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## Cultural Mirrors Made of Papier Mâché: Challenging Misrepresentations of Indigenous Knowledges in Education Through Media

*Misrepresentation, appropriation, and denigrating Indigenous knowledge is still common practice in educational institutions despite efforts of critical educators to challenge these practices. One such challenge was to papier mâché totem poles in an education institution's library in a faculty of education that houses teacher education programs. A papier mâché cross focused attention on the use and misuse of symbols and educated people about the problematic representational practices of papier mâché totem poles and crosses. What are the cultural discourses that support the inclusion of false representations of Indigenous knowledge in an education library? I draw attention to strategies and practices of challenging misrepresentation through the use of Indigenous media in education, examine challenges in changing institutional climates of teacher education, and encourage discussion of how Indigenous knowledge and people can be full partners in educational institutions.*

*La présentation erronée, l'appropriation et le dénigrement des connaissances indigènes demeurent des pratiques communes dans les établissements d'enseignement et ce, malgré les efforts du personnel scolaire qui critique ces actions. Pour remettre en question ces pratiques, des mâts totémiques en papier mâché ont été érigés dans la bibliothèque d'une faculté d'éducation. Une croix en papier mâché a mis en évidence l'usage et le mésusage de symboles et a conscientisé le public quant à la pratique problématique qu'est celle de représenter des mâts totémiques et des croix en papier mâché. Quels sont les discours culturels qui appuient l'inclusion de fausses représentations des connaissances indigènes dans une bibliothèque pédagogique? J'attire l'attention sur les stratégies et les pratiques de remise en question de la présentation erronée et ce, par l'emploi de médias indigènes en éducation. De plus, j'étudie les défis que pose la transformation des climats institutionnels au sein des programmes de formation des enseignants et j'encourage la discussion sur les moyens d'intégrer les connaissances et les personnes indigènes comme partenaires à part entière dans les établissements d'enseignement.*

### Introduction

Misrepresentation, appropriation, and denigrating Indigenous knowledge is still common practice in educational institutions despite efforts of critical educators to challenge these practices (Battiste, 2000). One such challenge I posed was to papier-mâché totem poles in an education institution's library in a faculty of education in which I taught that housed teacher education programs. In a teacher education course entitled "Indigenous Peoples and Medias" we discussed the papier-mâché totem poles in our library. In this dialogue one

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Indigenous storytelling and healing practices are foci of the research being carried out by Canada Research Chair (Faculty of Education) Judy Iseke. She is also a member of the Metis Nation of Alberta. She works with community Elders, exploring the oral traditions, stories, and histories of Indigenous families and communities in order to understand the complex and diverse needs and responsibilities of Indigenous knowledge.

teacher education student asked “What’s next? A papier-mâché Koran, a papier-mâché Bible?” I knew that if I were to create a cultural mirror for the papier-mâché totem poles in a Christian framework, then I would need to work with the most prominent Christian symbol, the cross. I produced a papier-mâché cross to focus attention on misuse of symbols and to educate about the problematic representational practices of papier-mâché totem poles and crosses.

One outcome of presenting the biased cross included removal of the poles from the library. Another was increased understandings of misrepresentations. In this article I examine the cultural discourses and representational practices that support the inclusion of false representations of Indigenous knowledge in an education library and draw attention to strategies and practices of challenging misrepresentation in the use of Indigenous media in education. Implications of Indigenous media and challenging representational practices in teacher education are shared to encourage discussion of how Indigenous knowledge and people can be full partners in educational institutions. I examine some of the challenges of changing the institutional climate so that teacher education programs are accepting of Indigenous knowledge. This article suggests possible approaches to aid students and institutions to understand their own cultural bias and begin to challenge this bias. It also suggests approaches that challenge dominant knowledge systems and how to open these to Indigenous knowledges.

Conclusions to this article suggest that educational institutions need to change to accomplish inclusion of Indigenous knowledges. It outlines the need to increase numbers of Indigenous faculty and students in the academy; ensure that Indigenous authors are read, engaged respectfully, and moved beyond the ghettoized location currently experienced; reflect Indigenous knowledge in the history taught; and engage in Indigenous pedagogies linked with Indigenous theorizing.

#### *Theoretic Framework*

Indigenous knowledges refer to the “ideas and cultural knowledges of local peoples concerning the everyday realities of living. These knowledges are part of the cultural heritage and histories of peoples” (Dei, James, Karumanchery, & James-Wilson, 2000, pp. 49-50). The term *Indigenous*, as Smith (1999) explains, is troubling because it collects distinct populations and diverse communities, language groups, and nations with varied experiences of colonialism using a single term. Other collective terms that are often used as alternatives to *Indigenous* include *First Peoples*, *First Nations*, *Native Peoples*, *Aboriginals*, and *Fourth World Peoples*. Many Indigenous peoples prefer to use the term from their own experiences that connects them to their history and the land. Although the term *Indigenous* is troubling, it is also the term used in the international community in the expression *Indigenous peoples*, an expression that emerged in the 1970s out of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood (a precursor to the current Assembly of First Nations in Canada). The expression *Indigenous peoples* creates an international sense of experiences and issues as well as shared struggle for colonized peoples from throughout the world. The final *s* in *Indigenous peoples* is important

because it recognizes the real diversity of Indigenous peoples and epistemologies and the right to self-identify.

A considerable body of theoretical work has examined the process by which colonized peoples continue to be represented as *other* in literary, media, cultural, and popular texts, in educational resources, and in pedagogic practices, and the effect this has both on theoretical understandings of the world and on daily life (Battiste, 2000; Dei, Hall, & Goldin Rosenberg, 2000; Doxtator, 1988; Hall, 1997; Iseke-Barnes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Little Bear, 2000; Said, 1978; Smith, 1999). Canada's Indigenous peoples continue to be misrepresented in popular discourses, educational resources, and media (Battiste; Iseke-Barnes, 2004, 2005; Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2006, 2007). These representations overwrite the voices of Indigenous peoples (Doxtator; Valaskakis, 1993; Young Man, 1998). Alternatives to these orientations exist in Indigenous practices and processes that assert the defining of cultural knowledges that thrive on relations among peoples and worlds (Castellano, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Iseke-Barnes, 2008, 2009; Little Bear).

Minh-ha (1989) describes tactics of colonialism that act to preserve cultural forms but destroy the content of those forms, that is, dream-catchers are now commonplace (sold in Dollar Stores in Canada and made in other nations), but their meanings in culture and history are simplified or forgotten. This creates cultural forms whose histories have been erased. Goldie (1995) describes a paradoxical situation in which "the white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada?" (p. 234). Attempts at resolving this conundrum include incorporation of the *Other* into white culture superficially "through beaded moccasins and names like Mohawk Motors" (p. 234), in more sophisticated ways through literature that replicates and represents (Minh-ha, 1989; Mudrooroo, 1995), or by rejecting the Other by assuming that the country began with the arrival of whites (Iseke-Barnes, 2005). Little Bear (2000) proposes a way out of this bind by recognizing jagged world views: that the histories, languages, and cultures of our *others* are not separate from our own histories, languages, and cultures.

Many sites of public education and schooling serve to provide stories about Indigenous peoples representing dominant viewpoints through dominant pedagogies. These stories, viewpoints, and pedagogies subjugate Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies (Iseke-Barnes, in press; Iseke-Barnes & Sakai, 2003). Smith (1999) emphasizes that Indigenous accounts and stories are rarely acknowledged as valid accounts of the past. She highlights the importance for Indigenous peoples to hold and honor alternative viewpoints so that they can guide actions and pedagogies in the world today. Educational practitioners also need to broaden what counts as educational knowledge to ensure that Indigenous knowledge has a place in education and academic programs (Iseke-Barnes, 2008).

#### *Understanding Ourselves through Stories*

The story about the papier-mâché totem poles is both about the social context of teacher education and the challenges to Indigenous scholars working there, and it is about my role in educational change in teacher education as expressed

through storytelling. I am a Métis woman from Northern Alberta, relocated to Southern Ontario to teach in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. In this educational institution, in addition to teaching various master's of education courses, I had been teaching social foundations courses for many years in the teacher education program. This had included a course "Equity in Schools and Society" (Iseke-Barnes & Wane, 2000) and for five years the course "Indigenous Peoples and Medias." In this course students encountered the social and political realities of colonization (Adams, 1999; Dei et al., 2000; Smith, 1999), and representational practices (Bigelow, 1999; Doxtator, 1988; Pewewardy, 1999; Slapin, Seale, & Gonzales, 1998) and came to understand Indigenous media as useful in challenging stereotypical understandings of Indigenous peoples (Ginsburg, 2000; Iseke-Barnes, 2002, 2005; Singer, 1999; Taylor, 1999; Valaskakis, 1993, 2000).

The social context in which I taught this course was complex. The Ontario Institute for Studies of Education was attempting to grapple with the social context of education in a more complex way and was trying to encourage more engagement with social, cultural, and political issues among its faculty and instructors. To this end, a committee had been struck to encourage dialogue and hopefully transformation of programs and instructional processes. The committee planned several faculty meetings to which all instructors and researchers in teacher education and graduate programs had been invited.

The faculty members who chose to attend sat in three groups in an open area newly created in the reconfigured library. The intention of these faculty meetings was to help this institution and its educators to integrate action on equity and diversity in preservice and graduate teaching and research. We held this meeting in a space overlooked by two papier-mâché totem poles (Figure 1)—brightly colored 10-foot constructions, which I later learned had been donated to us by an instructor in our teacher education program. The poles were the work of children's hands from a local school.

### *Understanding Poles*

In contrast to these papier-mâché poles created by children, real totem poles are created from Indigenous knowledge by Indigenous peoples living in what has become known as British Columbia, as well as other regions of the Pacific rim of North America. The Indigenous peoples of these regions have their own words in their own languages for poles. McMaster (2005), a scholar with extensive experience in Indigenous works of art from across Canada, advises that we should cease to refer to these as totem poles and simply use the word *poles*. He explains, "the word 'totem' is from another cultural group altogether, who are the Algonquian speakers. The term refers to 'relations': family, clan, the entire cosmos; for example, in Cree the word *ni-totemuk* means 'my relations'" (p. 159). He explains that because only some poles actually refer to family or clan that it is both inaccurate and inappropriate to call them totem poles.

It is unclear what knowledge the children who produced these papier-mâché pieces had of the languages and cultures of the peoples who produce poles. It is possible that they knew that Indigenous peoples, working in their Indigenous knowledge system, create poles from large cedar trees harvested through ceremonies. Perhaps they were informed that some kinds of real poles



Figure 1. Papier-mâché totem poles in the library.

tell the story of Indigenous people's history. Perhaps it was explained that one needs to have the cultural knowledge to be able to read and understand the images in a real pole. It is possible that they were told that people knowledgeable about poles can read geneological records of the inhabitants of a home, a community, and a region from some kinds of poles. Perhaps they were informed that some poles may be used in communities as mortuary poles commemorating loved ones. They may have been informed that poles sometimes depict the history or story of events in communities. Perhaps they were told that poles can tell stories of spiritual or mythical beings who are part of the life of a people. But it is also possible that these poles were made by children who did not know these things. The question is really What do children and their teachers need to understand in the work they do around Indigenous knowledges?

These papier-mâché poles, disconnected from the knowledge and culture of Indigenous people who produce poles, did not represent Indigenous knowledges and cultures. For me they came to signify the fact that Indigenous knowledges can be denigrated inside the institution of schooling. When I explained my concerns to librarians, staff, and colleagues, they did not understand my concerns.

#### *Examining Cultural Practices in Educational Institutions*

When these faculty meetings were taking place, I was teaching the only course in a large teacher education program that was focused on Indigenous issues in education. My class, called "Indigenous Peoples and Medias," discussed the power of images, drawing on Indigenous texts to challenge and question how cultural images in Canada seek to reduce Indigenous peoples to cultural stereotypes. When I discussed these papier-mâché poles with my students, one

particularly astute student asked, “What’s next? A papier-mâché Koran? A papier-mâché Bible?” I knew I needed to do something.

I went to the library and asked at the front desk about these papier-mâché poles. I was told by staff at the libraries collection desk that they had been donated by a local school but that they had no other information. I explained that the poles were a problem. The librarian, although claiming to be culturally sensitive, was defensive about these being in our library collection and suggested that I take it up with the head of collections. At the end of the faculty meeting, I spoke to a senior administrator about the poles and was told that the administrator understood my concerns and to remind him if he failed to do anything about it.

The job of creating understanding and change was large given the multiple levels of bureaucracy in a large institution. I next spoke to students in the Indigenous Education Network, a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who are concerned about Indigenous issues. I asked whether they might want to be part of making change in regard to the poles in the library. But they had more pressing concerns. They were trying to get an Indigenous faculty member replaced after her position had been vacated. The Indigenous area—with several Indigenous faculty and numerous allies—had been decimated by the fact that many full-time faculty who used to put considerable energies into this area had left. Two became deans at other institutions, two had died, three had left for other faculty positions, and two had retired. When I was trying to take this action, I was the only full-time faculty member in my division still working fully on Indigenous issues. One Indigenous woman had a small cross-appointment to the faculty in which I taught. Given that we had more than 200 faculty members, the representation of Indigenous faculty was minimal. Students, having lost supervisors and instructors, were devoting their efforts to lobby for Indigenous faculty positions. Students were doing exactly what they needed to do.

Kaomea (2005) observes that there is considerably more Indigenous content in school and university curricula, but that the numbers of Indigenous people hired to teach these curricula are limited. Kaomea comments,

Consequently, when Indigenous studies curricula are promoted in the absence of significant structural changes that provide for the recruitment and employment of Indigenous classroom teachers who are qualified to teach this curriculum, it is difficult to predict what these progressive curricular efforts will actually look like in practice. (p. 24)

The consequence could be more misrepresentation, appropriation, and denigrated Indigenous knowledge as in the papier-mâché poles that towered over us in our faculty meetings. Although some faculties of education are making considerable efforts to increase involvement of Indigenous faculty, like that at the University of British Columbia, which by the end of the 2010 will have 10 full-time Indigenous faculty (of its approximately 135) teaching in its programs, most faculties of education in Canada have far fewer Indigenous faculty members in its programs. This leaves space for incredible challenges to Indigenous faculty members trying to survive in institutions (Iseke-Barnes, 2007) and limits the ability of Indigenous faculty to produce visionary pro-



grams with Indigenous communities and to respond to the needs to challenge institutional problems.

*Why Would There Be Papier-Mâché Totem Poles in Our Library?*

In the process of uncovering information about the poles, I began to ask myself why there would be papier-mâché totem poles in our library. Where would teachers get the idea to produce papier-mâché totem poles? Why would they believe this to be culturally appropriate? In our library, school libraries, and public libraries, I have found many resources that support the cultural appropriation and misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledges and support the suppression of Indigenous knowledges and peoples. I have since learned that curriculum support documents in the province of Ontario have suggested, until recent changes, that teachers undertake the activity of creating papier-mâché poles with their grade 3 students in a unit about Aboriginal peoples. MacEachren (2006) commented that the Ontario arts curricula emphasized “communicating conceptual ideas through visual images” including “41 two-dimensional images, two three-dimensional projects, and one item of potential utility, a mask” (p. 220). MacEachren, although supporting the acts of making as a useful and valid activity for educating students, questions “using the criteria of European art to judge and influence the development of items made by First Nations people [which] becomes an example of hegemony” (p. 220). Why would a government document suggest such inappropriate activities? Longstanding colonial discourses are evident in understandings that children bring to curricula, and when these discourses are repeated in curricula, they go unchallenged (Iseke-Barnes, 2005; Iseke-Barnes & Sakai, 2003; Kaomea, 2005). Based on a study of First Nations students, Kanu (2002) indicates that “curriculum should include Aboriginal perspectives, histories or traditions, and interests, all of which have foundations in their cultural heritage but which have been largely denied them in the formal school system” (p. 89). The question remains how to include Indigenous perspectives to be beneficial to students, meaningful to Indigenous communities, and to reflect Indigenous knowledges meaningfully.

Original Indigenous peoples have inhabited these lands of Ontario for millennia. In Ontario also live Indigenous peoples from across all parts of Canada and from around the world including those who are from an Indigenous nation that produces poles (like Arthur Renwick in Iseke-Barnes & Jimenez, 2008). But the Indigenous peoples who originally inhabited this land called Ontario do not produce poles. So why would the curriculum support documents choose to focus attention on Indigenous peoples from outside the region rather than on Indigenous peoples from the territories that are now known as Ontario?

I am certain that there are many answers to this question. One might be that if you are going to misrepresent a nation, it is easier if you have no direct contact with those whom you are misrepresenting so they cannot interfere with your interpretation and misrepresentations. Another might be that in the 18th century and into the 19th century, museums around the world began to gather poles from the Pacific Rim from the peoples who had created poles. The processes by which they obtained these poles, although not always clear, are a source of contestation today. For example, the film *Totem: The Return of the*

*G'psgolox Pole* (Gil Cardinal, National Film Board of Canada, 2003) describes the story of one totem pole.

In 1929, the Haisla people of northwestern British Columbia returned from a fishing trip to find a nine-metre-high pole, known as the G'psgolox pole, severed at the base and removed from their village. The fate of the 19th century pole remained unknown to the Haisla for over sixty years. This long awaited new film from director Gil Cardinal reveals the Haisla's recent discovery of the pole in a Stockholm museum where it is considered state property by the Swedish government. From the lush rainforest near Kitamaat Village, BC, to the National Museum of Ethnography in Sweden, the documentary traces the fascinating journey of the Haisla to reclaim the traditional mortuary pole. Bringing to light a powerful story of cultural rejuvenation, the film raises provocative questions about the ownership and meaning of Aboriginal objects held in museums. (ImagineNative Film and Media Arts Festival catalogue, 2003, p. 25).

It seems appropriate to engage children in developing understandings of Indigenous peoples with whom they share this territory as well as engaging in discussions of Indigenous peoples from other territories. By engaging with Indigenous peoples locally, there is the potential that children might begin to develop relationships with and understandings of Indigenous peoples in their local communities or regions through engaging in cultural activities and events. Children may have greater opportunities to challenge their own assumptions and misrepresentations of Indigenous nations and Indigenous knowledges by engaging with Indigenous peoples.

I am a mother of three children who attend schools in Ontario. Around the same time as these faculty meetings, my two daughters brought home books with themes related to Indigenous peoples (Iseke-Barnes, in press). I critiqued these books with my children and found alternatives for them in the public library. I have also written about the project my daughter was assigned in which she was to study the Group of Seven (a group of artists who are assumed to be the first artists who identified a style of art that is uniquely Canadian) or their contemporaries. My daughter was assigned to examine the art of Canadian artist Emily Carr, whose early works were hundreds of paintings of poles. She continued this practice until she was told by Lawren Harris, a member of the Group of Seven and close friend of Carr's, that these poles were art in their own right and that she need not do this any longer (<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/totems/exintro.htm>, May 2004. Retrieved October 28, 2008, from: <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/totems/default.htm>). At that point, she moved on to paint her now famous landscape paintings.

*Resisting Papier-Mâché Totem Poles: Producing a Misrepresentation of a Cross*

How could I get people to understand how offensive I found these cultural appropriations of Indigenous knowledges and denigrations of that knowledge? I had a dream that I was to create an art piece from materials in my recycle bin (egg carton, toilet paper rolls, and a newspaper) and a toy from my children. When I got up that morning I made the piece (Figure 2). It was an upside-down cross and on it was attached a toy: an Easter bunny with long, bendable arms and legs. From my cuttings of paper for the papier-mâché, the headlines "Heart of Evil" and "Heart Full of Lies" and a Bad Boy furniture



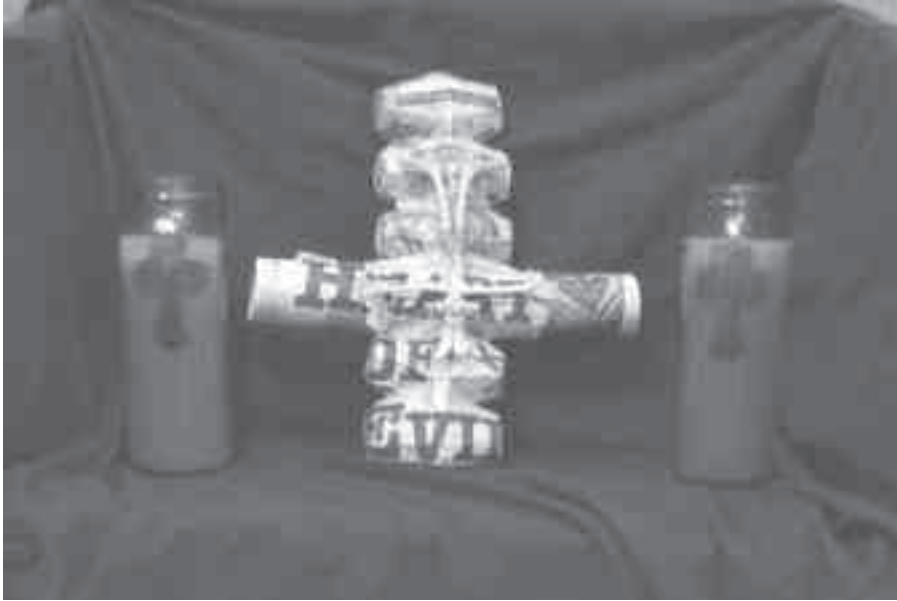


Figure 2. Papier-mâché misrepresentation of a cross.

advertisement, as well as the words “have any anger” fell from the cut pieces of newspaper. These became the outer layer or the symbols on the papier-mâché cross.

The symbols on both the papier-mâché poles and cross denigrate knowledge. The poles denigrate Indigenous knowledges. The cross denigrates Christian beliefs by hanging it upside down to deliberately symbolize how a lack of cultural knowledge means we do not understand even how to hang this symbol. Similarly, the producers of the totem poles incorporate figures about which they have no knowledge, so it forces the question: Are these figures upside down? Right side up? Represented appropriately? Of both pieces we can ask, What do these symbols mean? The answer is that they are inaccurate misrepresentations because they were produced without any connection to the peoples who have the knowledge. In the case of the poles, they were created without the Indigenous peoples who have the knowledge of poles.

The character on the cross is a bendable Easter bunny: a cultural symbol that has replaced Christ as the main character for Easter. This demonstrates the consumption of important Christian days by a mainstream consumer culture. Similarly, the Indigenous knowledge is consumed by a mainstream consumer culture. The words “Heart Full of Lies,” “heart of evil,” and “Bad Boy Furniture” on the papier-mâché cross remind us of sources of this cultural consumption: when works of art and resources from Indigenous peoples are captured as artifacts in museums and other spaces of cultural representation. In these places Indigenous materials are often used to represent what the dominant society has produced: the myth that Indigenous peoples are savages or images of evil. The use of these words, then, is a play on the concept of evil but reflecting it back. Who is evil here? Indigenous peoples living their lives through Indigenous knowledges and cultures reflected in their cultural art, or

those involved in European conquest and genocide of Indigenous peoples who capture their art (Churchill, 1998)? These words remind us that Christianity was introduced to Indigenous peoples and was part of the colonizing process that suppressed Indigenous knowledges. They remind us of the work of missionaries in importing Christian belief systems that suppressed Indigenous peoples and were involved in creating dominant myths about Indigenous peoples (Adams, 1999).

By placing the words on the cross, I also want to demonstrate that there is a way of reading a cultural artifact if one has the knowledge to read the cultural symbols, in this case words in the English language. I have produced this deliberate way of reading this misrepresentation of a cross. I wish to demonstrate that real poles reflect cultural understandings. If a real pole resides in the cultural context in which it is produced, then peoples of these cultures have the knowledge to read these poles, to interpret their meaning and purpose in the culture, and honor the poles, the carvers, and the lives of the peoples and cultural knowledge represented in the poles. When poles are removed from their cultural locations they lose their connections to the people, culture, and knowledge, and the meanings and value of the poles can be erased.

Egg cartons, toilet paper rolls, and newspaper are not the materials of great art but of childhood explorations. I do not wish to denigrate the children who engaged in this misguided project. It is not working with cultural representations or expressing them through childhood enthusiasm and childhood craft of papier-mâché that I wish to challenge. Instead of expressing a denigration of someone else's culture, as these children did, imagine if children were asked to portray their own culture using whatever materials were available to them and working in ways to match their skills and abilities.

Children need to be engaging with cultural practices, exploring cultural expressions, and exploring with their hands through art in order to grow and generate understandings of themselves as cultural beings. What if children were asked to construct a project in which they explored their relationship to Indigenous peoples? This might engage them in exploring their own locations and those of people outside their usual circle. Imagine if cultural activities like going to a pow wow and having visiting dancers and singers were included in their experiences. This might stimulate interesting dialogues about children's cultural locations. This might be interesting art, although perhaps beyond some aspects of the grade 3 curriculum.

#### *Discussing Changing Education*

Indigenous peoples and knowledge are represented as *other* in the process of producing the papier-mâché poles. The practice of producing the poles overwrites the voices of Indigenous peoples who live in cultures that produce real poles. In this case the cultural form of the pole is reproduced in papier mâché, destroying the cultural content of the form and misrepresenting and denigrating Indigenous cultural knowledge. This practice is part of the paradoxical situation Goldie (1995) described above in which the Indian is other and alien through the eyes of the Canadian. But the Indian is Indigenous and cannot be alien. The Canadian must be the alien. But how can the Canadian be alien to Canada? The superficial incorporation of the Indigenous Other into Canadian institutions is accomplished here through incorporation into the papier-mâché

poles. It is a superficial acknowledgment of Indigenous peoples and does not reflect the Indigenous knowledges that produce real poles.

Little Bear's (2000) proposal to resolve this conundrum by recognizing that our histories, languages, and cultures are not separate from those we consider *other* is an important contribution. We can express these jagged world views through expressing stories that reflect our shared histories. But these must be another kind of history. Elsewhere I have indicated this.

Histories are contested terrain in educational practice. Many sites of public education and schooling serve to provide information on history and represent dominant histories which subjugate indigenous peoples. In mainstream education students are taught to believe that "History is ... about justice, that understanding history will enlighten our decisions about the future" (Smith, 1999, p. 34). However, Mackey (2002) explained that history is not truth, but an interpretation of events told from a particular point of view. (Iseke-Barnes, 2005, pp. 149-150)

Understanding the histories of Indigenous peoples will change the story about history that is commonly told in education. If Indigenous histories are included in the story then the mainstream history must change and loses its privileged position as dominant history and becomes one story—told by the powerful to retain power rather than *the* story, which is truth.

Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things. (Smith, 1999, p. 34)

Part of this alternative way of doing things and producing alternative knowledge is through Indigenous media. Based on this story, I produced the short film (1 minute 33 seconds) entitled "Papier-Mâché Totem Poles in the Library." In this film a child's voice questions inclusion of papier-mâché totem poles and crosses in the library, and misrepresentations of Indigenous knowledges in the education of children. Mainstream misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples and knowledges in mass-produced objects—children's sticker sets, art sets, and a key holder—are also challenged. All these objects eventually end up being thrown in the recycle bin at the conclusion of the film (Figure 3). The final question this child asks is: "How can native [Indigenous] children grow up proud if native [Indigenous] people and knowledges are not respected?" The film cuts away to the child holding her drum and singing an Indigenous song. The film suggests that children need to be in cultural relation to the knowledge of Indigenous peoples if they are to truly understand themselves as Indigenous peoples or to understand themselves as members of cultures that are in relation to Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous knowledges must be a respected and full part of educational practices if Indigenous children are to be full participants in educational classrooms. But as the papier-mâché poles example shows, educational institutions are still dominated by Western knowledge systems that denigrate and misrepresent Indigenous knowledge (Iseke-Barnes & Sakai, 2003). How can an educational setting move beyond these practices? How can artists and educa-



Figure 3. *Papier-mâché poles and cross in recycling.*

tors work to create spaces that are inclusive and respectful of Indigenous knowledges?

Critically examining the cultural representations inherent in the works included in educational institutions may well be a helpful practice as the many problematic practices can be discarded, as was the case of the papier-mâché poles. This is also the case in my current employment, in which various Indigenous and non-Indigenous students examined our entire education library collection. They located and organized all the books that they felt had problematic representations of Indigenous peoples. For a discussion of how to do this assessment see Slapin, Seale, and Gonzales (1998).

Opening discussions among colleagues and students to encourage critical engagement with issues of representation may well be a place to begin to make change as was the case of the faculty meetings. But as we have seen in this example, if those engaged in the dialogue are not open to change and ready to really grapple with the challenging issues before us in considering the knowledge systems to which they and we cling, then dialogue can be unproductive.

Perhaps the most helpful role that can be assumed by non-Natives [non-Indigenous] who are interested in assisting with Indigenous self-determination efforts—whether one is a classroom teacher faced with the task of teaching Indigenous studies curricula or an educational researcher working in Indigenous educational communities—is to work collaboratively with Native [Indigenous] allies, listen closely to our wisdom as well as our concerns, interrogate unearned power and privilege (including one’s own), and use this privilege to confront oppression and “stand behind” Natives [Indigenous peoples], so that our voices can be heard. (Kaomea, 2005, p. 40)

It was ultimately helpful to me as an Indigenous scholar to share my concerns with several colleagues who were supportive of my efforts. It did take

a kind of informative action, the production of a cultural mirror in the form of a misrepresented cross, to create the awareness of the cultural bias in a papier-mâché pole.

Hall (1997) engages in a discussion of representation and the process of producing difference through power. He suggests that power is more than physical coercion and must be understood "in broader cultural or symbolic terms" (p. 259). He concludes that it is a practice of power when one engages in representation of someone or something in a particular way. He describes this as the "exercise of *symbolic power* through representational practices" and suggests that it is part of the "exercise of symbolic violence" (p. 259). These papier-mâché poles, in representing particular Indigenous knowledge in these misrepresentations, are engaged in the exercise of symbolic power through which the dominant culture misrepresents and *others* Indigenous knowledge.

Hall (1997), drawing on Said's (1978) discussion of Orientalism, discusses how European culture produced understandings of "the Orient" ideologically and imaginatively. Similarly, in this university setting, the production of papier-mâché poles ideologically and imaginatively produced "the Indigenous other." This relationship of power is produced through knowledge. Said suggests that it is cultural hegemony that provides strength to Orientalism. Similarly, cultural hegemony provides strength and durability to ideas about the Indigenous other. Said explains that the idea of Europe and "a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans" (p. 7) produces Orientalism. Similarly, it is the collective notion identifying the centralized ideas from European and Western thought that gives the enduring ideas about Indigenous others their power. It produces the idea of European and Western thought as superior to all non-Western knowledge.

It is the hegemonic understandings of Western thought that produce the Indigenous other and that make the idea of papier-mâché poles acceptable to those immersed in a Western system of knowledge. "Power ... always operates in conditions of unequal relations" (Hall, 1997, p. 261). The dominant ideas about what knowledge is acceptable and what is not operate in this and other institutions of learning. In this case European and Western thought in a university setting is dominant and operates to exclude other knowledge systems, in this case Indigenous knowledge systems. It is then included only in a Western frame of reference.

Battiste, Bell, and Findley (2000) critique Canadian universities, suggesting they are still "primarily about the insiders and how much or how little they will have to adjust their practices and share their privileges in order to 'respond' to (by once again determining) outsiders' 'needs'" (p. 182). They further contend that "universities have largely held onto their Eurocentric canons of thought and culture and sapped the creative potential of faculty, students, and communities in ways both wasteful and damaging" (p. 182). In the case of the papier-mâché poles in the library, it is the West's notion of Indigenous knowledge that is portrayed in the university rather than Indigenous knowledge itself as reflected in real poles.

Indigenous knowledges, like all knowledge systems, are fluid, adaptive, and changing. It is the everyday reality of living in a place (Dei et al., 2000). It reflects the current and historic realities of Indigenous peoples. As Wagamese

(1994) suggests, Indigenous peoples are “movin’ between our jobs and the sweat lodge. Movin’ between school and pow wow. Movin’ between English and Anishnabe. Movin’ between 1990 and 1490” (p. 137). The dynamic nature of Indigenous knowledge is why the cultures are resilient (Doige, 2003).

### *Conclusions*

What do the cultural mirrors produce in this dialogue? They challenge the inclusion of false representations of Indigenous knowledge in an education library and draw attention to the strategies of producing another cultural mirror, this time a mirror that reflects back the cultural bias of Western thought in showing a biased and misrepresented cross. The effect of this mirror was to inform, and it did challenge the representational practices in education. Returning to the important question asked by a child in the film: How can Indigenous children grow up proud if Indigenous people and knowledges are not respected? We need to think through the implications of representational practices in the university and in education in general.

Because our intention in teaching is to support the growth of all people in education, how is it that we can aid students and institutions to understand their own cultural biases, and begin to challenge these biases and become more open to knowledges outside their own? Perhaps most important is that Indigenous people be in the hallways. We cannot expect Indigenous knowledges to be respected and reflected in the institutional practices if these knowledges and the carriers of these knowledges—Indigenous peoples—are excluded from these centers of learning.

It goes beyond having Indigenous scholars and students in educational settings. It means challenging the taken-for-granted knowledge systems and making space for knowledges beyond the dominant European, Western thought. It means changing both who is present in the institution and changing the character of the institution to enable Indigenous knowledges to be explored, examined, and actively engaged. Eigenbrod (2005) suggests that “An ethical reading of Aboriginal [Indigenous] literatures implies a re-visioning of notions of expertise; however, as academics, as persons in positions of influence, we should not ignore our responsibilities as educators” (p. 206). She suggests that we need to ensure that Indigenous authors are listened to, read, and respectfully responded to, ensuring that the reflections of Indigenous knowledge in written pieces move beyond the current ghettoized location they experience.

Indigenous artists and media producers are making tremendous strides in challenging a colonial past and visioning a future (McMaster, 2005; Iseke-Barnes & Jimenez, 2008). Indigenous knowledges are reflected in the art and work of artists and media producers. These works need to be reflected in educational institutions. We need to acknowledge that Indigenous artists are experts in their own right and that their work is reflected in and respected in education.

Indigenous knowledges can be reflected in the history we teach. More often than not, however, history reflects a Western or dominant cultural bias (Smith, 1999; Iseke-Barnes, 2005). If we are truly to transform the educational institutions in which we work, we need to open opportunities for alternative histories to the dominant and Western histories, creating spaces to hear Indigenous



accounts of history that reflect Indigenous understandings and perceptions of the past.

Let me be clear. I am not suggesting that kind of add-on approach so common in educational practices of the past in which the curriculum does not change and we just add on the Indigenous content as an afterthought. This add-on approach means that Indigenous knowledge is still marginalized, displaced, and discounted in its location on the margins of real knowledge. If educational institutions are really going to change, they need to be open to knowledges that are not located in the Western paradigm. They also need to be open to critique their own Western paradigm to recognize its limits and come to understand that these limits are confining.

So how can we achieve these goals in the educational setting of the university? Indigenous courses can be helpful (Iseke-Barnes, 2008). They can provide opportunities for engagement with Indigenous knowledge in frameworks of Indigenous knowledge. As in the course "Indigenous Peoples and Medias," in which students talked about the papier-mâché poles and analyzed their symbolic practices, they were able to provide meaningful critique of these practices.

In such a class it is possible to link educational practices with Indigenous theory in ways that may be useful to teachers in preparation, current teachers, and educators of classroom teachers, as well as curriculum developers and educational theorists. Preservice teachers' questions informed this story, as do the words and questions of an Indigenous child. But we need increasing numbers of Indigenous educators to ensure that the dialogue about Indigenous knowledges continues in education. If the carriers of Indigenous knowledge are not admitted to the university, then these knowledges cannot be fully reflected there, and the risks for continued misrepresentation, appropriation, and denigration continue. By increasing involvement of Indigenous scholars in education, there is the potential for Indigenous knowledges to be reflected there and respected in the classrooms, libraries, and meetings in academe.

By taking various stances in viewing the story, layers of meaning were revealed. On one level, the story has revealed practices used by dominant society to maintain dominance. On another level, it reveals strategies to make these dominating practices evident and to disrupt them. On a deeper level, conceptual meanings of misrepresentations and the power of media to affect change have been explored. It is my hope that the questions asked and journey toward change has been instructive. All my relations.

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