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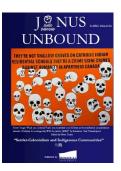
Indigenization in Universities and Its Role in Continuing Settler-Colonialism

Celeste Pedri-Spade & Brock Pitawanakwat

Abstract

Canadian universities have accelerated plans to Indigenize their institutions following the release of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) *Calls to Action* report. While the TRC report implicates post-secondary institutions in the work of educating society about the legacy of Indian Residential Schools, many universities have expanded this call to include various efforts aimed at increasing Indigenous presence across their respective campuses. Yet, the consequences of said work do not always match the stated goals. In this essay, Pedri-Spade and Pitawanakwat discuss multiple ways that settler-colonialism is carried out within universities, often under the auspice of advancing Indigenization. They first provide a short history of some of the milestones and key challenges related to advancing Indigeneity in the academy from 1960 to 2015. They then turn their attention to more recent advances and struggles, providing examples of how the avoidance and/or failure of universities to reflect local Indigenous cultural values and protocols is often justified through the espousal of Indigenization to neoliberal organizational politics and practices. This section offers critical reflection on advancements in Indigenous education *vis-à-vis* a reconciliatory framework that emphasizes Indigenization as a commitment to add Indigenous bodies and their knowledges within existing architectures that simultaneously contribute to their erasure. Through this process the authors expose the kinds of harms experienced by Indigenous peoples and communities. Moving forward, the authors call for Canadian universities to emphasize processes of decolonization and redress.

Keywords: Indigenization, Decolonization, Truth and Reconciliation in Universities

Introduction

This article invites readers to critically reflect upon Indigenization efforts within universities in Canada by critiquing ways that settler-colonialism is carried out within universities, often under the auspice of advancing "Indigenization." First, the authors provide a brief history of Indigenization in Canadian universities from 1960 to 2015, addressing some of the key challenges and milestone achievements that set the stage for the current phase. We then

move on to more recent advances and struggles providing examples of how the avoidance and/or failure of universities to reflect local Indigenous cultural values and protocols is often justified through the espousal of Indigeneity to neoliberal organizational politics and practices. The article will provide critical reflection on advancements in Indigenous education *vis-à-vis* a reconciliatory framework that emphasizes Indigenization as a commitment to add Indigenous bodies and their knowledges within existing architectures that simultaneously contribute to their erasure.

As Anishinaabe scholars from First Nations in Ontario, it is important to situate ourselves as Indigenous scholars who pursue these goals through a critical Indigenist approach that centres our lived experiences, ideas, interests, and struggles as scholars with a combined 25 years of experience navigating Indigenization within the academy. Dr. Celeste Pedri-Spade (Anishinaabe – Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation) is an associate professor and the Queen's National Scholar in Indigenous Studies at Queen's University, and a practicing artist and visual anthropologist whose current research interests include: Anishinaabe knowledge, critical pedagogies and identity politics, and the role of Indigenous visual/material culture in decolonial praxis. Brock Pitawanakwat (Anishinaabe – Whitefish River First Nation) is an associate professor and program coordinator of Indigenous Studies in York University's Department of Humanities whose current research includes Anishinaabe education, governance, health, labour, and language revitalization. We locate our research within an Indigenous research paradigm that intentionally employs a critical narrativist style as a way of unpacking and working through issues of power and authority that affect Indigenous Peoples, their knowledges and experiences in the academy. While we recognize that opinions vary about the value and merit of Indigenization, our goal is to, indeed, demonstrate some of the inherent tensions around Indigenization. Moving forward, we call for a commitment to decolonize outlining key considerations for universities, which emphasize processes of redress and ongoing commitments to addressing issues of power, authority, and relationship building with Indigenous communities.

What is Indigenization in Canada's post-secondary sector? In the tailwinds of the 2015 federal election campaign, the Canadian Prime Minister promised that his government's most important relationship was with Indigenous Peoples. Reconciliation emerged as a national priority for the first time since the 1990s and the national reckoning that followed the so-called Oka conflict.[1] Universities accelerated their pursuit of "Indigenization" and quickly found themselves scrambling to keep up with one another as they strived to be the first to arrive at the finish line of "truth and reconciliation" (Gaudry and Lorenz; Louie; Vescera). The Indigenization race has many facets. As one university inches forward with a "cluster hire" of Indigenous faculty members, another commits to mandating Indigenous content courses. The number of Indigenous faculty members at many institutions has increased rapidly and many of these individuals have contributed to banks of new Indigenous courses, providing access to Indigenous knowledge to students at every year level regardless of their program of study. Table 1 below provides a summary

of an environmental scan of Ontario's largest public universities' attempts to Indigenize their institutions since the TRC issued its 94 *Calls to Action* in 2015. The chart clearly shows that Ontario's publicly funded universities responded to the TRC with gestures of reconciliation and commitments to invest more in Indigenous program development, student initiatives, community partnerships, and staff and faculty hiring.

Table 1: Gestures of Reconciliation in Ontario's Publicly Funded Universities

Ontario University	Online TRC Response	Academic Program Development	Student Support Initiatives	Commnity Partnerships	Administrative Hiring	Faculty Hiring
Brock	🏛				🏛	🏛
Carleton	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛
Guelph	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛
Lakehead	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛
Laurentian	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛
McMaster		🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛
Nipissing	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛
OCAD	🏛	🏛				🏛
Ontario Tech	🏛		🏛	🏛		
Ottawa	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛
Queens	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛
Toronto	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛
Toronto Metropolitan	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛
Trent	🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛
Waterloo	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛
Western	🏛		🏛	🏛	🏛	🏛
Wilfrid Laurier		🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛
Windsor	🏛	🏛	🏛			🏛
York	🏛	🏛	🏛		🏛	🏛

At the same time, many universities struggle to retain Indigenous faculty members, pointing towards complex, multi-layered reasons for their departures Indeed, we have witnessed a rise in Indigenous faculty who have not only brought in new Indigenous content courses delivered from an Indigenous perspective, but have also taken on a plethora of governance and service duties related to "Indigenous initiatives" within universities. While it is challenging to define what "Indigenization" means within universities because approaches and activities often vary from institution to institution, Cree scholar Shauneen Pete provides this comprehensive definition:

> The transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces that facilitate the ethical stewardship of a plurality of Indigenous knowledges and practices so thoroughly as to constitute an essential element of the university. It is not limited to Indigenous people, but encompasses all students and faculty, for the benefit of our academic integrity and our social viability. (ctd. in Hogan and McCracken)

We define Indigenization as a transformative process that depends on the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and their respective knowledges and the creation of various spaces where Indigenous Peoples may enact their ways of knowing, axiologies, and ethics. This definition suggests that its occurrence brings intellectual and societal benefits. Of course, Indigenization looks great on the surface, yet during our combined 25 years working as Indigenous academics we have concerns with its limitations. What could possibly be wrong with Indigenization?

Faculty members and students have already voiced important critiques of Indigenization and many of these have addressed the problem with mandating Indigenous courses, exemplifying how this often jeopardizes the education of Indigenous students in spaces where they are frequently forced to both educate non-Indigenous students and professors about their culture while enduring their racist backlash (Gaudry; Kuokkannen; Lorenz and Gaudry). Others have critiqued how institutions have failed to provide safe and collegial work environments when bringing onboard Indigenous faculty and staff through diversity hiring (Pedri-Spade 2020a; 2020b; Sterritt). Indigenous scholars are often marginalized, by both fellow faculty and their students, when sharing critical Indigenous perspectives that draw attention to how education systems and policies perpetuate inequity and settler-colonialism.

Brief History of Advancing Indigeneity in Canadian Universities

Indigenous post-secondary programming is a recent phenomenon in Canada with its first Indigenous-focused program launched at Trent University in 1969. Cree scholar Blair Stonechild's *The New Buffalo: The Struggle for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada* (2006) is the most comprehensive study of higher

education for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Stonechild addresses how Canada's early higher education policy was openly assimilative with automatic enfranchisement, a legal term for forced citizenship and assimilation, for status Indians with university degrees. Enforced enfranchisement of university graduates ended in 1951; however, education for Indigenous peoples remained assimilative. Prime Minister Diefenbaker's government was the first to bring in a sponsorship program for Indian post-secondary education. Stonechild argues that the Treaties secured higher education as a "guaranteed and portable" Treaty Right for First Nations including funding for individuals as well as funding for Indigenous institutions of higher learning (2006 137).

The federal Indian department did in fact begin funding Indigenous centers for higher learning beginning with the Community Development Program, which was launched in the 1960s, but soon cancelled when its politicized students criticized and mobilized against the federal government. The following decade saw the government's establishment of Cultural/Education Centres, the largest of which was Manitou College near Montreal, Quebec (underfunding led to its closure soon after).

By the mid to late 1960s, mainstream Canadian universities began to respond to Indigenous calls for culturally-relevant courses and Indigenous-focused programs of their own. Trent University's Native Studies program was the first in Canada and started in 1969, with Brandon University and the University of Manitoba following in 1975 (Tanner). Trent University's Native Studies program was implemented as the university wanted to further educate those who were not familiar with the issues that surrounded Indigenous populations. During the late 1960s, Indigenous People's movements such as the American Indian Movement and the National Indian Brotherhood began to draw greater public awareness of Canada's colonial past, which indeed challenged many of the white settler-colonial narratives that structured the nation's overall identity (Tanner).

The first federally sponsored status Indian student was Joseph Jacobs in 1910 who enrolled at McGill University. The number of post-secondary Indigenous students remained low for several decades, until 1969, when it was estimated that 125 status Indians were enrolled in Canadian universities (Stonechild 2016). University enrolment of Status Indians grew steadily through the 1970s and 1980s, leading the federal government, in an act of austerity, to reduce its support for First Nations students with a cap on post-secondary support in 1988. The National Indian Education Forum responded in its report that Canada's refusal to adequately fund Indigenous post-secondary students was poor public policy because "it cost $10,000 to put an Indian through a year of university, compared to up to $56,000 per year to house them in a high-security prison" (82). Post-secondary education continued to remain important for Indigenous students during this period, especially within specialized professional programs including social services and teaching. This need reflected a period during which Indigenous struggles for control over child welfare and education intensified, following prolonged periods of colonial violence such as Indian Residential Schools and the so-called "Sixties Scoop."

Out of these early developments arose important Indigenous critiques illustrating how struggles to advance Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge systems were related to Eurocentric worldviews. Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste has written extensively on Eurocentrism in the Canadian academy:

> Every university discipline, and its various discourses, has a political and institutional stake in Eurocentric diffusionism and knowledge. Yet, every university has been structured to see the world through the lens of Eurocentrism, which opposes Indigenous perspectives and epistemes. The faculties of contemporary universities encourage their students to be the gatekeepers of Eurocentric disciplinary knowledge in the name of universal truth. Yet, Eurocentric knowledge is no more than a Western philosophy invented in history and identity to serve a particular interest. (186)

Indigenous scholars like Battiste advocate for Indigenous scholarship to be rooted in Indigenous languages, knowledges, and worldviews. The establishment of Indigenous spaces in preexisting institutions of higher learning is one of the most important developments in Indigenous higher education in Canada. These Indigenous academic spaces, whether programs, departments, or even faculties, started small, often only with the appointment of individual faculty members, but over time programs, departments, faculties, and even entire institutions have emerged. Examples include First Nations University, First Nations Technical Institute, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. Many of the institutions and programs have steering committees comprised of several Indigenous community members. Despite this growth, all of these institutions remain closely affiliated, federated, and dependent upon established Canadian colleges and universities (Castellano, Davis, and Lahache). They are governed and beholden to non-Indigenous stakeholders whose views and priorities do not necessarily correspond to those belonging to Indigenous peoples. Canada's reluctance to support full self-determination of Indigenous institutions of higher education is a microcosm of the colonial control that the settler state continues to wield over Indigenous peoples.

Our intent in providing this short history of early attempts at bringing Indigenous peoples and their respective knowledges into the academy is to contextualize recent trajectories that followed work still rooted in both assimilationist, exploitive, and consumptive agendas: for example, the importance of educating the "Indian" to be a better Canadian or educating the settler about Indigenous peoples so that they are more equipped to manage Indigenous peoples and their struggles. It is also important to touch upon earlier critical Indigenous scholarship that exposed how these measures were grounded in Eurocentric and colonial worldviews about knowledge itself, Indigenous Peoples, and their respective knowledge systems.

The 21ˢᵗ Century University: Corporate, Neoliberal, and Settler-Colonial

In this section, we unpack what it means to "Indigenize" within a broader context of the neoliberal university. In her analysis of the neoliberal shift in post-secondary education, Yvonna Lincoln provides key definitions. She argues that neoliberalism represents the politico-economic-social theory from which many of the assumptions regarding the market's power and its presumed ability to determine appropriate arrays of labor, capital, education, and social services, emerge. Within settler-colonial states a form of heightened neoliberalism, referred to as "ordoliberalism," emerges wherein the market also dictates governance and the roles of government in providing services and creating the conditions for the markets to operate freely, as it wishes, with "a minimum of regulation" (Lincoln 11). Within these conditions, institutions like universities behave as corporations, competing to retain and improve their rank in the echelon of post-secondary institutions.

Ultimately, universities that fail to adopt corporate ideology and practices within their institutional ecology, which includes academics and research that support the neoliberal, capitalist system, are deemed "misfit" or dangerous. Lincoln suggests that "the terrorism" of these accountability regimes may be directly related to the very real threats of program discontinuation, contract nonrenewal, failure to tenure and promote, failure to provide merit pay, or the removal of courses from the course catalogue, with its implication that certain topics would no longer be covered in the curriculum (17). Lincoln warns that the most vulnerable program areas are not departments but extra-departmental programs, including critical race and ethnic studies language programs, gender studies, and women's studies. Universities that press to focus on liberal arts education and critical thinking are indeed threatening because they may promulgate serious critiques of the dominant system and the kinds of inequities and injustices it perpetuates.

A timely example of the severity of the neoliberal settler-colonial capitalist regime on Indigenous academics is the 2020/2021 closure of the Indigenous Studies program at the University of Sudbury, a federated partner of the Laurentian University (Gustafson, Lefevbre, and Rowe). Despite its status as one of the oldest Indigenous Studies programs in Canada that offered a range of courses with several hundred students registered every semester, this program was terminated during a "restructuring phase" as a result of Laurentian's insolvency filing under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) (Ulrichsen). This was the first time that the federal courts approved the application of this Act, intended for corporate, for-profit companies, to a Canadian university. Indigenous Studies was a casualty along with other critically oriented programs aimed at fostering social and environmental justice. The majority of programs that did survive the dramatic cutbacks were those with direct or indirect ties to local and regional industry (namely mining), whereas terminated programs centered critical, anti-colonial approaches to settler-colonial, extrac-

tivist industry and their involvement with Indigenous lands and peoples, including Environmental Studies, Gender Studies, Indigenous Studies, Labour Studies, Philosophy, and Political Science (Harp).

Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenization

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released a summary report that outlined 94 *Calls to Action* aimed at changing policies and programs in various sectors in order to repair the devastation caused by Indian Residential Schools and move forward with reconciliation. The *Calls to Action* report implicated post-secondary institutions in the work of truth and reconciliation, calling for commitments to improve Indigenous programming, increase opportunities for Indigenous language learning, Indigenous research, and enhance supports for Indigenous students. Additionally, another key Call to Action related to equity and diversity, calling upon institutions to ensure that they are hiring more Indigenous employees.

Following the release of the *Calls to Action*, universities and colleges across Canada responded in different ways and at different speeds (Gaudry and Lorenz; Louie). More formalized and structured approaches involved establishing TRC committees comprised of different community stakeholders—Indigenous and non-Indigenous. These kinds of committees or task forces would collectively recommend different actions to university leadership in how truth and reconciliation could be implemented not only through teaching and student support but also through, for example, university operations (e.g., developing public signage that respected Indigenous cultures and their languages). Many of those heavily involved in these committees included Indigenous staff, faculty, and students already engaged in broader institutional Indigenization efforts, inevitably leading to many connections and crossovers, specifically as TRC recommendations related to Indigenous programming and Indigenous student support.

As mentioned previously, the momentum generated by the TRC's *Calls to Action* report led to a period during which universities across Canada launched Indigenous faculty searches, attempting to hire at all levels and in many different Faculties and Schools (Four Arrows; Gaudry and Lorenz; Louie; Sterritt). Thus, truth and reconciliation in universities connects to equity and diversity measures as universities attempt to "Indigenize" through the recruitment of more Indigenous scholars and staff. Taking their cue from the *Calls to Action* report, many universities committed to advancing reconciliation by better educating students about the historical and present-day events and experiences that shape the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The underlying logic is that Indigenous faculty are needed to address the severe underrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples within their respective institutions and are instrumental to "Indigenizing" programs through the delivery of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Not only have Indigenous scholars been tasked with the ongoing development and delivery of new Indigenous-focused course and program development but as minority scholars, they are disproportionately tasked with

service to enhance the Indigenization efforts of the university as a whole, often to the detriment of their own individual research and academic success. In a recent research report commissioned by Ontario's universities, Indigenous faculty noted that service activities exceeded that of their non-Indigenous peers and was often different in nature (Council of Ontario's Universities). Indigenous faculty cited in the report expressed frustration that they were called upon to serve on all levels of their institutions while also carrying the expectation of maintaining relationships with Indigenous communities outside of the university. The next section will outline some of the key ideological shifts in universities to provide greater context to the broader institutional environment in which this Indigenization takes place.

TRC, Equity and Diversity, and the Politics of Recognition

Universities have been slow to implement Indigenous and Treaty rights to education except when they are able to harmonize them with existing institutional priorities. Many of their institutional priorities are focused on economic development, finance, and extractivism that are antithetical to Indigenous concerns and instead are well-aligned with the Eurocentric and neoliberal conceptualizations of land and society that indeed threaten Indigenous life. This predicament, or rather the inability to confront it, often leads universities to limit their work related to supporting Indigenous rights or Truth and Reconciliation to symbolic Indigenous land acknowledgements and activities that often fall under institutional equity and diversity initiatives such as hiring more Indigenous faculty and staff.

In an analysis of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the postsecondary sector, scholar Penny Burke has critiqued institutional measures to reveal how these measures function within neoliberal practices that prioritize market-driven imperatives and economic outcomes. Burke argues that equity work is often co-opted by the economic and financial priorities of neoliberal universities. Indeed, all universities in Canada receiving federal monies must comply to specific equity and diversity targets outlined in the Federal Contractors Program. This program ensures that contractors who do business with the Government of Canada seek to achieve and maintain a workforce that is representative of the Canadian workforce, including members of the four designated groups under the Employment Equity Act; Aboriginal peoples (Indian, Inuit, and Metis) are one of the four designated groups (Federal Contractors Program). As such, universities must ensure that reasonable progress is made towards having full representation of the four designated groups within its workforce. Universities are required to collect and report on information related to how many Aboriginal peoples make up their workforce. It is unclear how these measures are being enforced and reported by the federal government to hold universities accountable for their Indigenous targets.

Several scholars have outlined how Truth and Reconciliation efforts grounded in a politics of recognition do very little to advance the aspirations and goals of Indigenous Peoples linked to the regenerative and restorative work happening in their respective communities and Nations (Alfred; Cheechoo;

Corntassel; Coulthard). This is because a politics of recognition reinscribes the very issues of settler-colonial power that limit and threaten Indigenous rights to self-determination (Alfred; Coulthard). It is the state and its institutions that have absolute control and authority in determining what kind of reconciliatory activity/actions will take place and to what extent. One may argue that this politics of recognition is at work within universities and is carried out through neoliberal equity and diversity initiatives. While the recruitment and retainment of Indigenous faculty and staff may be framed as supporting truth and reconciliation within the university, there is an incentive tied to this effort as explained above in discussion of the Federal Contractors Program. Thus universities are positioned with the task of recognizing Indigenous Peoples as distinct members of their workforce. While this may sound like a straightforward task, the work of Indigeneity and Indigenous Nationhood is complex. State-led definitions related to Aboriginality in Canada are often at odds with how respective Indigenous communities and subsequent Nations define who belongs and who has the right to claim citizenship and membership. The next section will address how both the avoidance and failure of universities to uphold Indigenous concepts and practices of belonging and nationhood through their individualistic self-identification processes contribute to ongoing settler-colonial violence.

Problematizing Indigeneity and the Emergence of Ethnic Fraud

In his recent article investigating recent recruitment and tenure and promotion practices involving Indigenous scholars in post-secondary institutions, Dustin Louie states that over the last decade there has been a 40% increase in professors who self-identify as Indigenous in Canada. Moreover, he scanned 15 Indigenous scholar job advertisements from September 2018 to July 2019 and found that 100% of these postings included an expectation for the candidate to hold Indigenous Knowledges and connections to Indigenous communities. Indeed, the race for reconciliation in universities has created different teaching and service responsibilities for Indigenous scholars that place increased pressures on already substantial workloads (Pedri-Spade 2020a; Vescara.)

As mentioned previously, with the corporatization of universities, new full-time faculty positions in North American universities are scarce. At the same time, there is an increased demand for Indigenous scholars given university-wide commitments to advancing Indigenization and the TRC's *Calls to Action*. This situation creates a strong incentive for academic job-seekers to best position themselves to match the job's requirements. Unfortunately, when Indigenous identity is a requirement, in some instances it leads to deceptive practices of ethnic fraud in which the individual applicant is most directly responsible, but the hiring institution is also complicit if it fails to verify the applicant's Indigenous identity claims. Comanche-Kiowa scholar Cornel Pewewardy defined Indigenous ethnic fraud in the American academy as the "inaccurate self-iden-

tification of race by persons applying for faculty positions at mainstream colleges and universities, or for admissions into special programs, and for research consideration" (201). Unfortunately, Canadian universities frequently fail to verify their Indigenous hires are Indigenous by relying solely on self-identification or honour systems. One of the most recent controversies demonstrating this failure happened in 2021 at Queen's University, where several faculty and staff members' claims to Indigeneity were called into question through a publicly circulated, anonymous report (Miller). After the university quickly rejected the anonymous report, claiming that it trusted the Indigenous protocols it uses to confirm a person's ancestry, a public letter was penned and signed by over 100 Indigenous academics across Canada and the United States. The letter called upon Queen's to retract its statement and uphold its constitutional obligations to First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples. Indeed, when universities are only interested in checking a box to meet diversity hiring targets, then their hiring committees and senior administration (which often have little or no Indigenous representation) will often gravitate to the box checker who appears to be the best fit for the settler university. The result is an "Indigenous" academic workforce that has little to no Indigenous community support but instead fits a perceived need in the institution that is conducting the hire.

Moreover, there continues to be much ambiguity around what constitutes "Indigeneity" as a category within settler-colonial institutions. Indeed, an "Indigenous" individual is not recognized with any legal rights according to Section 35 of Canada's *Constitution Act*, which defines "Aboriginal" rights as pertaining to only "Indian, Metis and Inuit" peoples. Considering the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, there is no official definition of "Indigenous;" but, according to the United Nations, Indigenous Peoples are those that: 1) have historical continuity with pre-colonial, pre-settler societies; 2) have a strong link to land/territory; 3) have a distinct culture and struggle to maintain it; 4) are socially and economically marginalized within dominant societies; 5) self-identify as Indigenous at the individual level and are accepted by the community as their member; 6) have distinct social, economic, or political systems; and 7) have distinct language, culture, and beliefs. For Julia Bello-Bravo the meaning of Indigeneity is contested across different legal and scholarly contexts but one of the key elements that typically recurs is a legal and moral right of unlimited self-identification by peoples as Indigenous. However, Jeff Corntassel stresses that while a person may claim Indigenous status, said claim may be deemed invalid by an Indigenous community.

Of course, this is further complicated given how "Indigeneity" is a contested term complicated by formal definitions under domestic and international law and the lack thereof. For example, within the Ontario Human Rights Code, Indigeneity is taken up as simply a matter of individual "ancestry" and "heritage" as opposed to a distinct political identity. Recent scholarship in Indigenous Studies addresses how "Indigeneity" is not an identity but an analytical category, drawing attention to the negative consequences of subsuming tribal and national identities into one global identity. Dakota scholar Kim TallBear (2013) illustrates how trying to link the environmental, cultural, and

spiritual concerns of Indigenous Peoples globally (or assuming this "global Indigeneity" frame) may lead to the erosion and neglect of unique tribal cultures and histories and may undermine the political ambitions and rights of particular tribal nations. Indeed, this issue presents itself in university governance when, for example, various arts or humanities programs with their own curriculum plans, attempt to advance institutional "Indigeneity" by adding a "global pan-Indigenous" perspective, failing to understand that there is no such thing. What this "global Indigenous" need often translates to is a desire to infuse the program/curriculum with an Indigenous perspective from elsewhere/anywhere other than here. Instead of approaching recruitment with the desire to fill either a local or a global Indigenous position, based entirely on what the program requires, there needs to be a clear consultation with Indigenous communities in order to ascertain what role this kind of "global" addition will take on, including how it relates to or supports the cultural, social, or political aspirations of the tribal peoples upon whose lands and territories they are located. Without such consultative work, further marginalization and displacement of Indigenous Peoples may result where the specific university is located. Some universities have moved to change Indigenous territorial acknowledgements, adding verbiage that recognizes Indigenous claims to specific lands where none existed before (Lee, Sy, and Pedri-Spade). While it is admirable that universities strive to be more inclusive and welcoming different Indigenous groups that make up their respective school communities, it is careless and harmful to revise the way that Indigenous Peoples talk about or relate to their lands, especially when these revisions are in violation of Indigenous sovereignty.

Many universities have failed to develop a mechanism or process beyond self-identification for determining what "Indigeneity" actually means, including who can be considered an "Indigenous" employee or student. This failure is due to both the contested terrain of Indigeneity itself and, with respect to Indigenous hiring, a lack of clarity regarding what information employers are legally permitted to request of Indigenous hires and how to collect this in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner. The conundrum here is that while Indigenous Peoples would agree that neither a State nor its institutions play a part in determining who does or who does not belong to their respective Indigenous nation/community, universities (as well as other public organizations), are required to create job positions for Indigenous people and thus, must develop a process that sees this through. As mentioned previously, when the ability to self-identify as "Indigenous" is the dominant and sometimes only requirement, this creates the condition for outright cultural/ethnic fraud to take place and also for a more subtle misappropriation of Indigenous identity through claims to Indigenous ancestry. The recent prominent case of Carrie Bourassa exemplifies the risk of relying only on self-identification for academic appointments. Dr. Bourassa resigned in disgrace as a university professor months after being fired as scientific director of the Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health when it was revealed that she had provided inaccurate information claiming to be of Anishinaabe, Tlingit, and Metis ancestry to her univer-

sity and federal employers (Leo). This type of fraud has real emotional and material consequences as Anishinaabekwe scholar Geraldine King explains:

> (Indigenous identity fraud is) a really sick form of settler-colonialism. We've already had everything taken from us and then here's this trauma that is connected to land and displacement … all that's left is this trauma and these horror stories (ctd. in Williams and Allan).

At times university norms equate ancestry with Indigeneity. Yet, just as Indigeneity is not an identity, having Indigenous ancestry does not automatically make one "Indigenous." TallBear (2013) addresses the settler phenomenon of claiming Indigenous identity through online DNA testing sites and family genealogy sites. TallBear illustrates that even if you chose a specific group, having some matching genetic markers from ages ago does not mean you have the lived experience to become part of that community. Moreover, she states that people who are not members of an Indigenous community will tend to define Indigeneity as a racial category. In a similar vein Darryl Leroux's work on race shifting and self-defined "Indigeneity" explores how white individuals discover an Indigenous ancestor born 300-375 years ago and use this as the sole basis to shift into an "Indigenous" individual. It is important to note that his research is not about individuals who have been displaced by colonial policies including invasive child welfare practices and are struggling to reclaim their kin and community. Rather, his work is about how white settler peoples see an opportunity to gain access to specific rights, resources, or opportunities through appropriating Indigeneity and use settler-colonial strategies and institutions to do so.

The issue with conflating Indigenous ancestry with identity within universities is that it creates the conditions whereby someone who just discovered an ancestor from 300 years ago can access an Indigenous position displacing an Indigenous person who is connected to and claimed by a living community/Nation of people. Moreover, Indigenous scholars within universssities play key roles in advising on a plethora of Indigenous academic and administrative issues and must have lived experience in order to contribute information that reflects the kinds of cultural, political, and socioeconomic realities facing Indigenous Peoples. A key teaching from Anishinaabe Elder Alex Skead reminds people that if they speak about things they do not know about, they could do much harm to others: "I will upset everything if I start talking about something that I don't know" (ctd. in Kulchyski, McCaskill, and Newhouse). There are examples of "Indigenous" research carried out by researchers with tenuous claims to Indigenous identity that are presently widely contested as they undermine the sovereignty and nationhood of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis Peoples in Canada. One recent example was the Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Science's 2020 Prix du Canada Award, which prompted the resignation of the Federation's entire Indigenous Advisory Circle. The Indigenous Advisory Council made it clear that they had no role in the adjudication process and when they were finally consulted by the

Federation, "a lot of things were said but advice was not really followed up" (Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonnization). Moreover, when professors who falsely claim to speak from a lived Indigenous perspective enter classrooms full of Indigenous students with actual lived experiences, it further marginalizes students (Cheechoo).

While it is widely acknowledged that Indigenous identity can be complicated given the decades of intergenerational colonial trauma aimed at severing family and community ties, the move to conflate ancestry with Indigeneity among students can be problematic. While Indigenous initiatives aimed at supporting Indigenous students are fundamental to Indigenous student success, universities must be mindful of how some activities may, albeit unintentionally, create the conditions for students to seek institutional validation for misclaims to Indigenous identity *vis-à-vis* "settler nativism" (Tuck and Yang). Settler nativism is when settlers locate or invent a long-lost ancestor who is rumored to have had "Indian blood," and they use this claim to mark themselves as somewhat blameless in the attempted eradications of Indigenous peoples. This instantaneous claiming of Indigenous identity through a newly discovered Indigenous ancestor is a settler move to innocence because it is an attempt to deflect a settler identity, while continuing to enjoy settler privilege. There are often financial academic awards reserved for Indigenous students that rely heavily on grades and there have been examples where students who have benefitted from the privileges of living their lives as non-Indigenous people, begin their journey of connecting with their Indigenous roots and apply for these awards and are successful. This, of course, may further marginalize and oppress racialized Indigenous students who have not shared the same kinds of privileges in their educational journey. While universities can certainly play an important role in providing various Indigenous cultural supports for students that are tantamount to not only Indigenous student success but also contribute to the creation of a more culturally respectful and inclusive school community, the responsibility and work of reclaiming kinship ties must come from and be led by Indigenous communities and Nations.

Moving towards Decolonization

In 2018, during an Indigenous Research conference hosted by a northern Ontario university, Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck delivered a keynote talk in which she posed the question "Do we mean 'indigenization' or 'decolonization'?" Here, she was pointing to how individuals within universities often use these terms interchangeably and how they are not the same. Decolonization within universities happens when people commit to identifying and changing systems and processes rooted in colonial ideologies and white supremacy that continue to oppress Indigenous peoples and their knowledges. Decolonization recognizes that trying to "Indigenize" without dismantling systems of oppression changes nothing and actually creates conditions where Indigenous Peoples are further marginalized in ways that are gendered and racialized (Pedri-Spade 2020a). Decolonization is a process that requires committed efforts from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and the resources to support these

efforts. Elina Hill points to the risks of institutional Indigenization efforts that focus on adding Indigenous faculty and knowledges into colonial spaces that remain unaltered. The author suggests that while Indigenization always sounds like an admirable goal, there is a very real risk that certain university stakeholders will exploit Indigenous people and their knowledges in pursuit of their settler-colonial goals. Indeed, Maori scholar Linda Smith argues that Indigenization efforts within settler-colonial systems will only benefit Indigenous Peoples if the systems themselves change and that "Indigenization" is only one of several initiatives that fall under the work of decolonization.

The question then remains: what are the changes needed within universities to move towards decolonization? In her landmark study, *Colonized Classrooms: Racism, Trauma and Resistance in Post-Secondary Education*, Anishnaabe-Kwe scholar Sheila Cote-Meek interviewed Indigenous university students and faculty to better understand the impacts of colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism in university classrooms. She identified at least three institutional changes for decolonizing university classrooms:

- hire Indigenous faculty in a range of disciplines;
- provide them institutional support;
- establish an anti-racist institutional culture among all staff; and,
- recognize that all levels of education in Canada are affected by ongoing colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism.

  Institutional support includes:

- acknowledging service requirement will be greater for Indigenous faculty;
- avoiding scenarios of Indigenous faculty members working alone in silos;
- providing teaching reductions and seed grants for research support; and
- offering mentorship by senior faculty.

The first point recognizes that decolonization cannot happen without a concerted investment in Indigenous educators but, as indicated previously, hiring Indigenous professors can be a challenging and complex endeavor for more than the mere fact that they are in high-demand. In a recent post on social media Kim TallBear (2021) shared something very useful to the work of bringing in Indigenous faculty to the academy. She stated that instead of focusing on "Indigeneity" as a self-proclaimed identity, which may be easily misappropriated, Indigenous pushback to this would center Indigenous "relations." She argues that "identity" privileges individualism and inherited property(ies) and is a poor substitute for relations. Relations (as opposed to identity) confirm the people and places that, for example, an Ojibwe or Cree professor, are constitutive of, and thus, accountable to.

Centering relations as opposed to self-identity entails creating processes that show how someone is situated within a host of kin/community/land relationships that best prepare them to advance Indigenous initiatives through an informed perspective connected to other Indigenous people and places.

Centering relations in hiring processes, for example, would entail establishing policies and procedures that privilege Indigenous involvement. This involvement should happen not only at a faculty level; it should be real engagement with leaders and Elders from local Indigenous communities. It would encourage universities to adopt policies that respect how Indigenous nations have always determined who (and who does not) belong as well as who (and who does not) have a right to claim citizenship within their respective nation. Centering *relations* as opposed to *identities* also has implications for other Indigenous initiatives including student support services and Indigenous programs that can help people understand what it means to be, as our Elders would say, "in good relations" with each other and the land. Encouraging students to explore what it means to be "in good relations" moves beyond simply encouraging them to "self-identify." It would entail supporting students through the work of understanding and critically reflecting on their own positionality, their own lived experiences, the lived experiences of those in their family and community that helped shape them, etc. Centering relations moves beyond teaching or encouraging anyone claim an Indigenous identity based simply on learning they have a long-ago ancestor. Centering relations rejects the urge to "claim," as claiming is grounded on the logic of individual rights and extractivism more so than on relational accountability.

Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel's work in decolonization stresses the importance of what he calls "daily acts of resurgence," which are the often unnoticed and unacknowledged actions that promote Indigenous community health and wellbeing. He illustrates how these acts that take place at individual, family, and community levels are critical for deepening our understanding of the restorative and transformative work that happens apart from state-led processes of reconciliation. Corntassel suggests resurgent acts are key to decolonizing our systems, including education, yet, as Louie demonstrates, they go unrecognized in formal evaluative processes (e.g., tenure) for Indigenous faculty within universities, despite the fact that these activities are tantamount to their roles and responsibilities within their respective Indigenous communities. Thus, one of the key changes that can be made to better support Indigenous faculty across the university are policies and processes within formal evaluations that clearly privilege their contributions to the restorative and regenerative work they do with Indigenous families and communities. The institution needs to address the obvious irony in supporting processes where an Indigenous scholar would receive greater rewards or accolades for writing an academic journal article on the importance of intergenerational Indigenous language revitalization than for the time and effort said Indigenous scholar must commit to in order to support their family and community in developing and running such a program.

Pedri-Spade (2020a) argues that institutions advancing decolonization must work at de-centering everything in the university that is constantly working against Indigenous Peoples—all of the ineffective policies that do not contribute to or restore the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples. This work requires institutions to commit to taking a hard look at how settler-colonial

logic is often immediately employed in response to Indigenous perspectives around what changes need to happen in order to contribute to a safer, culturally relevant, and equitable learning and teaching environment. Non-Indigenous decision makers hesitate to make changes that support Indigenous wellbeing within settler-colonial institutions and will draw on a range of excuses, financial or otherwise, in order to justify their lack of action. However, Pedri-Spade illustrates that this hesitation is more often than not grounded in the need to constantly recenter themselves and their own comforts and privileges. Linda and Bret Pardy illustrate how decolonization is in a way counterintuitive to white settlers because why would anyone want to change a system that has worked so well for them? Thus, decolonization requires non-Indigenous peoples to make what is familiar to them, strange. It requires them to see how what is so familiar to them, and what works so well for them, does not work, and actually harms, others. As several scholars have illustrated, this work is challenging because it requires people to reevaluate what a "good" person who actually helps others is and does (Dion).

Moving towards Anti-Racism

Cote-Meek's second and third recommendations point to the importance of situating decolonization alongside broader institutional commitments related to anti-racism. Linda and Brett Pardy stress the significance of fostering an institutional environment and culture that supports anti-racist education and self-engaged transformation. They provide strategies and tools to carry out this work, emphasizing faculty and student commitments to engaging with critical pedagogies in spaces where individuals are supported to share openly without formal assessments attached to their contributions. In addition, they suggest that educators utilize a range of resources that brings in multiple perspectives including films and podcasts.

Current research demonstrates that effective anti-racism initiatives must help individuals (students, faculty, and staff) understand their own forms of privilege (e.g., racialized, gendered) and how privilege functions at a systemic level to lift some individuals up and keep some individuals down (Collins and Watson). Universities must invest in opportunities for various groups (e.g., departments, research centers) to unpack the layers of privilege that are "unseen" in order to understand how they guide decision making and influence overall governance. Christina Torres stresses the importance of members not falling into the trap of "white guilt" or "privilege guilt," which can prevent them from arriving at a place of action. How can they reframe their understandings of privilege so that they stop prioritizing hegemonic ideas of success and worth in order to make space and support the work of decolonization?

Well-known activist Harsha Walia stresses the importance of supporting the efforts of Indigenous peoples who are exercising traditional governance and practices in opposition to settler-colonial violence and who are seeking redress for acts of genocide and assimilation, such as residential schools. Centering "redress" in university settings requires taking action to remedy and rectify injustices or a past wrongs. It involves identifying the kinds of things within

your institution that were, and still are, harmful to Indigenous Peoples. Recent examples of redress in Canadian universities include the action taken at Queen's University to remove the name of Sir John A. Macdonald from its law school (Pedri-Spade 2020b), and the recent commitment of Toronto Metropolitan University to the creation of a taskforce to take more meaningful actions in addressing Egerton Ryerson's connection to Indian Residential Schools. It should be noted that meaningful and respectful initiatives aimed at redress should reflect deeper ongoing commitments of universities to developing relationships with the many Indigenous stakeholders that are part of their school community. Moreover, redress should privilege spaces for local and regional Indigenous community members. Universities are physical entities that are built on and thus occupy lands belonging to specific Indigenous Nations. At a university we both worked at, the main campus was built over the traditional winter hunting grounds of a specific local Anishinaabe family. Elders residing within the nearby reserve community still held stories about this dispossession. Within Anishinaabe worldview, hunting is a form of Anishinaabe knowledge; thus, a form of knowledge that was displaced by the settler institution. The work of redress at this university would involve privileging spaces for the reclamation and resurgence of Anishinaabe thought and practice.

Lastly, redress also involves revisiting and rethinking relations between and within Indigenous and Black struggles within settler-colonial states and institutions. In a recent policy brief, Afro-Indigenous scholar Etanda Arden addresses the erasure of Black Indigenous identity in Canadian education. As a Black Dene woman Arden reflects on her experience growing up in a northern Ontario city, "More than 20 years later and I'm still struggling with the fact that the shade of my skin provokes anti-Black racism within my peers that keeps me in the margins of Indigenous society" (para. 2). Arden eloquently demonstrates what it means to navigate setter-colonial spaces as both a Dene woman *and* a Black woman. Yet, in institutions like universities, minority peoples are often placed in or accounted for within a single group or category. Yet, these binaries do not reflect, and thus further ostracize and marginalize, many individuals who cannot conform to them based on their lived experiences and histories.

In their recent scholarship that analyses the relationship between Indigenous genocide/settler-colonialism and anti-blackness, Tiffany King, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith illustrate the historical disconnect between Indigenous and Black struggles for liberation. They observe how Indigenous Peoples in North America have expected and received solidarity from Black organizations but often failed at reciprocating the support received. This was due, in part, because Indigenous Peoples were under threat of disappearing and had no time to help others. Yet this position undermines their own agency and political effectiveness. Arden (2021) calls upon Indigenous communities to address how their liberation struggle attends to their complicity in the oppression of Black Peoples. Thus, decolonization must create spaces for what Hotylkuce Harjo calls radical sovereignty: reordering Indigenous Black relations beyond simply connecting the dots between Indigeneity and Blackness, and, instead, attending

to the many ways that the relation between indigeneity and blackness itself helps to constitute its terms: Indigeneity and Blackness. Decolonization of academic spaces requires a determined intellectual critique of both anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism. Colonialism has profoundly negative impacts on Black and Indigenous nations; addressing those harms must continue to be a collective effort.

Conclusion

The struggle to advance Indigeneity within Canadian universities presents many unique and complex challenges that, if unaddressed, may further perpetuate settler-colonial violence and undermine the rights and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples and their respective nations. This article revealed the ways that institutional "Indigenization" risks several negative outcomes that include the misappropriation of Indigenous identities and the misrespresentation of Indigenous experiences and knowledges that are integral to culturally respectful research, teaching, and learning. While it may appear that these consequences remain within the institution, they trickle outward in ways that undermine the restorative and regenerative work taking place in Indigenous communities—work that is about kinship and care, the maintenance of Indigenous governance and upholding Indigenous sovereignties. As scholars Emily Grafton and Jérôme Melançron state, "decolonization is an emancipatory response to colonial oppression and thus demands not only actions and the development of relations toward new, free political opportunities but also new ways of acting and relating" (141).

In order to avoid settler-colonial re-inscription, these new ways of acting and relating must decenter settler-colonial privileges and comforts that oppress Indigenous wellbeing, and redress past harms and injustices Indigenous peoples have suffered and continue to suffer. Moreover, decolonization efforts must involve anti-racism and address the erasure of Black Indigenous identities within institutions. While the race toward "Indigenization" can be appealing because it offers, at times, a shorter path, the work of decolonization is challenging and not so straight-forward. At the heart of this work will remain the importance of kinship, of *being in good relations* with one another and the lands and waters as our living relatives.

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Notes

1. *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) investigated and proposed solutions to the challenges affecting the relationship between Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian government, and Canadian society with its Final Report released in 1996. It was RCAP that outlined that the future must include a place for those affected by Indian Residential Schools and that led to the Gathering Strength Action Plan, which included a Statement of Reconciliation.

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