust their way of thinking to the culture they are engaging with, they are demonstrating “cultural code switching”—which may just be one of the most critical additions to the list of liberal education skills for the twenty-first century.

While this paper has focussed primarily on bridging the gap between Western and Indigenous worldviews, the reframing of liberal education requires an expansive new foundation beginning in the K-12 curriculum where the Western worldview is deeply embedded. Early exposure to the stories of Indigenous elders—not in isolation or as fictional entertainments, but as part of the science or social science curriculum that stresses the complementarity of the two systems<sup>32</sup>—would be a start. But as several of the studies cited in this presentation have noted, language and worldview is inextricably intertwined. It is nearly fifty years since most colleges and universities scrapped the language admissions requirement, with the effect of eliminating the breadth and depth of high school language programming and subsequently eviscerating college and university language and literature departments: students no longer arrived ready and interested in reading works in their original language. English was then fast becoming (and now has become) the lingua franca of international commerce, government, NGOs and academic work. Native English speakers have been lulled into believing that if people speak English, they also share or aspire to their own worldview. Reciprocity in cross-cultural understanding lacks urgency.

Over the next ten to twenty years, immigration will transform Canada and the U.S. while the urgency to settle land claims and establish better communication channels with our Indigenous communities grows. If we are to address the big issues facing us now and only getting bigger—climate change, epidemics and pandemics, urban planning, food security, etc.—we must find common ground. We must be able to work together across cultural and linguistic difference, and overcome the fears and suspicions spawned by misunderstanding and ignorance. To do that, we

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<sup>31</sup> Chirgwin and Huijser, p. 344.

<sup>32</sup> Barnhardt and Kawagley

must transform our education systems accordingly:

- K-12 educators in a given province or state, who are experts in primary and secondary education and share the belief that the absence of multiple worldviews in the curriculum reflecting the diversity of their classrooms is contributing to dangerous miscommunication and racial stereotyping and must be changed. This epistemic community would need to comprise representatives of the multiple worldviews; they would need to respect one another's expertise and knowledge system without privileging one over the others; they would need to agree on the solutions; and they would need to have access to policymakers to ensure standardization of the curriculum across a given region.
- College and university liberal education practitioners would first and foremost create a community of practice with the goal of adding and developing "cultural code switching" to the goals of a liberal education. Learning communities at each institution would establish the curriculum required to develop this skill, looking carefully at the absence of sufficient language and culture courses to do the job. Eventually, Provincial ministries of higher education and state education departments would, on the recommendation of presidents and trustees, add cultural code switching to degree level expectations and fund the necessary program changes accordingly.

On a more modest scale, of course, we can all just begin with a commitment to open our own minds to these deficits in the goals of our respective educational institutions and consider the options for change. Consider also, as a proper epistemic community would do, the consequence of inaction.