

*Indigenous Knowledges, Representations
of Indigenous Peoples on the Internet,
and Pedagogies in a Case Study in Education:
Questioning Using the Web to Teach
About Indigenous Peoples*

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines pedagogical issues in uses of the Internet in educational settings by student-teachers, teachers, and their students as it relates to Indigenous peoples. The paper begins with a discussion of Indigenous knowledges followed by discussions of a website called "Exploring Nunavut" which is critiqued through decolonizing theory, Indigenous knowledges, and cultural studies. The paper then presents a case study in which the Internet is used to stimulate discussions of culture in a grade 3/4 classroom. The analysis of the story demonstrates the ways that the Internet texts are taken up through dominant discourses which are presented in the website. The paper demonstrates the complexity of educational practices in discussions of Indigenous peoples, the Internet, and education.

Résumé: Ce papier analyse les aboutissements pédagogiques dans des travaux d'études que les professeurs-étudiants, les professeurs et leurs étudiants mènent sur les indigènes en utilisant Internet. Cet article démarre par une discussion sur la culture indigène suivie par des débats sur le site Internet appelé «Explorer Nunavut.» Celui-ci est commenté à travers une théorie de décolonisation, de connaissances indigènes et d'études culturelles. Puis, l'on découvre un cas d'étude où Internet est utilisé pour stimuler les débats sur la culture dans des classes de cours

élémentaire deuxième année et de cours moyen première année. La finalité de cette expérience montre les aspects que les textes d'Internet ont empruntés grâce à des exposés fondamentaux trouvés sur le site. On y remarque aussi la complexité de la pratique enseignante sur les débats liés aux indigènes, à Internet et à l'éducation.

Educational goals for school children include using technology which is often interpreted as using the Internet. In discussions of the Internet and education concern is often expressed about children's exposure to inappropriate materials on the Internet particularly portrayals of violence or pornography. A broader issue to be concerned about in regard to Internet portrayals are cultural representations and misrepresentations. Educators must contend with the cultural content of the Internet to which students are exposed including issues of representations of identity, community, and culture. Web developers reproduce discourses evident in broader society about culture within their web sites. Users of web sites encounter these discourses. Educators using the Internet must examine the images, counter images, understandings, and refutations which are (re)produced in the Website being used. How are cultures represented in the web sites in use? Who controls these representations?

This paper provides a discussion of Indigenous knowledges which is contrasted with a description of a web site about Indigenous peoples which engages in colonial discourses about Indigenous peoples. These discussions form the basis for analysis of a case study which describes a student teacher's – Cory Sakai – story of a grade 3/4 classroom scenario in which he and his cooperating teacher attempted to aid children in learning about Indigenous peoples in a newly named and redefined northern territory in Canada called Nunavut. Students used the web site to learn some words from an Indigenous language and see images of Indigenous peoples and their locations. Students read a novel about Indigenous peoples as well. Students then produced stories about Indigenous people.

The analysis of the case study highlights ways that Internet texts about subordinate groups reproduce dominant discourses thus reinforcing oppressive perspectives. It also demonstrates how Indigenous knowledges are not taken up in web sites nor in educational practices. This paper questions cultural narratives of language learning through distance, examines the complexity of educational practices in discussions of Indigenous peoples, describes images captured by a colonial lens, and

examines cultural representations of Indigenous peoples. Finally, the paper demonstrates that cyberspace inclusion in curricula complicates these many issues through representational and pedagogic practices.

The Terms Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples

Before proceeding to describe the case some terminology needs to be clarified. The term Indigenous, as Smith (1999, pp. 6-7) explains, is troubling because it collects together distinct populations and diverse communities, language groups, and nations with very different experiences of colonialism using a single term. Other collective terms which are often used as alternatives to Indigenous include First Peoples, First Nations, Native Peoples, Aborigines, and Fourth World Peoples. Many Indigenous peoples prefer to use the term from their own languages which connects them to their history and the land – for example, *Anishnabe* is the term used by Ojibway people in Canada to mean ‘we the people.’ The Indigenous peoples students are referred to as Indigenous or *Inuit* in this study as this is the term used by people of this region (recognizing that this term also collectivizes distinct groups of people who once were referred to as Eskimo, a term reflected in this paper only when quoting participants in the case study).

While the term Indigenous is troubling it is also the term used in the international community in the expression Indigenous peoples – an expression which 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 term Indigenous peoples “internationalizes the experiences, the issues, and the struggles of some of the world’s colonized peoples” (Smith, 1999, p. 6). The final ‘s’ is important because it recognizes the real diversity of Indigenous peoples and the right to self-identify.

The term has enabled the collective voices of colonized people to be expressed strategically in the international arena. It has also been an umbrella enabling communities and peoples to come together, transcending their own colonized contexts and experiences, in order to learn, share, plan, organize, and struggle collectively for self-determination on the global and local stages. Thus the world’s indigenous populations belong to a network of peoples. They share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled

out. As Wilmer has put it 'indigenous peoples represent the unfinished business of decolonization.' (Smith, 1999, pp. 6-7)

Indigenoussness and Indigenous Knowledges

Dei (2000) describes Indigenoussness as "knowledge consciousness arising locally and in association with the long-term occupancy of a place" (p. 72) and refers to "traditional norms, social values, and mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate ... ways of living in and making sense of the world." Dei's notion of Indigenous "recognizes the multiple and collective origins and the collaborative dimension of knowledge, and underscores that the interpretation or analysis of social reality is subject to different and sometimes oppositional perspectives" (p. 72).

The word Indigenous is also commonly used in the expression Indigenous knowledges which refers 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). Further, Dei (2000) suggests that an Indigenous knowledge system:

Is based on cognitive understandings and interpretations of the social and physical/spiritual worlds. Indigenous knowledges include concepts, beliefs, perceptions, and experiences of local environments, both social and natural Different forms of knowledge (e.g., knowledge as superstition, knowledge as a belief in the invisible order of things, knowledge as 'science') all build on one another to provide interpretations and understandings of society. This idea that knowledge is accumulative suggests strongly that indigenous knowledges are dynamic. (p. 72)

As Dei et. al. (2000) explain "Indigenous knowledges are dynamic, and in their ability to adapt to new challenges and new environments, they have stood the test of time" (pp. 46-47). Smith (1999) also emphasizes change for Indigenous peoples who "have regrouped, learned from past experiences, and mobilized strategically around new alliances. The elders, the women and various dissenting voices within indigenous communities maintain a collective memory and critical conscience of past experiences" (p. 98).

Castellano (2000) recognizing the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada suggests that commonly understood characteristics and modes of transmission of Aboriginal knowledges in Canada may be described as "personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language" (p. 25). She explains:

Illustrating the personal nature of aboriginal knowledge, there is a story that has been repeated often enough to have acquired a place in contemporary oral culture. At the hearings considering an injunction to stop the first James Bay hydro-electric power development in northern Quebec, an elder from one of the northern Cree communities that might be affected by the development was brought in to testify about Cree lifeways and the environment. When asked to swear that he would tell the truth, he asked the translator for an explanation of the word. However truth was translated for him, as something that holds for all people, or something that is valid regardless of the rapporteur, the elder responded: 'I can't promise to tell you the truth; I can only tell you what I know.' (p. 25)

Aboriginal knowledge does not claim universality. The way you can trust what is being said is linked with the integrity and perceptiveness of the speaker. Castellano provides an example of someone reporting seeing a sign of a moose in a given direction. The report will be considered in regard to the person's history and whether their reports have been accurate in the past, what is collectively known about the region in which the report was made, and the habits of moose. The report would be considered in context. Given the personal nature of knowledge it means that disparate and even contradictory perceptions can be accepted as valid. "In a council or talking circle of elders you will not find arguments as to whose perception is more valid and therefore whose judgement should prevail" (Castellano, 2000, p. 26). Instead, in Aboriginal communities there are many meetings to discuss issues that affect the community.

Gradually comments or experiences with a particular bent were heard reinforcing one another; and at a certain point, everyone would get up and leave. A perceptive observer might be able to see the exchange of looks or nods between certain elders, signaling the emergence of consensus; but such consensus would not normally be confirmed in a vote. Collective wisdom is arrived at by a process of 'putting our minds together.' (Castellano, 2000, p. 26)

Indigenous knowledges are complex and are often shared in relationships – they may be expressed as heart knowledge, spirit knowledge, blood memory, experiential knowledge, or holistic knowledge, and are often shared through narrative or story in oral transmission.

In Relationship

The *oral transmission* of Aboriginal and Indigenous cultures often means that they are perceived as preliterate as though literacy were somehow more advanced on an evolutionary scale (Castellano, 2000, p. 26). Often Elders decline to have their words recorded in print or on tape because when Elders' words are recorded the Elder loses the possibility of adjusting the lessons to the maturity of the learner and the ability to influence the ethical use of the knowledge. Teachings of Elders are shared in relationship encompassing both an intellectual and emotional quality. When teachings are recorded they lose this richness. The intention of this type of teaching is to maintain relationships rather than for the transmission of information.

Likewise, Holmes (2000), an Indigenous Hawaiian describes her understandings of knowledge passed to her from *kupuna* (elders). "Knowledge is a gift from a higher power, revealed and contextualized through relationships" (p. 40). She describes the process of establishing relationships anchored in *'ohana* (family) before stories were passed down. She says she "received not only personal directives from the interviews but also a sense that each interview was in fact, *for* her, and given in the context of a relationship" (p. 40). Wane (2000), a Kenyan scholar and faculty member in Canada, describes her work with Kenyan women Elders. She states that:

Knowing the name of one's tribe or clan was not enough as far as these women were concerned. One had to know several generations of one's family tree. This allowed lineage to be established, and since this was a small community, I usually learned that all of us were connected at some point in the family tree. After lineage was established, the women felt more comfortable talking to me. I would be asked questions such as, 'Whose daughter did you say you are? What is your clan? What about your mother's clan? Do you know your aunties and uncles?' It was during my interviewing that I found out who my great-great grandparents were and where they had come from. Once that bond was established, I knew the women could question my opinion and understanding on any issue. I had become their grandchild or daughter. (pp. 57-58)

Heart Knowledge

In Holmes (2000) *kupuna* (elders) further "construct knowledge as an almost tangible force flowing through the bodies of successive generations. In this sense, the continuum of time is collapsed into and manifests out from the bodies of humans" (p. 40). In this way knowledge

“surpasses the intellectual realm, and lodges itself in the emotional realm” as a result Holmes refers to this as heart knowledge.

Mamatowisowin / Spirit Knowledge

Like Holmes, Willie Ermine (1995), a Plains Cree scholar, suggests that “our Aboriginal languages and culture contain the accumulated knowledge of our ancestors” (p. 104).

It is critical that we examine the inherent concepts in our lexicons to develop understandings of the self in relation to existence. The Cree word *mamatowisowin*, for example, describes the capability of tapping into the ‘life force’ as a means of procreation. This Cree concept describes a capacity to be or do anything, to be creative *Mamatowisowin* is a capacity to tap the creative force of the inner space by the use of all the faculties that constitute our being – it is to exercise inwardness (p. 104).

Ermine further explains *Mamatowisowin* as:

The capacity to connect to the life force that makes anything and everything possible. The recording of ancestral pioneering expeditions and associated community structures helped individuals hone their self-development by developing *mamatowisowin* through dreams, visions, and prayer. The culture of the Aboriginal recognized and affirmed the spiritual through practical applications of inner-space discoveries. (p. 110)

Blood Memory

Holmes describes a related concept of *blood memory* which emphasizes the importance of family, genealogy and the connection of Hawaiians to one another. She emphasizes that this is not blood quantum (the process by which people are included or excluded from official Hawaiianness by state laws) which is a foreign concept to Hawaiians. Blood memory emphasizes that it is:

That you *are* Hawaiian and you are ‘ohana (family) and eat from the same poi (a food made from taro) bowl ... And that we come from the same roots. And that’s the connectedness that ... brings all Hawaiians together, no matter how much Hawaiian they have by blood quantum. Wherever they live, if you are Hawaiian, you are Hawaiian The circular connection between the people, the *ali‘i*, the gods, and the land is forged not by information but by blood and ‘roots.’ Central to the idea of blood and roots is the notion that experience is crucial to knowledge. If one does not have the

experience, knowledge must come through the experiences of the *kupuna*. (2000, pp. 41-42)

Given that many Hawaiians no longer have the experiences of living on the land or near the waters and taking care of them it becomes the responsibility of those who have this knowledge to tell them. As such, those without experience will learn from the *kupuna* "by receiving the memories and admonitions of their *kupuna* Ties forged through blood and connection (or roots) are the source of living memory" (p. 42). But this knowledge can contain contradictions and differences. The task is not to validate the truth value. What is important is to understand that different knowledge can exist and flourish together so in the instance of a husband and wife whose families have some differences in their knowledges, their children can be taught both forms and be taught to respect both.

Experiential Knowledge

Experiential knowledge for Aboriginal peoples draws into question dominant science which seeks objective and quantitative understandings while Aboriginal knowledge is qualitative and subjective (Colorado, 1988). Ermine (1995) further observes that:

Those people who seek knowledge on the physical plane objectively find their answers through exploration of the outer space, solely on the corporeal level. Those who seek to understand the reality of existence and harmony with the environment by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm that might be termed Aboriginal epistemology. (p. 103)

Castellano (2000, p. 29) provides an excerpt of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report which describes the experiential nature of knowledge:

The need to walk on the land in order to know it is a different approach to knowledge than the one-dimensional, literate approach to knowing. Persons schooled in a literate culture are accustomed to having all the context they need to understand a communication embedded in the text before them Persons taught to use all their senses – to absorb every clue to interpreting a complex, dynamic reality – may well smile at the illusion that words alone, stripped of complementary sound and colour and texture, can convey meaning adequately.

Holistic Knowledge

Holistic knowledge, as described by Castellano (2000) requires “all the senses, coupled with the openness to intuitive and spiritual insights” (p. 29). She explains the importance of ceremony in creating an openness and stillness in order to be fully aware. In this process one becomes aware that “everything is alive” and that “we are all related” (Couture, 1991). Hampton (1995) explains these ideas in a description of the deep meaning he came to understand in his fasting for a vision:

On the second day of the fast, as I prayed I began to ask myself, ‘Who are my people?’ Over the following days my identity expanded from my own skin outwards to family, friends, relatives, Indian people, other humans, animals, growing things, to finally reach the earth itself and everything that is. I came away from the fast with a deep awareness of feeling at home, related to all that is. (pp. 19-20)

Castellano also speaks of the predominance of medicine wheel teachings, which were originally part of the cultures of the peoples of the plains – Dakota, Blackfoot, and Cree but which are important for many Aboriginal peoples today. Castellano emphasizes that this teaching is a model of balance.

Some of us find ourselves predominantly in one quadrant of the wheel, with gifts that by themselves are insufficient for a full life. The medicine wheel teaches us to seek ways of incorporating the gifts of the other quadrants. It encourages us to bring more balance to our own lives ... and to form relationships and work in teams. So the model of the world is ... of people united in a circle. Through the sharing of diverse gifts, balance is created in individual lives and in society as a whole. (2000, p. 30)

Narrative and Metaphor

Narrative and metaphor are primary ways that Aboriginal knowledge have been shared in traditional society. In these stories are information, entertainment, models of behavior, and warnings.

Recounted in ceremonial settings and confirmed through many repetitions, they record the history of a people. They teach without being intrusive, because the listener can ignore the oblique instruction or apply it to the degree he or she is ready to accept, without offence. Stories of personal experience can be understood either as reminiscences or as metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination. (Castellano, 2000, p. 31)

Indigenous knowledges are diverse and ever changing but there is also a strong sense of relationship or interconnectedness in these knowledges. All Indigenous peoples and all peoples for that matter are connected by sharing life on mother earth.

Indigenous Peoples Represented on the Internet

This rich view of knowledge and culture presented through Indigenous knowledges stands in stark contrast to the everyday understandings of Indigenous peoples common in representations by popular media. Drawing on discussions of decolonizing theory, cultural studies, and Indigenous theorizing what follows is a discussion of the “Exploring Nunavut” web site which highlights cultural assumptions evident on the Internet. This discussion specifically focuses on issues of representation in the site in order to aid in discussing the case study in which students use this site and to draw into question ways that language, images, and Indigenous languages are understood in Internet sites.

The “Exploring Nunavut” Web Site

The site selected for use by students in the teaching scenario was called “Exploring Nunavut”¹ and was made available by the producers of the 1998 Nunavut² Handbook. The “Exploring Nunavut” site is provided by the producers of a handbook for travelers and so is both advertising of a product and an overview of things that travelers might want to know. As such this site has a corporate orientation and focus as well as financial backing. Already, as you enter this site, from its name you have some sense of what this site is about – Exploring. While this is a common expression in education it is also related to a colonial discourse.

Near the top of the site there is a list of headings in colored boxes which connected to various informational items including Planning Ahead, Getting Around, Destinations, Activities, The People, The Territory, Land and Wildlife, and Art and Music. In the middle of this page was an image of an Indigenous boy in a fur coat and an introductory paragraph:

You’ve found it. The 1999 on-line edition of The Nunavut Handbook. Still the world’s most comprehensive travel guide to Canada’s Arctic – one of the last great eco-tourism and adventure travel destinations on Earth. Nunavut is the new Canadian territory that came into being April 1, 1999. Discover the Inuit, the indigenous people who for countless years have called Nunavut

home. Explore Nunavut's diverse and unique wildlife, its national and territorial parks, and much more.

This site, while clearly focused on eco-tourism, encourages the viewer to "Discover the Inuit" the Indigenous people of this land and territory. As one scans the first page of the web site, on either side of the introductory text there is a set of images to click upon; under each is an English word including: buy the book (picture of a book above this text used as a button to click on), maps (image of a globe), search the site (magnifying glass), products and services directory (roll-o-desk organizer), talkback (megaphone) and events (a partially flipped calendar) as well as press kit (newspaper), photo tours (camera), virtual tour (strip of film), audio (set of earphones) and postcards (two postcards). While the informational items may appear at the top of the page they are not nearly as salient as those which appear near the photograph which have images associated with each of them. Of these items to click upon, the camera and headphones may well attract considerable attention because they are two very common items which many visitors to this web site may recognize and they suggest images and sound that might be exciting. Particularly to a young audience these are very appealing.

Visual Imagery and the "Exploring Nunavut" Web Site

When one clicks the camera you enter a "photo tour" which takes you to a page of text, with four sets of images to look at. The first of the four sections on the photo tour is "Nunavut's Landscape: A Portrait of Naked Beauty" which is further described as "Unadorned by trees, Nunavut's snow-and-ice landscapes are breathtaking visions of minimalism." In introducing the landscape the focus on empty land seems to deny the presence of people in this landscape – a common problem of colonialism which assumed that the land was empty and unpeopled so it could be taken by colonial explorers.

The second section of photographs is entitled "Pangnirtung: A Community Snapshot" provides images of boats on water, three girls huddled together, and a mountain. I have to wonder how these are pictures of the community of Pangnirtung. There are no images of the kinds of houses these children live in nor images of the community in a section supposedly about community. Perhaps the description provided is telling.

The plane begins its descent, and I try to reassure myself the mountains in front of me are scenery, not obstacles. Dwarfing both the aircraft and the town site below, it makes me realize how small I really am. That uncomfortable feeling resurfaces a few minutes later, when it appears the pilot is about to land on one of Pangnirtung's few straight streets. Dirt roadway turns to gravel runway at the last second, though, and we touch down.

Half expecting to see the typical arctic image of flat, windswept tundra, the mountains that grip the edges of Pangnirtung Fiord have taken me by surprise. Starting out as low hills at the fiord's mouth, they develop into a jumble of peaks that fade beyond sight. To the north, the entrance to Aksayook Pass forms its distinctive silhouette. Beyond it lies Auyuittuq National Park Reserve, "the land that never melts," a term that offers even more meaning to the surrounding land.

This description is written not by a resident of Pangnirtung but by a photographer who flies in – an outsider to this community and environment. The complete absence of any description of the town or its people seems strange in a section about a community. The focus is on the fear of being engulfed by the apparently empty landscape. This framework is consistent with a colonial history of penetrating a region, conquering the land, and within these conquests of fearing being engulfed by nature or being lost in a barren land. In such descriptions there is a nature/culture binary which is produced and denied by the silencing of the people and culture of these people.

The focus on barren or empty land rather than on its people is a colonial assumption that the lands which explorers entered were empty and that they could be claimed for whatever colonial power with which the explorer was affiliated. The discourse assumes that the explorer had *discovered* this land (Koning, 1991). On the issue of *discovery* Bigelow (1999) describes a teaching activity in which he begins class by taking a student's purse. He announces that the purse is his because he has it. Student's challenge his ownership. He shows them things inside (what students don't know is that he set this up with the student beforehand) and says this is my lipstick. Students continue to protest. He helps students in articulating their concerns by asking "If we had a test of the contents of the purse, who would do better, Nikki [the owner of the purse] or me? Whose labor earned the money that bought the things in the purse?" (p. 224). Then he asks them "What if I said I *discovered* this purse, then would it be mine?" Students laugh and continue to contend that it is Nikki's purse. Then he asks "why do we say that Columbus

discovered America?" He asks "Were there people on the land before Columbus arrived? Who had been on the land longer, Columbus or the Indians? Who knew the land better? Who had put their labor into making the land produce? ... "what is the first thing that Columbus did when he arrived in the New World?" Bigelow goes on to describe that "Discovery' is the phrase of ... the conquerors, the invaders, masking their theft. And when the word gets repeated in textbooks, those textbooks become, in the phrase of one historian, 'the propaganda of the winners'" (p. 224).

The third section of the photo tour is called "Art Keeps Us Alive" and begs the question who is *us* in this expression? The description says that "In Nunavut as in other aboriginal societies, art sustains culture. That basic need to communicate the connection to the land surfaces again when Nunavumiut share their world with others." Apparently *us* is Nunavumiut – the people of Nunavut – who are mostly Indigenous peoples. Notice though that in the description these people are sharing 'their world' not 'our world' as such this description suggests that again this site is not written by Nunavumiut but outsiders. In this section there are images of Indigenous peoples from Nunavut. The initial photographs are not of the same photographic quality as those provided in the earlier sections but the description provided still focuses on emptiness: "On the map, Nunavut seems a vast, empty space. It may be one-fifth the size of Canada, but Nunavut's 25,000 or so people give the territory the feel of a small town." Here there are images of an Indigenous woman and child with whale skin, a carver on his knees working, and a distant image of a family group in hide garments. On the second of these pages we see a woman and her children, the woman wearing what is described as "The amauti is still the winter coat of choice for Inuit women the territory over. Children are stored in a large pocket in the back of the amauti; the hood can then be pulled up over both child and mother." Images are evident of older men and women engaged in using a whip made of hide, in producing carvings, and in traditional dress holding a curved knife.

These initial images fit with stereotypic images of Inuit peoples from times past – traditional peoples engaged in traditional activities and a subsistence economy. They appear also to be consistent with stereotypes of Indigenous peoples which are "reduced to a few essentials, fixed in Nature by a few, simplified characteristics" (Hall, 1997, p. 249). But there are other images which seem to counter the stereotypic images like that of a woman of advanced age in a red helmet sitting on an all terrain

vehicle with the caption "An elder, who most likely spent her younger years living off the land, today adopts modern conveniences such as the all-terrain vehicle, used for town and land travel in the summer." There also is an image of children making sand castles; one child is wearing a parka with fur hood while one is in rubber boots and a nylon coat and another which is just in jeans and a t-shirt. These later images seem to suggest that there are remnants of a traditional past but that change is visibly evident. It is also possible that these images have been staged by the photographer. Edward Curtis staged photos to ensure modern influences were eliminated in his photographs (Francis, 1992). He wanted authentic Indigenous peoples. Perhaps this photographer staged these photos too. It is impossible to tell. The description suggests that:

Not yet have Nunavut's people, whether the 85% Inuit or the 15% non-Inuit, succumbed to the monotony of the melting pot. Instead, they borrow from each other's cultures. A hunter travels by plane and four-wheeler to hunt caribou, then in traditional fashion carefully cuts out and eats the 'half-cooked' lichen delicacies from the caribou's stomach. A teen-aged mother toting a baby in her colorfully embroidered amautik plays video games beside the fast food outlet, then roars away on her four-wheeler to check her fish-drying racks. A qallunaaq (white person) wears kamiit (animal-hide boots), carries her own baby in an amautik, and carves soapstone polar bears in her spare time.

This description seems to emphasize the taking up of modern culture while retaining the best of a historic culture. It seems that there is optimism in this description of borrowing. But the notion of borrowing implies choice. And in this description, it implies that non-Inuit and Inuit both have a free choice about what elements of culture they are to take up within this rapidly changing environment. But Castellano outlines a reason why this optimism is not shared:

The traditional media for transmitting aboriginal knowledge have become largely unavailable to many aboriginal people, especially the young. The young people no longer have daily access to experiential learning on the land; they have decreasing levels of fluency in aboriginal languages that would keep them in communication with elders; and they spend much of their time in educational institutions that socialize them into dependence on the written word. There is a real danger that the elders who still retain traditional and spiritual knowledge, and who know the context in which empirical observations must be evaluated, will join their ancestors without passing on what they know. (2000, p. 32)

Smith also outlines reasons why this scenario is not such a positive one for Indigenous peoples.

The struggle for the validity of indigenous knowledges may no longer be over the *recognition* that indigenous peoples have ways of viewing the world which are unique, but over proving the authenticity of, and control over, our own forms of knowledge The commodification of knowledge as intellectual property, of collective knowledge as public knowledge, and of knowledge as value-added takes the struggle into another set of cultural interpretations. Now indigenous peoples have to prove that what was used for centuries to heal an illness was something which was 'discovered' and then had a value added to that discovery through some sort of scientific process. The notion of authenticity is critical in this arena because it is often crucial to the arguments mounted by indigenous peoples in relation to knowledge and culture. Even if the grounds of the debate have shifted, the clash between science and indigenous knowledge remains constructed around the interests of science. In the new century indigenous peoples will continue to have to defend and seek to protect indigenous knowledges and cultures. (1999, pp. 104-105)

Borrowing may well seem to be a positive advantage to someone from a dominant group whose knowledge and way of life are not threatened. But the meaning to an Indigenous person is generally quite different. Non-Indigenous peoples are free to make choices within this context and to leave it if they feel it does not suit them. But for Indigenous peoples, this is their home and their land. They can choose to leave or to stay to deal with the implications of change, even when it is not change of their own choosing.

Additionally, it is important to remember that these images are being used in this website to sell a product – a book about this region. They are part of a sales package to market a product. As such they are commodities used in the sales pitch. Hall (1997, p. 240) describes the process of commodity racism through which Indigenous peoples become associated with nature, being taken to symbolize the *primitive* in contrast to the *civilized* world. While historically this process has involved the images of colonial expansion, in the examples in this website the images and cultural knowledges of the people become the commodities to be bought and sold.

As further evidence of this site's colonial intents through representational practices (hooks, 1994) consider the advice given by one of the photographers on this website. Mike Beedell is described on the

site as “an internationally published photographer, adventurer, and guide who suffers from a chronic case of arctic fever.” His advice on how to photograph in the north is provided near the end of a multi-page discussion of what type of camera to use, how to use it, and considerations for photography in extreme cold. Mike Beedell suggests that:

A home stay with an Inuit family can be culturally and photographically rewarding. Before booking with a tour company, confirm with them that the family is comfortable with you documenting their daily life. If they are, you can ask permission to photograph them flensing sealskins, for example, or worshipping at a local church. The instant results provided by a Polaroid or video camera can help ease any discomfort, by enabling you to share the experience with your hosts. Be sure to respect the family’s privacy. Remember, too, to follow through with your promise to send copies of photos to them after you return. That way, the experience will be happily remembered by everyone.

How is photographing a family engaged in worship at a local church respecting their privacy? What kind of cultural and photographic rewards are likely when staying with an Inuit family? Does the message which suggests that photographers give Inuit families polaroids and videotapes imply that that way they can take what they want? Everyone will be happy. Gerald Vizenor, a mixed-blood Ojibway scholar, describes the practice of cultural hobbyists:

The experts and cultural hobbyists never miss a chance to authenticate the scraps of romantic history dropped by white travelers through *indian country* centuries ago. White people are forever projecting their dreams of a perfect life through the invention of the indian – and then they expect an *oshki anishinabe*³ to not only fulfill an invention but to authenticate third-hand information about the tribal past. (1972, pp. 15-16)

This website appears intent on catering to and producing more cultural hobbyists than to further appropriative practices in regards to Indigenous cultural practices.

Audio Inuktitut

Language is central to the life of any community and cultural group. Language is the central way that groups express their knowledges. In this website Inuit language is presented. By clicking on an image of earphones the Audio begins. The text introduces you to a discussion of Inuktitut – the language of Inuit people – with the question “Can you

say ‘qimuksikkuurumavunga?’ Come on, you can do it: ‘qimuksikkuurumavunga.’ Still having a tough time? Then have a listen while our Inuktitut translator expertly pronounces this, and a whole slew of other words, sounds and phrases, for you.” Under three headings one can learn 1) “Inuktitut Sounds” – a list of the common sounds used in the language listed in a chart which you can click on to hear them, 2) “Useful phrases” – a list of phrases and a sound bite for each including phrases like ‘How are you?, I am Fine. What is your name, I want to take your picture?, Thank you, That’s all, How much is it, Expensive, I have to use the washroom, I am sick,’ and so on, and 3) “Common Words” – many names for various mammals and whales, sled, the people, a person of Inuit descent, Caucasian people, a woman’s parka, sealskin boots, a marker made of rocks piled up – Inuksuk, and names of arctic regions.

Inuktitut is the language of Inuit people and has structure and nuance as other languages do but in this website Inuktitut is viewed through the lens of English. The words presented can be combined using the syntax and grammatical structures of the language of the user of the site (assumed to be English given the site is in English). No syntax or grammar of Inuktitut are explained. Rampton (1995) suggests that people share languages to cross racial boundaries and engage in code crossing⁴ to transform interracial relations. Given that Inuktitut is removed from the people who speak it through technological interface any minimal transformation is uni-directional and become commodities in this product oriented site.

If languages (and culture as well) are to be taken up through the Internet and there is not a speaker of the language or member of the cultural group to explain its relationship to the people then culture and languages can become commodities. Commonly in second-language instruction the educator is a member of the community of speakers of the language and so there is a connection to the living relation of culture and language. Through the Internet this link is severed. Users of the Internet, or teachers of students using the Internet, are challenged to make these connections. But when it is a language the user or teacher does not speak from a cultural group the user or teacher does not know or identify with it is especially difficult.

The discussion of this website demonstrates that learning about Indigenous peoples from a distance is a difficult way to engage cultural discussions. As Smith (1999) tells us about distance,

One of the concepts through which Western ideas about the individual and community, about time and space, knowledge and research, imperialism and colonialism can be drawn together is the concept of distance. The individual can be distanced, or separated, from the physical environment, the community. Through the controls over time and space the individual can also operate at a distance from the universe. Both imperial and colonial rule were systems of rule which stretched from the centre outwards to places which were far and distant. Distance again separated the individual in power from the subjects they governed. It was all so impersonal, rational and extremely effective. (pp. 55-56)

In the use of the website one is distanced from those they study, the Indigenous peoples of Nunavut. Through the website we do not meet these people, do not come to know them, do not share the region, landscape, or lifestyle. In the website the distance is more than just thousands of miles. It is a cultural distance which cannot be negotiated through the technological distance.

From an Indigenous perspective, knowledges are interpreted by assessing the integrity and perceptiveness of the speaker. This website, produced by a non-Indigenous group about the land of Indigenous peoples and these peoples, is viewed with suspicion. The site presents information as valid even though the sources and quality of this information are suspect. The site does not involve Indigenous peoples to any great extent. This may be because it is common for Elders to share their knowledge with those in relationships to them with the purpose of maintaining relationships rather than transmitting information. But Internet sites, by their nature, are not about relationships but about transmission of (mis)information. Knowledges of Elders in this site are represented in images of the cutting of whale skin, traditional clothing of women, and the knife, whip, and carvings made by Elders. Indigenous knowledges are not shared here because these require relationships and knowledges that cannot be separated from the people. And since Indigenous knowledges are experiential, a website cannot provide the experiences necessary for real learning to take place.

Websites by their focus on pictures and text shared in a pre-formatted screen are fixed and unable to respond to the needs of learners. By their focus on structure and information websites are unable to deal with the intuitive and spiritual insights in holistic knowledge. Further, much of Aboriginal knowledge is shared in traditional society through stories which provide information, entertain, and provide models of behavior and warnings. These are often recounted

in ceremonial settings. But there is no place on the Internet so there can be no ceremony. The stories can be typed into the computer but they lose their context and relevance to the people who tell them. Without the context the stories lose their meanings.

As such, websites like this one appear to be more useful for exoticizing a people and selling a book through this exoticism than increasing understandings of Indigenous knowledges. But if the website about Indigenous peoples is not about Indigenous knowledges then what is it about? In this case, it is focused on colonial images of a mythical past in which Indigenous peoples are pliant subjects to be manipulated and commodified. What use can be put to such a website in a classroom? What understandings of Indigenous peoples are possible using a website with such a focus?

Setting the Stage – Introducing the Context of the Case Study

The story presented here is drawn from a research program composed of a series of three studies which focused on uses of the Internet in educational settings by student-teachers, teachers, and their students. Data were collected over a three year period (1995-1998) in elementary and secondary schools in Toronto, Canada and its suburbs including 33 preservice teachers in 16 student-teaching practicum placements. Preservice teachers gathered data through participant-observation to assist them in examining their pedagogic understandings. Preservice teachers participated with and observed students and their teachers over a three-week observation period (three-days per week) and during a four-week practicum (five days per week). They made careful field notes, held discussions with students and teachers asking questions about their activities, shared observations with their instructor and some classmates on a daily basis, and raised pedagogic questions which they took up in written papers about their growing pedagogic understandings.

Cory Sakai was a preservice teacher in the eight month teacher education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education who visited a public elementary school (kindergarten to grade 6) in a suburb of Toronto (a large urban center). He wrote about his experiences in an elementary school where students used the Internet to visit a web page about Nunavut – a new territory in arctic Canada largely populated by

Inuit peoples. A condensed version (due to space constraints) of Cory Sakai's original text is presented.

The school Cory visited is a relatively new building with some open concept classrooms. One of these was the computer room which is half of such a classroom shared with a classroom for grade 3/4 students. The community in which this school is located is mainly composed of young families, approximately 25% of which are the first or second generation to live in Canada with many having relocated from Indo-Asia. A large population of families from Atlantic Canada also make up the population of the school. Students in this classroom reflect the community composition with a quarter recently immigrated to Canada from Indo-Asia and the majority relocated here from Atlantic Canada. There were no students of Canadian Indigenous populations in this classroom.

The teacher of the grade 4 class of 28 students was a white male veteran teacher, Mr. MacKee,⁵ who was quite experienced with using computer software and applications (word processors and data bases) with students but who had no previous Internet experiences with students and limited background on using the Internet himself as the school had only recently established an Internet link. Students had no prior Internet experiences but became engaged in this project with the teacher who decided that they should explore a site on the Internet. The unit of study was intended to simultaneously address objectives of technology usage, and culture – particularly culture in Canada's North. This study of Northern Canada and its people was integrated across all units of study during the day, to incorporate writing skills development, reading, art, drama, and science.

It is important to understand that Mr. MacKee took a risk in initiating a new activity at a time when teachers in this province were under siege and had taken the previously unheard of political action of "walking out" of schools province wide to protest severe governmental financial cutbacks of the educational system which increased class sizes, increased teacher/student contact time, increased standards resulting in more content being prescribed for any given course/level, reduced teacher preparation time, and reduced availability of many resources except curiously for some computer technology which some governmental rhetoric suggested as "teaching machines." Mr. MacKee was also teaching at a time of curricular reform which focused more on technical orientations to teaching. Reforms had also recently dictated that the teaching of any information about Canada's Indigenous peoples would be moved to grade 6 rather than grade 4 in subsequent years so

the teacher was teaching this material for the last time at the grade 4 level.

Some years ago teachers wanting to learn about technology or engage in explorations of cultural issues might have turned to increasingly very sophisticated consultants in schools or school boards who could have helped them work through issues in order to develop pedagogical approaches. These consultants are mostly gone now. Mr. MacKee, a teacher who was trained in past years when the population of Ontario was not nearly so diverse as it is today (the city of Toronto has been named the most culturally diverse city in the world by the United Nations) likely had little or no training in taking up cultural issues and in dealing with the Internet. To try something new especially when he had a student-teacher observing was particularly challenging. What follows then is a description of classroom activities in a classroom with a teacher taking initial steps in issues of culture and the Internet.

The teacher, Mr. McKee, compared the "Exploring Nunavut" website to others about Nunavut. He noted that the site was easy to use, had a lot of very high quality images to look at, included some cultural information, and included language topics which are important to the grade 4 curricula. The English language use on the site was also at an appropriate level for grade 4. In comparison to other sites, this one was deemed by the teacher to be the best site and was selected. Mr. MacKee intended that students would learn about Inuit peoples from this site and write a story about their learning. They also were learning computer skills as they worked in pairs or groups of three on 12 multi-media Pentium computers.

Cory, as part of a course assignment for a course in his Bachelor of Education degree, observed the activities of two students, Tamara who worked with another girl, and Kalok who worked with two other boys. Cory was instructed to focus on one or two students in a class for an extended period as it is often the case that when preservice teachers go into classrooms to observe, they observe the teacher not the children and when they do watch children they focus on whomever happens to be close (thus changing vantage points means different children are observed) so they get no sense of how classrooms are experienced by individual children. The intention was to aid preservice teachers in beginning to view educational practices from those affected most by them – students in classrooms. Cory explained to the two groups of students that he "was not marking them" as he did not want them to be self-conscious or to restrict what they might usually do because they felt

they were being assessed. He explained that he was going to watch them work so that he could try to learn how children think. These were Cory's ways of helping students understand why he focused on a few students rather than on the class as a whole. The students thought this way was okay.

Cory's Story – The Case

As students began looking at the Nunavut site the text came up first prior to the images as the images were slow to load. Tamara and her partner began giggling because they had found a link that played "real-audio" clips of Inuktitut words and phrases. They played them and repeated what they had heard. Tamara's partner then came over to Cory, repeated the phrase "*qanuipit*," and went back. Apparently the word means "hello." They continued to listen and learn several phrases provided on the Nunavut site.

Kalok's group had been drawn to the page Tamara was on from the moment the sounds emanated from her computer. Kalok said "*Cool! Where did you get that?*" Tamara directed him but just as the boys began listening to audio clips the class was over and it was time to go. Kalok and other students in the class asked to stay over lunch hour but their teacher suggested he needed to eat too so they were not allowed to stay.

The next day students were told to explore as much as they could so they could tell the class the unique things that they had learned and that they would write about this in their journals. Both groups excitedly continued playing with the audio clips. Kalok said "*Cool, Oh, that's wicked!*" Other students also expressed excitement. At one point a student came over to Cory and said "*Hey Cory. Quisuktunga! You know what that means? It means I have to go to the washroom!*" (laughing) All of the boys and some of the girls that heard this started to giggle. In grade 4 any mention of bodily functions easily incites laughter. Cory began to listen to what they were saying and heard Kalok say "*Oh! This is a good one. Say this together with 'seal.' That means 'Hello seal'*" (laughter). The boys had combined these two words using grammatical structure from the English language. Cory thought students may have combined two innocuous words into an insulting phrase. The teacher went over to a student and said the Inuit words for "*Hello seal.*" The boys laughed having fun with the words. Some of the boys then began getting up from their seats so their teacher asked them to return to their work. The teacher had been marking journal books and was calling students

up to collect and discuss them as he marked them. The teacher did this regularly as a part of class.

Tamara and her partner had been playing and repeating words. As the class was let out students did not ask to remain in the room but seemed more interested in trying out some of the words and phrases on their friends before they forgot them. After class Tamara and her partner came up to Cory and told him some of the words and phrases they had learned inserting them into English sentences in a conversational sequence. They almost seemed to expect Cory to answer.

On the following day the teacher demonstrated how to save images from a web site to the hard drive so that students could incorporate these images into their own stories. Each student was to be limited to only one picture. Kalok's group found a picture of a polar bear which had been chosen by children in several groups. Kalok's group began to fight over who would get to use the polar bear image and who had found it first. Eventually they were running out of time and they settled who would have the polar bear and Kalok chose an image he had seen before which he described as "*the funny Eskimo on that other page*" which turned out to be a cartoon image of an "Eskimo boy." The final student in this group looked through the images for a ship (why did he think that there should have been a ship in a web site about Indigenous peoples? Perhaps it was because he saw images of kayaks on open water and assumed ships might be there) but when he could not locate one settled on a photo image of an Inuk building an igloo.

Tamara and her partner had already saved their images, a polar bear and a seal image, when Cory returned his attention to them. But they had just found a map of Nunavut that they were exploring. They asked if they could get the image of the map and Cory shrugged his shoulders. They figured out how to save the map which Tamara was going to use as her picture.

On the following day students returned to class. Kalok had written a story he had entitled "Lost Inuit" while Tamara's was entitled "The Poor Lost Polar Bear." Each was written outside of class and entered into the computer during class time. The novel that the class was currently reading was called *Frozen Fire* (Houston, 1977) which tells the supposedly factually-based story of two boys, caucasian (Matthew) and Inuk (Kayak), who undertake a perilous journey to rescue Matthew's father who became lost around Frobisher Bay in the Canadian Arctic. The story depicts the "traditional Eskimo way of life," and the changes that it undergoes in the contemporary world. Several other students

used lost or loss in their titles. Cory wondered about the recurrence of these themes in student writing. He posed the possibility that the teacher suggested some titles or gave students ideas thus “lost” was so prominent in their titles. It is also possible that because students were reading a story about loss and being lost they wrote a story in this way.

Discussion

In this case students did not come to know Inuit people nor did they come to share their language, region, landscape, or lifestyle. They remained at a cultural distance from these people. In doing so students explored Inuktitut through the lens of English. In a way, students played with Inuktitut like they play with ‘pig-latin’ – a game common to children in Canada in which they remove the first letter of a word and make it the first letter of a suffix to which they add the “a” sound. For example, ‘word’ becomes ‘ord-way.’ In exploring Inuktitut children used English rules to play with sounds. Inuktitut became funny sounding words which were consumed by students to construct sentences which they could play with the teacher. Students were oblivious to their commodification of language.

The case study demonstrates that learning about Indigenous peoples from a distance through a website and a novel are difficult ways to engage cultural discussions. Teachers are increasingly compelled to take up issues of culture in their classrooms and compelled or required by official curricula to find ways to incorporate Indigenous knowledges in their classes. But as this scenario highlights, teachers often are not well prepared nor supported in meeting these challenges. Teachers are often also situated in teaching contexts in which this kind of teaching is new.

As an alternative approach to teaching about language and culture, the teachers might have considered students’ own language(s) and colloquial expressions in English thus problematizing the way English and particularly dominant English (Achebe, 1975; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995; Pennycook, 1995) is maintained as normal in these discussions. It might have helped students understand why they viewed the languages of the other as funny. If children had used these limited experiences in Inuktitut to initiate the creation of language games in English students may have had opportunities to consider structure and nuance of language. This might have helped them see how languages are living in the people and in culture. Perhaps students could have been read passages from old English in which there were unfamiliar words or words used in ways unlike their common uses today. Language change

might become more evident to students this way. Perhaps students could have brought in music which they listen to which introduces new words or expressions which are not yet well-known to the broader culture but are well understood by those who listen to this music. Perhaps through these activities students could have begun to go beyond mere consumerism in regard to Indigenous languages and begun to see their own languages and those of Indigenous peoples as dynamic expressions of a culture and people.

Collectively students selected very few images from the web site. They chose images which were associated with the mythic Eskimo - photographs of a man in a kayak with icebergs in the background, an Inuk building an igloo, polar bears, and seals. These images emphasize Inuit people in historic activities and animals disconnected from their ecosystem. Did students understand that Inuit people today live in houses like other Canadians? Do they understand that kayaks and Igloos are not as common for Inuit peoples today? As an alternative activity to giving students only the guidance to choose any photograph they wished, what would happen if students had gone to the computer with questions to answer about Inuit peoples and their lives. How did Inuit peoples use igloos in the past? How do they use them today? Has the way of life changed? In what ways? Why have Inuit ways of life changed? What influenced these changes? Teachers could have discussed climate change, government educational policies, relocation programs, the opening up of the North to trade, commerce, and exploration as forces which have impacted the lives of Inuit peoples. Students could then consider how these forces continue to shape changes as Nunavut becomes a new territory and ways that changes are happening in this redrawing of boundaries and the establishment of a new government body – the territorial government of Nunavut. Perhaps the use of an Internet site for tourism would not make consideration of these issues possible. But students could also have considered what a site like this is helpful for and begun to critique it.

Students focused on mammals of the region when selecting images. These animals are important in the complex ecosystem of the Arctic but to focus solely on these animals misses the diversity of this Northern ecosystem and the relationships of people and environment in living in this Northern land. In expanding this study students could have been encouraged to consider animals and their relationship in students' own local environment. Perhaps then in looking at Nunavut these children could have begun to understand that they live in a complex environment

and that the way people live in that environment has an impact on the environment itself.

One of the students called the image of a cartoon drawing of a boy an "Eskimo." While some people living in the North still refer to themselves as Eskimo (particularly those residing in Alaska and Greenland) the term reflects someone else's term for these people and has come to be associated with stereotypic understandings of Indigenous peoples. Perhaps it would have been better to refer to the cartoon (mythic) image as a fiction and leave all terms used by any Indigenous people out of it so these could be reserved for the people of this culture so as to distinguish stereotypic representations and living cultural groups. But students were not given the opportunity to understand this distinction.

Many students in this context were either new Canadians, descendants of new Canadians, or relocated from other regions of Canada. It is likely that students had experienced name calling based on racism or bias. When the term Eskimo was used it could have been discussed with students as a sometimes derogatory expression for members of a racial group – a name which was not chosen by the people but applied to them by outsiders. There is rich opportunity for cultural learning in considering names and how they are used.

Students' writing activities in the case study focused on loss in regard to Indigenous peoples and life in the North. A focus on loss is particularly unfortunate when dealing with Indigenous peoples because "Loss of origins" and concerns about cultural extinction are a cultural preoccupation as a result of colonialism (Minh-ha 1989, 1995, p. 267). In the wake of colonialist orientations Indigenous people in Canada find themselves represented as "authentic" voices in popular discourses and media. 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 mainstream culture in superficial ways "through beaded moccasins and names like Mohawk Motors" (p. 234), in more sophisticated ways through literature which replicates and represents (Mudrooroo, 1995; Minh-Ha, 1989), or by rejecting the Other by assuming that the country began with the arrival of whites (Goldie, 1995).

Unfortunately, these students either were initiated into or had reinforced the dominant discourses which stereotype Indigenous peoples

in discourses about loss that arise in denying the violence of colonialism which produces a benign cultural difference framework. This framework denies colonial histories of penetrating / conquering / fearing being engulfed by nature or of being lost in a barren land. There is a nature/culture binary which is produced in these discourses which does not allow us to ask whose loss? Who gets lost? Nor does it make room for discussion of erasure of cultural knowledges through the power of colonialism. Students were likewise not in a position to question these assumptions in their writings and work in this classroom. A critical examination of the issue of loss might have allowed students to see these problems but they were not challenged to examine the colonialist orientations which they assumed or represented.

Images Captured by a Colonial Lens: Learning Stereotypes

The images these students saw and experienced were captured by a colonialist lens rendering the objects – Indigenous peoples – as powerless, passive, and silent. One goal of educating students about culture might be to help them dispel myths about cultural groups and to begin to see all people as members of cultural groups, including themselves, as living in dynamic cultures in complex environments. In these student activities, in learning about Inuit peoples, students were not afforded the opportunity to dispel myths about Indigenous peoples nor the mythical Eskimo – rather they reinforced mythical understandings and authentic representations. These experiences did not enable students to see Indigenous peoples as living in dynamic cultures embedded in complex environments but rather Indigenous peoples were simplified to cultural stereotypes and the complex environments were reduced to barren lands. In these activities students were not afforded the opportunity to understand Indigenous peoples and themselves as cultural beings.

But what kind of opportunities can be afforded students when they visit only a site intended for potential tourists having been encouraged to explore the site? If students had an explanation of the site as a tourist venture and had come to understand the financial orientation of a site like this they might well have been in a position to question the images they saw and to ask what kinds of representations and/or exoticising of cultural groups can take place in sites on the Internet. This might then have allowed students to ask where are the opportunities for Indigenous

peoples to be active participants in construction of diverse images of themselves and Indigenous cultures thus countering the pervasive stereotypes even these children seem to know. Do Indigenous peoples have any say in the images portrayed of Indigenous cultures? Should they? These might have been good questions for students to discuss.

In a counter-example, consider the work of Zacharias Kunuk, an Inuit director from Igloolik, Nunavut who works in his community creating video productions for television in the North. He also works on the Canadian nationally available Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and has now produced an award winning film (Cannes 2001 – best first feature film) – *Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner* (Canadian National Film Board) – which was written, produced, directed, and acted by Inuit. This film tells a legend that has been shared throughout the years about an evil shaman who claims his victims in a community which learns to put the needs of community above personal needs (Imaginative Media Arts Festival Catalogue, 2001, p. 21). Kunuk's shorter works also share cultural stories of his community by and for his community. Kunuk's work stands in stark contrast to that which appears in a website for tourists.

Representations of Indigenous Peoples and the Internet

How are Indigenous peoples represented and taken up by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples if only dominant images of subjugated subjects are presented? Who will have access to create these representations? What groups will be excluded and represented in simplistic ways? What frames of reference will be used to interpret what is on the Internet? If there is a continuation of interpretations of people not on their own terms but on terms prescribed by others who have power, access, and control then the Internet may serve the dominant at the expense of all others. This process involves "the act of conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with 'others' on terms not of their choosing; in making them into pliant objects and silenced subjects of our scripts and scenarios; in assuming the capacity to 'represent' them" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, p. 15).

In particular, as the commercialization of the Internet proceeds it is corporate and not cultural interests which seem to be increasingly reflected on the Internet. Corporate interests have the resources to flood the Internet with representations and to ensure that these are

catalogued/linked to be easily accessible. Sites of resistance may be less accessible and of such limited scale (compared to corporate activities) that one may need experience in where/how to find these sites in order to find alternatives to corporate material. Issues of scale and access combine to limit possibilities for resistance activities on the Internet.

The age and limited Internet/multimedia experiences of students and the fact that groups of students were using one monitor meant that students focused on images and sound files on the site. These, as discussed earlier, represented Indigenous peoples in terms not of their own choosing. Opportunity for resistance on the part of Indigenous peoples are not provided and students continued their understandings of culture without challenge. The resistance that Indigenous peoples engage in through the generation of web sites with contrary images and in discussion groups on the Internet where Indigenous peoples tell these stories (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1998; Iseke-Barnes, 2002) were not available to this group of students.

The discussion of culture in Canada has focused on peoples in a region these children do not know and through a medium these students do not know how to critique. Given that many students in this context either recently immigrated from Indo-Asia or relocated from Atlantic Canada, discussion of culture in Canada might have been an interesting exploration of students' understandings of culture by exploring its relationship to place, family, language, and identity. Consider that many of these students had recently experienced social or economic migration of their families. All students live in a community shaped by these forces whether they themselves had lived these realities. Students might have been able to see the issues in their own communities as related to Indigenous peoples' lives and issues. A possibility for understanding and seeing connections of students' lives and the lives of Indigenous peoples might be possible with more discussion engaging students in seeing how their lives are located in dynamic cultures and situated in relation in complex contexts. This teaching scenario might then have been more purposeful going beyond fulfilling some stated set of academic objectives prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

In the pedagogic practices, Indigenous peoples did not participate. Their knowledge was taken up through an Internet site not owned or operated by Indigenous peoples. The website serves to appropriate the knowledge in taking ownership and control of it and then to validate its representation of knowledge by publishing it in a book and on a website. Indigenous peoples had no voice in this pedagogic practice and no control

on how they were taken up. This is not consistent with Indigenous knowledges in which understandings are situated in a complex environments and interpreted in context.

Bigelow (1999, p. 227) whose earlier questions explored discovery provides a set of questions to guide his students' work. The final question asks "Can you think of any groups in our society that might have an interest in people having an inaccurate view of history?" Bigelow engages in this activity to teach students that all text and all material is to be read critically in order to bring the assumptions and values of the writer to the surface so they can make decisions about the usefulness of any work. They use excerpts in class from textbooks to get some practice. Students prepare their papers and then engage in group discussions of their work. They are then asked to write a text about the collection of texts they discussed. Reflecting what students experienced in these activities:

If the books wax romantic about Columbus planting the flag on island beaches and taking possession of land occupied by naked red-skinned Indians, what do young readers learn from this about today's world? That white people have a right to dominate peoples of color? That might or wealth makes right? That it's justified to take people's land if you are more 'civilized' or have a 'better' religion? Whatever the answers, the textbooks condition students to accept some form of inequality; nowhere do the books suggest that the Indians were, or even should have been, sovereign peoples with a right to control their own lands. And if Columbus' motives for exploration are mystified or ignored, then students are less apt to look beyond today's pious explanations for U.S. involvements in say, Central America or the Middle East. As Bobby, approaching his registration day for the military draft, pointed out in class: "If people thought they were going off to war to fight for profits, maybe they wouldn't fight as well, or maybe they wouldn't go." (Bigelow, 1999, p. 230)

When Bigelow's students engaged this activity they also began to use the questioning approaches they had learned directed at the materials they read in his class. They began to ask about the teacher's agenda in teaching this material. "We hoped students would see that the intent of the unit was to present a whole new way of reading, and ultimately, of experiencing, the world" (1999, p. 230). Bigelow further suggests that textbooks provide students "information masquerading as final truth" and teaching often requires them to "parrot back" information provided.

If students take up the Internet as information masquerading as final truth we are laying them open to a dangerous array of misinformation in which they could be manipulated. In this example of Internet use students do not challenge the text and images but believe what they see and reinforce their stereotypic understandings through what they see. The variety of ways, options, and strategies through which people make sense of their world and take action in it are not discussed in this activity. They are absent.

Bigelow outlines a final project in the unit on Native American history in which students created a project to "reach beyond the walls of the classroom to educate others in the school or larger community" (1999, p. 231). This was to ensure that students did not think that their role was simply to uncover injustice but rather to act upon it. They were required to make some sort of presentation to people outside the classroom. In the class musicians created a rock video about drowning of fishing grounds of the Celilo Indians when the Columbia River was damned. Another group choreographed a dance about Columbus' discovery. Some students interviewed local tribal leaders about their struggle over fishing rights and made a video which was shown on the school's TV news show. One woman wrote and illustrated a children's book about a boy discovering a clubhouse in his new neighborhood and then claiming it as his own. She went into elementary schools where she asked students if someone had something to write with. When someone produced a pencil she took it and then began discussions about discovery through reading her book and through discussion of who owned the pencil.

Getting students to begin to explore the Internet in a critical way is crucial. They need to begin to understand that societal hierarchical relations of power based on race are very much a part of the Internet. Anti-racist pedagogies might be useful for teachers taking up this task (Council of Interracial Books for Children, 1994; Dei, 1993; Dei, James, Karumanchery, & James-Wilson, 2000; Hall, 2000; Iseke-Barnes & Wane, 2000; Rymer & Alladin, 1996; Schniedewind & Davidson, 1994). There are also texts which children and educators could read and understand in aiding their discussion of stereotypes of Indigenous peoples (Allingham, 2000; Doxtator, 1988; Evaluating Books about Native Peoples, 1993; Francis, 1992; Moore & Hirschfelder, 1999; Slapin, Seale & Ganzales, 2000; Thomas, 1993).

Awareness of multiple and diverse narratives from Indigenous peoples will assist all of us to counter dominant misunderstandings of

Indigenous peoples and to resist simplifications. Becoming engaged in dialogue about racism will help students too.

If the dialogue is to be purposeful, it cannot be circumscribed. It cannot bar pain, anger, and passion. It cannot avoid the issues of race and racism. It cannot disclaim the existence of disparate social realities, different subjectivities, distinct histories, and diverse truths. In approaching this daunting challenge, the first step must involve a commitment to recognizing and including the stories and images of **all** Canadians. (Tator, Henry & Mattis, 1998, p. 267)

Beyond inclusion of stories and images of all Canadians, we must consider how these stories and images are shared, the purposes of the sharing and the ability for all of these Canadians to tell their stories. Through this type of teaching and learning students become part of the struggle for spaces for meaningful exchanges in countering colonial representations and acceptance of Indigenous knowledges as valid and legitimate. Changing educational institutions in elementary, secondary, post-secondary, adult, and teacher education to be responsive to the needs of Indigenous peoples is important in Canada and throughout the world where Indigenous peoples live and learn. Only then can we begin to include all peoples in public education discourses. Otherwise colonialism continues unchallenged to the detriment of all peoples.

NOTES

1. <http://www.arctictravel.com/> – The website is produced by Nortext Multimedia Inc. The book which this website sells – *The Nunavut Handbook* – is listed as being available at Box 8, Iqaluit, NT, Canada X0A 0H0.
2. Nunavut is a new territory in arctic Canada which came into being on April 1, 1999. It has been created in the Eastern Arctic from an area which was part of the Northwest Territories. Most inhabitants of Nunavut are Indigenous to this region.
3. *Oshki anishinabe* is an Ojibway expression which roughly means 'we the people' and either refers specifically to the Ojibway people or to all Indigenous peoples.
4. Code crossing or code switching provide contextualizing cues and interpretive frameworks for inferring meanings of utterances. Code switching is generally assumed to be an in-group process while code crossing is code alteration by people who are not in the group associated with the language.
5. Note that all names of teacher and students used in this paper are pseudonyms. The teacher and all students gave permission for their work to be used in a paper. The teacher was also asked to provide feedback to the paper and to correct any misrepresentations of his intentions or actions.

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