



## **Indigenous Postsecondary Institutions in Canada and the U.S.**

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### *Abstract*

**T**he movement, in Canada and the United States, to establish and maintain postsecondary institutions controlled by Indigenous peoples is part of broader Indigenous North American struggles to effect positive change on current circumstances and contribute to the creation of a truly “liberating education” in the face of historical and continuing colonial systems of marginalization. This article compares these processes in Canada and the United States, using an historical approach to a systems-level analysis to explore the past and present structures and purposes of these Indigenous postsecondary institutions as well as the past and present policies that shape them, with reference to the ways in which these institutions grow from and contribute to the decolonization of Indigenous communities.

### *Introduction*

When a people or set of peoples are consistently and longitudinally subjected to injustices by an imperial force due solely to their peoplehood and the valuable resources that rightfully belong to them, "sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so" (Freire, 1970, p. 44). The movement, in Canada and the United States, to establish and maintain postsecondary institutions controlled by Indigenous peoples is part of broader Indigenous North American struggles to positively impact their current circumstances and contribute to the creation of a truly "liberating education" in the face of historical and continuing colonial systems of marginalization (Freire, 1970, p. 54). This article explores the past and present structures and purposes of these Indigenous postsecondary institutions as well as the past and present policies that shape them, with reference to the ways in which these institutions grow from and contribute to the decolonization of Indigenous communities. The organization of this article includes definitions of the terms of discussion, a survey of the literature, the framework informing this article, the presentation and analysis of findings, and suggestions for future research.

### *Definition of Terms*

**I**ndigenous Peoples. In both the United States and Canada, many Indigenous persons prefer that their Indigenous affiliation be represented as the name of their nation, tribe, or band, e.g. Ojibwe, Six Nations, Keetoowah Band Cherokee, etc. However, due to many shared past and present circumstances and legal positioning, Indigenous peoples have been grouped together into larger categories. In the U.S., these categories are Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and American Indian or Native American, but the U.S. has no catchall term for all Indigenous peoples that parallels the use of "Aboriginal" in Canada. In Canada, the main terms are Métis, Inuit, and First Nations, a subset of which are the "Status Indians" and "Treaty Indians" of government documents. While these terms refer to different populations that have distinct relationships with federal and territorial/provincial/state governments, for the purpose of this article, all peoples who are descendents of the original inhabitants of the geographic spaces now called Canada and the U.S. are referred to under the heading of "Indigenous peoples". This definition largely aligns with that set forth by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) where she situates "Indigenous peoples" as a term that "internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the world's colonized peoples" while also acknowledging that there are "real differences between different Indigenous peoples" (p. 7). Smith further stipulates that this term "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" (p. 7). With this in mind, this paper uses "Indigenous peoples" as a term that acknowledges both shared and diverse experiences of colonization and struggles toward decolonization.

*Postsecondary Education.* Both Canada and the U.S. use terms like postsecondary (or post-secondary) education, higher education, university, college, community college, institute, etc., but these terms do not always imply the same thing, particularly since each country has a very different way of distributing degree-granting powers. For the purpose of this paper, postsecondary education refers to educational experiences that occur after the completion of a secondary education program, and may be of a technical, professional, liberal arts, or other academic nature.

*Indigenous Postsecondary Institutions.* Indigenous postsecondary institutions are institutions primarily run by and for Indigenous peoples that provide postsecondary education programs. In the U.S., these institutions are generally called Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCUs), but in Canada, Indigenous postsecondary institutions fall under the full spectrum of Canadian postsecondary education terminology, including everything from community learning centres and institutes to community colleges and universities. For the purpose of this article, "Indigenous postsecondary institution" is used to refer to any postsecondary institution run by and for Indigenous peoples. In this way, this definition parallels that of the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium (AIC) of Ontario, whose members are "Aboriginal owned and controlled postsecondary education and training institutions" that serve as "vehicles which support life-long learning and provide a basis for the continued development of human resources within Aboriginal communities" (AIC, 2006). However, it is important to note that due to the scarcity of resources that specifically discuss the institutions of Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Métis, and Inuit peoples as distinct categories of Indigenous persons, most of the information presented in this article relates most directly to Native Americans in the U.S. and First Nations peoples in Canada.

#### *Review of the Literature*

Currently there is a significant body of work that discusses education both for Indigenous peoples as well as education run by Indigenous peoples in the United States. Much of the research done in this arena is shepherded through the pages of the *Journal of American Indian Education*, whether as actual articles, in the form of book reviews, or as editor commentary. However, there are fewer resources for analysis of Indigenous postsecondary institutions or even higher education as a specific sector of education for Indigenous peoples in the U.S. In fact, although there are primary documents scattered in archives throughout the U.S., there seems to be only one text, current and thorough though it may be, dedicated to the history of higher education for Indigenous peoples as well as higher education by Indigenous peoples: *Native American Higher Education in the United States* (1999) by Carey Michael Carney. There is, however, a fairly young journal (twelve years old), called the *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, which contains a variety of articles that examine a broad range of issues in and around Indigenous postsecondary institutions, primarily in the U.S., with a clear aim to offer support to these institutions. There are also several booklets, published by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) in conjunction with the American Indian College Fund and the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), which seem to be primarily targeted at funding agencies and the tribal colleges and universities themselves. In particular, *Tribal Colleges: An Introduction* (1999), by AIHEC & IHEP, provides the basic groundwork for understanding what tribal colleges are and who they are meant to serve.

Recently, there have also been a number of books chronicling the history of the Tribal College Movement. *Tribal Colleges: Shaping the Future of Native America* (1989), by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, is a slightly older text that explores how and why Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. came to be, but this account is unique because it is presented through the eyes of an organization that regularly evaluates institutions of higher education. *The Tribally Controlled Indian College: The Beginnings of Self Determination in American Indian Education* (1990), by Norman T. Oppelt, is another recap of the events leading up to and currently sustaining Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S., but it is from a supportive insider's vantage point with the full backing of a number of tribal colleges. *Tribally Controlled Colleges: Making Good Medicine* (1992), by Wayne J. Stein, in contrast, is a candid discussion of the history of the movement from a man who could be said to be the

movement's original leader. *The Renaissance of American Indian Higher Education: Capturing the Dream* (2003), edited by Aenette K. P. Benham & Wayne J. Stein, is another text written from an insider's perspective, but it is also the most recent comprehensive narration of the movement's story. Additionally, several books that discuss education for Indigenous peoples more broadly include chapters on higher education or, specifically, native-run higher education institutions: *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (2001) by Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat; *American Indian Education: A History* (2004) by Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder; and *Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education in the United States* (1993) by David H. DeJong. Through the aforementioned works, we can contextualize Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. as part of a broader reaction to a history of multi-level assimilationist education that has existed, almost literally, since the first Europeans settled in North America.

On the Canadian side of the border, however, there seem to be significantly fewer references that primarily address higher education for Indigenous peoples. Part of this seems to come from the differences in the higher education system as well as the differences in the political and cultural histories of the two countries. The federal, provincial, and territorial governments of Canada have presented some press releases and short informative pieces like "Post-Secondary Education for Status Indians and Inuit" (2000) by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and "Strengthening First Nations Post-Secondary Education in BC" (2005) by the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Native Education Centre, and INAC in British Columbia. Additionally, publications such as the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, as well as U.S.-based periodicals like the *Journal of American Indian Education*, and the *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, have a few pieces on higher education for Indigenous peoples in Canada, typically focusing on students attending mainstream public universities and colleges. Even national and international organizations like the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation and UNESCO have offered insight into this topic with papers titled "Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education: What Educators Have Learned" (2004) and "Survey of Post-secondary Education Programs in Canada for Aboriginal Peoples" (2000). There are also a select number of articles and books that discuss education for Indigenous peoples in Canada, but the postsecondary education issues mentioned are few and far between when compared to parallel literature about Indigenous persons in the United States. These include, but are not limited to: "Empowering Aboriginal Voice in Aboriginal Education" (*Canadian Journal of Native Education* 2000) by Eileen M. Antone; *Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise* (2000) by Marlene Brant Castellano, Lynne Davis, and Louise Lahache; *Taking Control: Power and Education in First Nations Adult Education* (1995) by Celia Haig-Brown; *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds* by Marie Ann Battiste and Jean Barman (1995); and *First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles* (1992) by Verna L. Kirkness (with Sheena Selkirk Bowman). The vast majority of these resources, however, primarily address educational issues as they affect First Nations peoples only, with little to no specific reference to the educational struggles or initiatives taking place in Métis or Inuit communities.

While the broader literature is adequate on one level, the number of texts that specifically discuss Indigenous postsecondary institutions is nearly nonexistent. Although some of the documents above mention Indigenous postsecondary institutions in passing, there are only a handful of articles that concentrate on these institutions as the main topic of interest. Yet, postsecondary institutions for and by Indigenous peoples in Canada do exist. In *Windspeaker*, an Indigenous peoples-focused periodical based in Edmonton, Alberta, and in *Saskatchewan Indian*, "the official publication of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations," there are several

articles on Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Western Canada, particularly Red Crow Community College and First Nations University of Canada (formerly Saskatchewan Federated Indian College). These articles provide information on the newsworthy struggles and celebrations of these institutions on a regular basis over the past thirty years, offering some commentary, but little comprehensive data. Thankfully, there is one detailed, though singular, resource for information on Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada. *Aboriginal Institutions of Higher Education: A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students, Control of Indigenous Knowledge, and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions – An Examination of Government Policy* (August 2005), by the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, was sponsored and published through the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and provides eighty-one solid pages of information on these institutions in a Canadian context.

In terms of comparative studies that discuss Indigenous education in Canada and the U.S., while there are a number of journal articles and even a few book chapters that look at elementary and secondary schooling comparatively, there are only a handful of articles that even mention postsecondary education for Indigenous peoples in both countries. The most comprehensive of these articles is "Higher Education in the Fourth World: Indigenous People Take Control" (*Canadian Journal of Native Education* 1991), by Ray Barnhardt of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, which primarily examines Indigenous postsecondary initiatives in Canada, the U.S., New Zealand, Australia, Greenland, and Scandinavia. This text provides the reader with a basic understanding of the structures, purposes, and philosophies of these initiatives, describing some similarities and differences without much effort to suggest why these parallels and distinctions exist.

There are also surprisingly few works of broader comparative investigations of postsecondary education in Canada and the U.S. Michael L. Skolnik, of the University of Toronto, presented two articles in the early 1990s that contribute a great deal of insight to literature on this topic: "Lipset's *Continental Divide* and the Ideological Basis for Differences in Higher Education between Canada and the United States" (with Glen Jones, *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 1990) and "A Comparative Analysis of Arrangements for State Coordination of Higher Education in Canada and the United States" (*Journal of Higher Education*, 1992). These two articles refer to the U.S.-Canada comparison framework put forth by Seymour Lipset in *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (1989).

As a result of the rather skeletal state of the research on Indigenous postsecondary education, Indigenous postsecondary institutions specifically, Indigenous postsecondary education in comparison, and even broader postsecondary education in comparison, this article seeks to gather together pieces of information from disparate resources and comparatively examine some of the intriguing similarities and differences between the experiences of Indigenous peoples and their postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

#### *Framework for Data-Collection and Analysis*

To understand my location as a researcher, it is important to note that I am not an Indigenous person of either Canada or the U.S., but, rather, I am an Afro-descendant citizen of the United States who has only lived in Canada for a very short time. I do have some academic background in Native American Studies, through which I pursued research on a variety of Indigenous issues, which included topics in education, specifically boarding schools, cross-cultural interactions in a dual-ethnic institute, the tribal college movement, history courses at tribal colleges, funding mechanisms for tribal colleges, and tribal college purpose documents. My personal experiences and past scholarship have allowed me some engagement with Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S., but I have had nearly no such engagement

with their counterparts in Canada. I have investigated this topic because I am interested in the ways that marginalized peoples, especially Indigenous peoples and "visible minorities", create and maintain educational projects in order to address the needs and wants of their communities. The deeper intention of this comparative article is to provide a foundation from which to develop further scholarship that can be used by Indigenous and otherwise marginalized peoples to further the goals of their education initiatives, especially at the postsecondary level.

In order to describe the differences and similarities between Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada and, further, to examine why these parallels and peculiarities exist, this article uses an historical approach to a systems-level analysis with the nation-state as the primary unit of comparison. The fundamental framework for this analysis comes from Nicholas Hans (*Comparative Education*, 1967), who theorized that comparative education must: 1) understand each system in relation to history; 2) collect system-wide data; 3) use a common taxonomy; and 4) consider multiple categories of influencing factors, which he organized under the headings of natural, religious, and secular. The data and discussion presented in this article primarily explore secular factors, with some reference to natural and religious factors, but there is a strong emphasis on the history and context that has affected the development of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in both countries. In addition to Hans' basic framework, Lipset's U.S.-Canada comparative theories from *Continental Divide* (1989), contributed to this analysis. In his text, Lipset situates the U.S. as the "country of the revolution" with Canada as the country of "the counterrevolution", suggesting that the history of their formation as nation-states has led to an American culture that holds individualism and antistatism at its core in comparison with a Canadian culture that embraces statism and other collectivist ideologies. Lipset's theories are based in historical and somewhat cultural determinist approaches, but put forth conceptions of these two countries that are almost ideal types for purposes of analysis. Skolnik (1990) and Skolnik & Jones (1992), then, posit that these histories and ideologies contribute significantly to the shape and processes of the postsecondary education system(s)<sup>1</sup> in the U.S. and Canada.

In addition to the comparative theoretical framework, this article seeks to create space for Indigenous voices to use what Critical Race theorists call "counter-storytelling" to contest the privileged discourses of the majority or dominant culture (DeCuire & Dixon 2004; McDonald 2003; Deyhle, Parker, & Villenas 1999). In this way, the data and commentary from Indigenous sources serve to disrupt commonly held notions about Indigenous peoples and postsecondary education in the U.S. and Canada. The lens through which this study views Indigenous postsecondary institutions focuses on the oppressive systems of colonization that affect Indigenous peoples and the tools and acts of decolonization used in resistance by Indigenous peoples.

Imperialism and the process of colonization are defined by Fyre Jean Graveline in *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness* (1998, p. 24), through reference to the work of Edward Said and James M. Blaut, as centering on the control, by a "dominating metropolitan center," of lands and resources that belong to, often geographically distant, others. In order to attain and maintain control over these natural and material items, it is necessary for the colonizers to also control, whether covertly or overtly, the lives of the Indigenous peoples who are the rightful stewards of the colonized lands and resources (p. 25). Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), further emphasizes that colonization is a multi-layered ongoing process that takes many forms. It is unsurprising,

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<sup>1</sup> Although each province and territory of Canada administers its own education system, at the postsecondary level, the systems are quite similar, with Quebec's CEGEP process as the major exception. Therefore this paper will primarily discuss Canada's postsecondary education system at a nation-state level, using, for analysis purposes, a single nation-wide discourse model that maintains awareness of sub-national differences.

therefore, that the systems set up under colonization in both Canada and the United States have employed a number of methods to try to subdue Indigenous populations. These colonizing schemes include, but are certainly not limited to: dismantling Indigenous sovereign governments, devaluing Indigenous knowledges, outlawing Indigenous languages, marginalizing Indigenous cultural practices, demonizing Indigenous religious and spiritual practices, destroying Indigenous ecosystems and environments, claiming Indigenous lands and natural resources, undermining sustainable Indigenous economies, demoralizing Indigenous youth attending Eurocentric schools, and criminalizing traditional Indigenous activities as well as behaviors that directly result from colonial structures of oppression. Despite these myriad efforts, the colonizers did not succeed in truly subduing the Indigenous societies of the North American continent.

This lack of total victory for colonial structures relates directly to the ways in which “colonization as a force produces a counterforce of resistance,” which Graveline (1998) situates as a universal characteristic of colonial encounters. These elements of resistance serve as counter-stories against the notion that colonization has succeeded in its conquering efforts and, further, they present alternatives to colonial configurations, offering non-colonial paths for understanding and living within the world (p. 36). This process of decolonization is described, by Graveline (1993) with reference to Blaut, as requiring a resurrection of Indigenous histories to determine how they have contributed to world history and a rewriting of colonial histories to expose colonization as a path “to poverty rather than progress” (p. 37). Indigenous peoples and their organizations and institutions in Canada and the U.S. have always resisted and continue to resist subjugation under colonial structures, nurturing anti-colonial initiatives and de-colonizing their minds<sup>2</sup> and their communities by many means. These efforts at decolonization include, but are certainly not limited to: supporting self-determining Indigenous governments, uplifting and protecting Indigenous knowledges and knowledge-production processes, revitalizing Indigenous languages, continuing and sharing Indigenous cultural practices, respecting and reviving Indigenous religious and spiritual practices, restoring Indigenous ecosystems and environments, initiating and defending Indigenous land and treaty rights claims, rebuilding sustainable Indigenous community economies, encouraging and aiding Indigenous youth in their personal development, and rallying against the in-justice system while pursuing alternative ways to address destructive behaviors.

Despite the emphasis on decolonization in the content of this study, the Western research machine is very much a mode through which colonizing structures marginalize Indigenous peoples and knowledges (Smith, 1999). To counteract this marginalization, Smith (1999) proposes a research ethic and methodology that not only respects Indigenous histories, cultures, values, and experiences, but actually uses these aspects of indigeneity as the basis of the research paradigm. She then stresses the complexity of culturally safe Indigenous research by asserting that such research must also acknowledge that Indigenous peoples, even specific Indigenous groups, are heterogeneous, and so the multitude of Indigenous voices should be represented. For a large portion of the data on Indigenous postsecondary institutions, this article references the works of a number of Indigenous scholars and practitioners to ensure that a variety of Indigenous perspectives are offered to the reader. However, it was not possible, during the time span of this exploration, to directly discuss these issues with said authors or other Indigenous persons involved with Indigenous postsecondary institutions. Working with Indigenous peoples will need to be an essential component of future research and, as such, this work can only be

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<sup>2</sup> Graveline (1998) theorizes that “[i]f one can be acculturated to hold dominant views, they can also be unacculturated” (p.90). In this way, “de-colonizing the mind” is the process by which we come to challenge the assumptions, philosophies, behaviors, and structures of colonization, especially in terms of our personal experiences and those of marginalized peoples.



considered a brief preliminary study. Although the depth of this exploration was limited in this fashion, this article presents a broad array of basic comparative information on Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

### *Data and Discussion*

#### *Founding Indigenous Postsecondary Institutions*

The histories leading to the development of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in both Canada and the U.S. begin within the confines of "the cage of oppression" (Frye, 1983, p. 4; Graveline, 1998, p. 91). During the history of colonization in North America, the education of the Indigenous peoples has been handled by governmental and religious bodies, largely seeking to assimilate native peoples into Christianized Western mindsets, either with the intent to suppress forms of Indigenous knowledge or with little consideration given to the potential negative effects of these programs might have on various forms of Indigenous knowledge (Antone, 2000; Oppelt, 1990; Robbins, 1974; Ryan, 1996). Although this process of colonizing Indigenous minds did not wholly succeed, the intent of the colonizers is clear in histories that show how "early missionaries designed education for Indians to convert and civilize the native peoples" (Oppelt, 1990, p. ix; Ryan, 1996) and how, later, federal governments organized schools, particularly boarding schools in the U.S. and residential schools in Canada, "to pacify and assimilate the Indians into the dominant culture" (Oppelt, 1990, p. ix; Kirkness, 1992; Robbins, 1974; Ryan, 1996). The methods used to "educate" Indigenous peoples in both Canada and the U.S. often adhered almost literally to the "Kill the Indian, Save the Man" ideals made famous by the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 19<sup>th</sup> century America (Carney, 1999; Merisotis & O'Brien, 1998; Oppelt, 1990; Robbins, 1974). These methods included physical and emotional abuse while often turning a blind eye to sexual abuse (Turtle Island, 2005; DeJong, 1993). The forced and assimilationist nature of these policies and practices resulted in the destruction of the worldviews embedded in Indigenous students and searing Western values and norms into the minds of said students (Antone, 2000; Antone, 2003; Battiste, 1995; Cajete, 1994).

According to the Assembly of First Nations (2005) and a number of other authors (including Kirkness, 1992; Antone, 2000; Antone, 2003; Battiste, 1995; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; Merisotis & O'Brien, 1998; Steffenhagen, 2004; MCL, 2003), it is these and other historical mechanisms of oppression, whose effects have been perpetuated by contemporary systems, that place Indigenous peoples in a worse situation than the general population of both countries and even in comparison to many other "visible minority" groups. Some of these difficult circumstances include low academic attainment and achievement (e.g. low literacy rates, low marks in school, low completion rates), as well as low socioeconomic status (e.g. high unemployment rates, low income and wealth statistics), not to mention the variety of cultural, mental health, and physical health issues that Indigenous peoples are striving to address in the wake of negative colonial pressures. It is not surprising, therefore, that Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States have historically struggled and continue to struggle towards decolonization and, further, that they were active participants in the massive call for local and global social change that erupted during the post-WWII 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the founding of Indigenous postsecondary institutions, both in Canada and the U.S., was related to the fervor of this era, the following paragraphs explore how the actual social movements and government actions that contributed to the rise of these institutions had a unique impact on Indigenous communities that were very specific to the countries in question.

In addition to the ongoing cycle of oppression and hardship both within and outside education, for Indigenous peoples in Canada, there were a series of moments during the mid-

1900s that contributed significantly to the momentum propelling Indigenous peoples to create and maintain their own postsecondary institutions. One of these pivotal moments was also a turning point for Indigenous peoples and policies far beyond the sector of education. In 1969, Pierre Trudeau presented the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969*, commonly called the *White Paper*, which argued against Indigenous land claims and treaty-making between Canadian and First Nations governments while calling for the dissolution of “special status” for Indigenous peoples (Kirkness, 1992, p. 15; NIB, 1972; SI, 1978; Antone, 2003; AIC, 2005; CITM, 2005). This proposal sent a shockwave through Indigenous communities, inciting intense activism and leading to the article titled *Citizens Plus*, commonly called the *Red Paper*, which was prepared by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta and their supporters in 1970 and which comprehensively rejected the *White Paper*, offering many recommendations to ensure Indigenous rights and Indigenous involvement in policy-making (NIB, 1972; SI, 1978; CITM, 2005). These actions and reactions prompted a number of education-related protest works including a First Nations school strike in 1971 and the founding of Blue Quills First Nations College also in 1971, as well as a government response: an inquest on the educational issues affecting Indigenous peoples in Canada (Kirkness, 1992; AIC, 2005). The most influential statement responding to this uproar, in terms of education, was *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972), a policy paper put forth by the Assembly of First Nations, then called the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB, 1972; MacPherson, 1991; Kirkness, 1992; Antone, 2003; AIC, 2005). This policy statement presented the federal government with a plan for local control of and increased parental responsibility in education programs for First Nations peoples, stressing the importance of Indigenous culture, knowledge, and self-determination as key to the success of Indigenous learners and communities (NIB, 1972; Cardinal, 1977; MacPherson, 1991; Kirkness, 1992; Antone, 2003; AIC, 2005). Within months, the Minister of Indian Affairs had accepted the proposal, at least in principle (Cardinal, 1977; MacPherson, 1991; Kirkness, 1992; Antone, 2003; AIC, 2005). This early stage of the Indigenous postsecondary institution movement was integrally connected with broader decolonization efforts in the Indigenous communities in Canada by both gaining momentum from and contributing momentum to the reclamation of Indigenous peoples’ rights as sovereign peoples, particularly regarding ownership over the education of Indigenous persons.

In the U.S., there was less of a pivotal moment and more of a clash and coalescence of social change agendas put forth by social movements that were based within Indigenous communities, as well as those based outside Indigenous communities. Similar in sentiment to the Canadian 1969 *White Paper* was the American Termination Movement. This movement began in the 1880s and survived through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with its primary aim to disrupt Indigenous sovereignty efforts, eliminate the federal reservation system, and place Indigenous-serving programs in the hands of individual states (Merisotis & O'Brien, 1998; Carney, 1999). With the extreme social, political, and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples in the U.S. during this era, this movement to decrease support for Indigenous communities met a significant amount of resistance, to which Indigenous postsecondary institutions contributed. The Civil Rights Movement, though it did not directly address many issues important to Indigenous peoples, also influenced the rise of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S., because it pushed to the forefront of American politics issues of equity and equality and, further, succeeded in passing important legislation that took a step towards the creation of a less oppressive nation (Oppelt, 1990). In addition to the broader rights movement, Indigenous communities in the U.S., as in Canada, developed a specific response to the past and continuing injustices affecting Indigenous peoples, presenting a different perspective on equality efforts by articulating self-determination and sovereignty as the goals of Indigenous peoples (Merisotis &

O'Brien, 1998; Carney, 1999; Oppelt, 1990; Stein, 1992; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999). This Self-Determination Movement (or Sovereignty Movement), of which the American Indian Movement was a part, led to a number of education initiatives in Indigenous communities at all levels. The first major achievement in postsecondary education was the creation of Navajo Community College, now called Diné College, in 1969 (Merisotis & O'Brien, 1998; Carney, 1999; Oppelt, 1990; Stein, 1992; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999). Beyond the efforts for social equity and equality, there were some educational change movements that contributed to the Indigenous postsecondary institution movement in the U.S., with the Community College Movement of primary influence. The foundational educational philosophy that led to the expansion of the community college network served as a model for U.S.-based Indigenous postsecondary institutions, because both categories of schools wanted to offer occupational education, guidance, and counseling programs run by and for the community in order to best respond to local needs (Stein, 1992).

In accordance with the education-related needs and wants of Indigenous communities, Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada and the U.S. seek to "address the specific cultural, linguistic, intellectual, social and economic needs and conditions of [Indigenous] peoples," particularly in terms of the local community that directly surround said institutions (AIC, 2005, p. 33; Castellano et al, 2000; Carney, 1999; Stein, 1992; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; Benham & Stein, 2003; Merisotis & O'Brien, 1998; Oppelt, 1990). Further, many Indigenous postsecondary institutions have emphasized the need to protect Indigenous intellectual property rights, because of research, patent, and misrepresentation issues described in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Smith, 1999) and other critiques of Western knowledge (AIC, 2005)<sup>3</sup>. This has produced institutions that seek to empower Indigenous peoples, sustain Indigenous cultures, provide personalized attention towards overcoming barriers to success, and prepare students for employment in local communities and in the broader global society (Barnhardt, 1991). In order to do this effectively, most institutions use programs, courses, classroom practices, calendars, and events that incorporate local Indigenous cultural practices and knowledges (AIC, 2005; Castellano et al, 2000; Carney, 1999; Stein, 1992; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; Benham and Stein, 2003; Merisotis & O'Brien, 1998; Oppelt, 1990). By basing their purpose on the needs of local Indigenous communities and by acknowledging that these needs must be met within an Indigenous worldview, Indigenous postsecondary institutions engender the decolonizing of Indigenous minds while providing the community with programs that directly counter colonial structures and graduates trained to fill key roles in Indigenous communities striving towards self-determination.

#### *Policy Affecting Indigenous Postsecondary Institutions*

In Canada, there is some jurisdictional confusion that seems to be complicating and, in some sense, thwarting the efforts of Indigenous postsecondary institutions. The federal government has a commitment to support services for the Indigenous peoples of Canada, but the provincial and territorial governments have a constitutional right to administer education in their areas as they see fit (Kirkness, 1992, p. 14; Antone, 2000; Antone, 2003; MacPherson, 1991; Castellano et al, 2000; AIC, 2005). Additionally, many Indigenous communities and their governing bodies have specific treaties and related agreements with the Crown and the federal

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<sup>3</sup> This particular aim is mentioned in some U.S. tribal college purpose documents, but is not emphasized in the literature about these institutions. It is unclear if this difference of emphasis in the literature relates in any way to differences in the actual work of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada. Instead, it may raise questions of the authors in that literature, if Indigenous intellectual rights issues are being continuously overlooked as important components of the Indigenous postsecondary education movement.

government regarding their self-governance rights and the education of their peoples (Kirkness, 1992, p. 14; Antone, 2000; Antone, 2003; MacPherson, 1991; Castellano et al., 2000; AIC, 2005). The question, then, is: who is responsible for the education of Indigenous peoples, both in general and at the postsecondary level?

There are federal funds set aside for Indigenous education, including postsecondary Indigenous education, though these funds are primarily for the use of First Nations and Inuit peoples with little to no specific support for Métis education. These funds are then distributed based on agreements between the federal government and sub-national education service providers. There are also provincial and territorial policies and practices that must be adhered to, despite the unique relationship between Indigenous persons and the federal government. Further, there are Indigenous groups who are seeking control of the funds held by the federal government for Indigenous peoples while also seeking control of the policies that apply to education in their communities (Kirkness, 1992, p. 14; Antone, 2000; Antone, 2003; MacPherson, 1991; Castellano et al., 2000; AIC, 2005).

As a result of this jurisdictional confusion, there are very few public funding mechanisms available to Indigenous postsecondary institutions. The primary federal fund that aids credentialed postsecondary programs for Indigenous peoples, the Indian Studies Support Program, provides only a small portion of the funds needed by Indigenous postsecondary institutions and only does so through one-year grants that require annual reapplication with no guaranteed continuation of funding (AIC, 2005). The fickle nature of these grants severely limits the planning and commitment capabilities of Indigenous postsecondary institutions (AIC, 2005). In addition to jurisdictional problems, there is also a widespread lack of degree-granting status for Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada (AIC, 2005).

Across the thirteen provincial education systems of Canada there is an intense commitment to ensure the financial viability and standardized educational quality of "recognized" public postsecondary institutions (Skolnik, 1990; Skolnik & Jones, 1992). This system is based on a strong Canadian belief in and emphasis on collectivist ideals, like institutionalized social services and support for citizens and residents, which are integral to notions of education as a primarily public endeavor at multiple levels. The notion that public systems, even public monopolies of systems, can ensure quality and equality in a way that competition and privatization cannot, is deeply ingrained within Canadian culture (Lipset, 1989; Skolnik, 1990; Skolnik & Jones, 1992). Consequently, there are fewer degree-granting postsecondary institutions in all of Canada than there are in many metropolitan areas of the U.S. There is also little differentiation amongst these degree-granting institutions in Canada, such that most are comprehensive universities, offering a variety of academic and professional paths, but not maintaining a particular specialization (Skolnik, 1990; Skolnik & Jones, 1992). In this way, the Canadian system allows little variance in the value of postsecondary degrees, creating an equality of results, but promoting some inequality of opportunity, since there is also little variance in the standards of entry into degree-granting postsecondary institutions (Skolnik & Jones, 1992; Leslie, 1980).

Since the overwhelming majority of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada are not "recognized" by provincial education agencies as providing quality public education, they must partner with "recognized public institutions", which have degree-granting status, in order to offer programs that culminate in degrees; further, they must maintain this partnership to be eligible for funding through the federal Indian Studies Support Program (AIC, 2005). The only Indigenous postsecondary institution in Canada that receives federal funding on a regular basis, rooted in legislation, is the First Nations University of Canada, formerly named Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. There are also a small number of institutions receiving regular funds

from provinces and territories based on provincial/territorial legislation (AIC, 2005). These legislated institutions barely scrape the surface of the Indigenous postsecondary institution network in Canada, which currently includes nearly fifty institutions (AIC, 2005). As a result, the burden of finances is often left to students through tuition costs, which is a very problematic situation considering the economically marginalized circumstances of many Indigenous communities (AIC, 2005).

One of the major current projects of the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium (AIC) in Ontario is the development of an accreditation system to recognize Indigenous postsecondary institutions "as legitimate public post-secondary institutes" drawing from models in other Canadian provinces, the U.S., and New Zealand (AIC, 2006; AIC, 2005; AIC, 1998). Creating a path to recognition that preserves the autonomy of Indigenous postsecondary institutions seems to be the primary thrust of the AIC's policy-related activism, because such a step would drastically increase the number of government funding opportunities available to them. Though the implementation of this new accreditation system does not seem quick in coming, if the Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada achieve this goal, it would surely be a significant act of decolonization since it would allow Indigenous peoples to access colonial coffers and use those funds toward the betterment of Indigenous communities through postsecondary education programs constructed within Indigenous cultures and knowledges.

In the U.S., although there is a strong mandate for state control of education and a competing mandate for federal control of services for Indigenous peoples, there is very little mention of jurisdictional issues at the postsecondary level in the literature, though elementary and secondary education for Indigenous peoples does have some of the same jurisdictional issues in the U.S. as in Canada. American culture places a very high value on individualism and competition that has translated into the education arena, especially the postsecondary education sector, as a strong underlying focus on creating a market for individual choice (Lipset, 1989; Skolnik, 1990; Skolnik & Jones, 1992). As a result, although the states do recognize and support specific public postsecondary institutions, the degree-granting status of postsecondary institutions in the U.S. is established through national and sub-national nongovernmental bodies, which ensure educational quality through processes developed within said organizations and approved by an agency of the federal government (DoEd, 2005). This accreditation procedure has led to the creation and maintenance of a vast, multi-level system of degree-granting independent institutions in the United States. Indigenous postsecondary institutions, therefore, apply for and gain accreditation like most other newly formed postsecondary institutions (Carney, 1999; Stein, 1992; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; Benham & Stein, 2003). Some actors within the network of U.S.-based Indigenous postsecondary institutions have suggested the creation of an independent accreditation organization or process for these institutions, but there has yet to be significant efforts to implement such a change to the current system (Benham & Stein, 2003).

Furthermore, the American history of segregation and post-segregation racial tension has led to a proportionally immense system of what are called Minority-Serving Institutions, with a related precedent for legislating federal funding for these separate postsecondary institutions. In accordance with these accreditation procedures and funding precedents, alongside other contextual factors, a number of important federal legislative acts were established, which provide regular, though arguably inadequate, financial support for Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the United States. The earliest of these acts was the Navajo Community College Act of 1971, which provided federal funding for the nation's only Indigenous postsecondary institution at the time, in a manner similar to the funding of the First Nations University of Canada (Carney, 1999; Stein, 1992; Benham & Stein, 2003). This was followed by a succession of other important federal policies, including the Indian Education Act of 1972; the Indian Self-Determination and

Education Assistance Act of 1975; the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978 (renamed the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act in 1998); the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (also called the Morrill Act); and the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities of 1996 and its subsequent extensions in 2001 and 2002 (Carnegie Foundation, 1989; Reyhner, 1989; Benham & Stein, 2003).

Many of those who discuss the Indigenous postsecondary institutions of the U.S. critique the insufficient financial support for these institutions, because the federal government regularly distributes only 60% or less of the funds that are authorized for allocation through the legislation currently in place (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999). Some even consider the maximum payout of the authorized allocations to be derisory (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999). Therefore, despite the improved number of supportive laws, Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S., like similar institutions in Canada, still have to place a significant portion of the financial burden on the shoulders of tuition-paying students who may or may not be receiving financial aid from governments or other financing bodies (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999). The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), collaborating with Indigenous and allied organizations, like the American Indian College Fund and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, continues to lobby for increased federal financial support (AIHEC, 2004).

### *Structures of Indigenous Postsecondary Institutions*

Indigenous peoples have found a number of different ways to work within and around the aforementioned policy strictures. One important method has been the sharing, collaborating, and lobbying facilitated through organizations like the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) in the U.S., which currently has two Canadian members, as well as the First Nations Adult & Higher Education Consortium (FNAHEC) in Western Canada; the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium (AIC) in Ontario; the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) in British Columbia; the National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning (NAIIHL), which is an organization for all of Canada; and the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC). These organizations have created a vast network and support system for both emerging and existing institutions, and the policy-change projects initiated by these coalitions challenge colonial governmental structures on issues of funds distribution, educational equity, postsecondary accreditation, technological development, environmental stewardship, and a host of other matters (AIC, 2005; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; WINHEC, 2005). In this way, Indigenous postsecondary institutions have banded together locally, regionally, nationally, and globally to contribute to a multi-level process of decolonization.

In terms of the structure of the institutions themselves, the funding and recognition/accreditation policies in Canada and the U.S. have, in conjunction with other factors, contributed to the rise of different institutional types in the two countries. While the primary structural category for Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. is "independent institutions", scholars of Indigenous postsecondary education in Canada and worldwide have also explored the "affiliated institution", the "integrated institution", the "partnership approach", and the "add-on approach" (Barnhardt, 1991; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000).

The add-on approach and the partnership approach to Indigenous postsecondary education do not usually involve an Indigenous postsecondary institution *per se* (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). Rather, the add-on approach refers to efforts by mainstream postsecondary institution to "bead and feather" their existing curriculum and pedagogical practices to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and learning methods into coursework, often in a largely superficial manner (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000, p. 20; Kirkness, 1992). The

partnership approach, then, points to efforts by mainstream postsecondary institutions to partner with Indigenous communities, usually through Indigenous governing bodies like tribal councils, to produce academic and professional programming that is culturally-appropriate and that addresses the education and employment needs of the community (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000).

Integrated Indigenous postsecondary institutions are established within existing mainstream institutions, usually maintaining some level of advocacy and advisory capabilities over Indigenous-oriented programs and services, with some actually holding negotiated decision-making and program-implementation powers (Barnhardt, 1991). First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) at the University of British Columbia is the most prominent example of this form of Indigenous postsecondary institution. Although FNHL does not directly oversee and administer programs, it is intimately involved in the coordination of "the Native Indian Teacher Education Program, the Ts'kel graduate programs in education, the Native Law Program, and the First Nations Health Care Professions Program" (Barnhardt 1991, p. 17). At first glance, integrated Indigenous postsecondary institutions may seem to lack authority, but FNHL and others like it continue to succeed in designing, implementing, and maintaining a number of important Indigenous programs on mainstream campuses, in communities, and across Canada (Barnhardt, 1991). FNHL even brought Indigenous education struggles into the international arena by organizing and hosting the first World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE) in 1987, which is an initiative that has grown exponentially in the past two decades (Barnhardt, 1991). Integrated Indigenous postsecondary institutions are in place on several campuses throughout Canada, but there are very few such programs in the United States. In Canada, the integration of these institutions allows Indigenous academic and professional programs and their students to have the broader credibility, support, and interactions offered by mainstream public universities (Barnhardt, 1991). Through the formation of Indigenous postsecondary institutions within the academies of the colonizers, Indigenous peoples are decolonizing postsecondary education in a very intimate way. Indeed, the presence of integrated Indigenous postsecondary institutions on mainstream campuses also contributes to the decolonizing of non-Indigenous minds through a variety of consciousness-transforming programs that are open to the general public (FNHL, 2006; FNH, 2005; Graveline, 1998).

The other heavily used format for Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada is the "affiliated institution". Affiliated institutions maintain a significant amount of autonomy formally negotiated through contractual agreements with their affiliate mainstream public postsecondary institutions (Barnhardt, 1991; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; FNUC, 2005). These affiliated Indigenous postsecondary institutions offer their students the credibility and transferability that comes with public university education while also ensuring that students have access to culturally-appropriate programs and support services that are primarily designed, developed, and controlled by Indigenous peoples (Barnhardt, 1991; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). The premier example of this institutional category is First Nations University of Canada (FNUC), formerly named Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, which "entered into a federation agreement with the University of Regina ... that provided for an independently administered university-college, the mission of which is to serve the academic, cultural and spiritual needs of First Nations' students" (FNUC 2005, p. 1; Barnhardt, 1991; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). While FNUC is touted as "the only First Nations-controlled university in Canada", having pushed through federal legislation to take the title "university" and directly receive regular federal funds, it is still under the umbrella of University of Regina programs, so much so that the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada refers to it as "First Nations University of Canada at the University of Regina" (AUCC, 2005, p. 1; FNUC, 2005).

FNUC is atypical, however, since most other affiliated Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada maintain their status as colleges, community colleges, cultural colleges, institutes, and learning centers and depend on their affiliate public postsecondary institution for funding as well as accreditation (Barnhardt, 1991; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; AIC, 2005). While this affiliation allows for more autonomy than integration, funding is still funneled by federal and provincial governments to the affiliate public institutions, instead of to the Indigenous institutions directly, placing Indigenous institutions in a "disadvantaged and subservient position" (AIC, 2005). This power and privilege structure is further perpetuated through the total lack of legislation regarding the accountability of affiliate public institutions to their Indigenous partners on matters of finance and programming (AIC, 2005). As a result, while the affiliated Indigenous postsecondary institutions provide a complete higher education experience that promotes decolonization through extensive incorporation of Indigenous practices and perspectives, these institutions must continually battle oppressive colonial policies that enforce a relation of dependency between them and mainstream institutions.

In the U.S., there are certainly some Indigenous postsecondary institutions that are classifiable as "affiliated institutions", but these are largely considered to be in a transitional phase with the end goal being independent status (Barnhardt 1991, p. 6). As Barnhardt (1991) writes, "having found the established mainstream higher education institutions wanting in terms of the kinds of program emphases, cultural orientation, institutional environment, and student support services that contributed to the success of Indian students, tribes set out to create their own institutions as a culturally-based alternative" (p. 4). In the main, U.S.-based Indigenous postsecondary institutions are chartered and managed by local Indigenous communities, though some were founded by the federal government and have only recently become primarily Native-run institutions (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; Barnhardt, 1991). Most Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. seek and acquire accreditation through conventional means, a few have even begun offering graduate degrees, and many enter into articulation agreements with mainstream postsecondary institutions for purposes of course transferability and joint programs, but they do so on a more equal footing than most affiliated Indigenous institutions in Canada (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; Barnhardt, 1991). In the U.S., independent Indigenous postsecondary institutions can seek funding through federal legislation (and some state legislation) already in place, not only through acts that target Tribal Colleges & Universities or Minority-Serving Institutions, but also through programmatic funds, like vocational training grants and adult education monies (Stein, 1990; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999).

In Canada, there are some fully independent Indigenous postsecondary institutions, but the vast majority exists without accreditation and with little public funding (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; AIC, 2005). Many are community learning centers and institutes that offer Indigenous programs, which may or may not culminate in some form of credential, and they often also provide space for external accredited programs to be made available to local Indigenous peoples (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; AIC, 2005). One subset of this institutional category in Canada is the vocational-technical institution, like Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in British Columbia and Six Nations Polytechnic in Ontario (Barnhardt, 1991). These institutions provide specialized training for local First Nations peoples and act as feeder programs to mainstream public postsecondary institutions (Barnhardt, 1991). Most independent institutions in Canada, like their U.S. counterparts, receive financial support from the Indigenous communities they serve and some government programmatic grants, but some are also non-profit institutions and may, therefore, seek funds through ally organizations (Barnhardt, 1991; Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen, 2000; AIC, 2005).



The few independent Indigenous institutions in Canada that operate on a level of autonomy and credibility similar to Tribal Colleges & Universities in the U.S. are established "by action of home rule" in places where Indigenous peoples hold a significant proportion of positions in government (Barnhardt 1991, p. 9). These institutions, which include Nunavut Arctic College in Arviat, Nunavut, and Yukon College in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, are largely "free to write their own rules and define their own standards according to the needs of the population they serve" (Barnhardt, 1991, p. 9; NAC, 2006; Yukon College, 2005). These institutions, like other independent Indigenous institutions, have to find ways to deal with the tension between maintaining a commitment to locality and indigeneity and seeking academic and professional credibility and transferability, but many have been able to maintain their core ideals while constructing positive relationships with mainstream postsecondary institutions (Barnhardt, 1991; NAC, 2006; Yukon College, 2005).

Indigenous postsecondary institutions in their various forms do more for decolonization than only the transforming of consciousness and the training of graduates who go on to participate in acts of decolonization, as previously described. From the data provided by a number of sources (AIC, 2005; FNHL, 2006; AIHEC & IHEP, 2001; Castellano et al., 2000; Carney, 1999; Stein 1992; AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; Benham & Stein, 2003; Merisotis & O'Brien, 1998; Oppelt, 1990), it is clear that these institutions, despite the difficulties created by their different structures, contribute to decolonization in a great number of ways, including, but not limited to: 1) supporting Indigenous sovereignty efforts by providing training for political employment and by offering resources and even meeting space for activism relating to Indigenous land and treaty rights claims; 2) uplifting and protecting Indigenous knowledges and knowledge-production by incorporating Indigenous worldviews into curriculums and classroom practices, by welcoming elders on advisory boards and into classrooms, and by promoting the pursuit of Indigenous research by students and faculty; 3) offering Indigenous language programs and training Indigenous language teachers so that Indigenous languages can be revitalized across the generations; 4) integrating Indigenous cultural practices into classroom interactions and campus events, like graduation; 5) acknowledging and respecting Indigenous religious and spiritual practices by welcoming spiritual leaders into classrooms, counseling programs, and special events and even by altering the academic calendar to recognize important Indigenous spiritual times; 6) rebuilding Indigenous environments by providing training in sustainable development in the realms of agriculture, natural resource management, forestry, and fisheries science; 7) aiding struggling youth by providing culturally-relevant counseling and guidance to overcome obstacles to higher education, employment, personal development, and a positive self-image; and 8) challenging the colonial hegemony by presenting alternative models for measuring success in postsecondary education.

#### *Effect of Indigenous Postsecondary Institutions on Individuals and Communities*

**D**ue to their persistent and targeted decolonizing efforts, Indigenous postsecondary institutions have, even during their young history, produced a number of concrete positive results in many communities, including increased postsecondary enrollment by Indigenous persons and decreased Indigenous joblessness, which contribute to the process of decolonization by upsetting the colonial order that seeks to have Indigenous peoples live in a disadvantaged or dependent state (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999; AIC, 2005). These institutions not only prepare Indigenous students for employment, but also employ a large number of Indigenous persons, such that in the U.S. 30% of faculty and 79% of staff are Indigenous, many coming from the local Indigenous communities where tribal colleges are based (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999, p. 11; AIHEC, 2000; AIC, 2005). There has even been an increase in income levels on

reservations with Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S., which, compared to reservations without such institutions, have seen a 49% greater growth in income over a ten-year period (AIHEC, 2000). Additionally, while poverty has grown across the board for Indigenous peoples in the U.S., poverty rates grew 22% more on reservations that did not have Indigenous postsecondary institutions than on those reservations that did (AIHEC, 2000). Graduates from Indigenous postsecondary institutions in both countries consistently have higher rates of further educational enrollment and attainment, as well as higher rates of employment, than exist in the general population of their local Indigenous communities (AIHEC, 2000; AIC, 2005). Some U.S.-based studies even show that Indigenous students who attend tribal colleges before attending mainstream universities are less likely to drop out, and often achieve higher grade point averages than Indigenous students who attend mainstream universities immediately after high school (AIHEC & IHEP, 1999). These same graduates report, both through questionnaires and anecdotally, a very high rate of satisfaction with their experience attending Indigenous postsecondary institutions, especially in terms of coursework, class size, instruction, and contact between students and institution employees (AIHEC, 2000, p. 19). There is some indication of other encouraging effects related to Indigenous postsecondary institutions, but there is very little correlative evidence available due to the lack of comprehensive research on this topic.

#### *Further Comparative Analysis*

The data presented above points to a number of fundamental historical, ideological, and structural idiosyncrasies that have contributed to the rise of a very different network of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in each country. Both countries went through a period of upheaval in relation to Indigenous rights and responsibilities which initiated the development and defined the content of Indigenous postsecondary institutions, but the policies of the education systems, and their related cultural ideologies, have established the current structure of these institutions. It is important, therefore, that solutions to the structural problems faced by these institutions be fashioned within the context of their distinct educational and governmental systems, while strategies to ensure culturally-appropriate content and classroom practice may be more easily shared across the border.

According to Lipset (1989), Skonik (1990); and Skolnik and Jones (1992), Canada's history as a government "deriving its title-to-rule from a monarchy linked to a church establishment" (Lipset quoted in Skonik & Jones, p. 123) has created a largely statist, collectivist nation where public opinion supports social order and the public good above all else. These scholars, then, situate the U.S. history of revolution as producing an antistatist, populist nation where public opinion supports individual rights and privatization above all else (Lipset, 1989; Skolnik 1990; Skolnik & Jones, 1992). While these classifications have their exceptions, the Lipset *Continental Divide* paradigm provides a worthwhile model with which to analyze the nature of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

Within a statist philosophy, public institutions are thought to result in quality and equality more so than private institutions and, further, private institutions are faced with suspicion when they enter into sectors that are considered to be fundamentally public, like education. Such a philosophy could easily contribute to the perception that Indigenous postsecondary institutions lack educational quality, which impedes efforts to gain recognition/accreditation and transferability for their courses. This belief may also correlate with the meager support for providing public funds for Indigenous postsecondary institutions, since they are private institutions seeking access to a public sector. The antistatist U.S., however, sees the expansion of the number and types of postsecondary institutions as integral to providing citizens and residents with ample possibilities for their choosing and, further, to encouraging those

institutions to improve constantly, in order to remain competitive in the postsecondary market. Indigenous postsecondary institutions are, therefore, provided some financial assistance, both at their launch and during their growth, in addition to being allowed to operate as they see fit after clearing minor accreditation hurdles.

Also from the writings of Skolnik (1990) and Skolnik and Jones (1992), it seems that Canadian postsecondary education, and Canadian education generally, is heavily predicated on the idea of very strong provincial and territorial governments with powers that they do not peacefully share with the national government. This means that federal education funds are primarily given through broad, unrestrictive grants that are then allocated in whatever manner the province/territory sees fit, including costs outside the realm of education. As a result, federal funding that is targeted to particular educational projects and institutions is seen as an intrusion on the rights and powers of provinces and territories. It is unlikely, therefore, that Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada can look to the federal government to provide a stable funding source, despite the unique relationship that Indigenous peoples, especially First Nations and Inuit peoples, have with the federal level of government.

Canadian provincial rights seem to trump Indigenous rights, as laid out in treaties and federal acts, whenever there is debate in the national political arena. This may explain the tendency of national and sub-national Canadian governments to blatantly dismiss the self-determination that these racially marginalized groups are entitled to under international and human rights law. While all layers of government in the U.S. also have a history of imposing on Indigenous sovereignty rights, states often have to push through special legislation to place the state in charge of Indigenous-focused services that would usually be handled by the federal government. Only one such initiative has been successful, and this took place in California, where Indigenous groups and governance were historically weakened due to Spanish colonization before the presence of an Anglo-American government in the West. In the U.S., while the balance of power between the federal and state governments has changed over time, in recent history there has been a fairly balanced collaboration between education policy and education funding mechanisms at both governmental levels. The federal government regularly specifies how education funds can be used, whether funneled through state governments or directly to educational institutions. Under this system, there are a number of federal legislative acts that allocate funding both directly to Indigenous postsecondary institutions and through the state government to such institutions.

An intermediate variable that may also have affected the growth of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada and the U.S. is the presence, or lack of presence, of precedents for prominent alternative postsecondary institutions. In Canada, there are virtually no recognized or accredited postsecondary institutions that do not fit within the comprehensive university mold. Skolnik (1990) and Skolnik and Jones (1992) reference a few religious schools with the power to grant degrees for religion-related coursework, but there are no other Canadian models to look to for ideas on recognition/accreditation or funding. The U.S., though, is teeming with prominent alternative postsecondary institutions, including religious schools, specialist schools, technical schools, and Minority-Serving Institutions, like Historically Black Colleges & Universities. All of these institutional categories have accreditation procedures and funding mechanisms in place at local, state, and/or federal levels. Consequently, Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada are truly pioneers in their efforts to ensure recognition and funding, while similar institutions in the U.S. can reference and even build upon policies that are already in place.

There have been many parallels in the histories of Indigenous peoples and their relationships with the colonial and neocolonial governments in North America, even in terms of

the circumstances leading to the establishment of the first Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada. Another worthwhile avenue of consideration in analysis of these institutions may be the history of cultural/racial/ethnic tension and conceptions of culture, race, and ethnicity in the public discourse of each country. The perception of educational quality, as bound by accreditation, and the perceived public worth of these institutions, as manifested through funding, may, for example, correlate with the connections between racial hierarchies and notions of intelligence and managerial capabilities in the two countries. Since Indigenous peoples are "othered"<sup>4</sup> persons within Canadian and American society, the lack of confidence that these Eurocentric dominant cultures have in Indigenous professorial and educational administration abilities may be based on underlying racial stereotypes that have been institutionalized through government policy. Differences in these underlying race-based stratification processes may contribute to differences in the social and financial support for Indigenous postsecondary institutions in each country.

It also seems that Canada situates itself as a multicultural nation while the U.S. understands itself as a pluralist nation. While this characterization of the two countries requires further study, part of the impetus for wholly separate institutions in the U.S. may come from a deeply held belief that groups have a right to their own institutions, in contrast with Canadian notions that different cultural groups have a constitutional right to space within public institutions. U.S. public postsecondary institutions, while acknowledging the needs of Indigenous students through rudimentary programs, do not seem to consider addressing Indigenous issues to be a critical part of their mandate to fill the postsecondary needs of the public. Canadian public postsecondary institutions, however, seem somewhat more committed to ensuring the postsecondary success of Indigenous peoples as a portion of their public. This emphasis may even relate to the fact that Indigenous peoples in Canada are a slightly larger proportion of the population than Indigenous peoples in the U.S.: 4.5% in Canada versus 1.4% in the U.S. (Kauffman, 2003). It is important to note, however, that the actual results of pushing Indigenous peoples to find space in public postsecondary institutions are considered by many Indigenous groups to be ineffective, inefficient, assimilationist, and in opposition to Indigenous sovereignty efforts.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

The literature that comparatively analyzes Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada consists of only a few articles with comparative studies of Indigenous K-12 education or general postsecondary education being more prevalent but still rather minimal. This is remarkable considering that Canada and the U.S. trade more with each other than with the other nations of the world and, further, that the value of cash, products, and services moving across the border each day is more than the gross domestic product of several of the world's countries. The literature on Indigenous postsecondary education in Canada, especially, needs a great deal more work from all types of scholars, particularly those willing to explore institutions and policies in expansive quantitative ways, detailed qualitative ways, and critical ways that desire to draw out counter-stories and marginalization processes that have been institutionalized and/or internalized. With the rapid growth of the Indigenous populations in Canada and the U.S. and, further, with the steady rise of high school completion rates for

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<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Cahoone (2003) theorized that "cultural units", like racial and ethnic groupings, "are maintained only through constitutive repression, an active process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization" in a way that presents other units "as foreign or 'other' through a hierarchical dualism in which the first is 'privileged' or favored while the other is deprivileged or devalued in some way" (p. 11). This process is commonly called "othering", and Cahoone is only one in a long list of social scientists who have spoken to this process of constructing the "other".

Indigenous peoples in both countries, it is imperative that more scholars take note of postsecondary education initiatives that specifically seek to address the needs of Indigenous communities.

In terms of content, future research should expand the literature by exploring a number of questions, particularly those items that are of interest to the people who are integrally involved with Indigenous postsecondary institutions and governmental policy-making in the U.S. and Canada. One of the most pressing issues for Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada, though it is relevant for institutions in both countries, is the question of recognition or accreditation and the funding policies that are tied to these processes. Future scholars should examine current local, provincial/state, and federal policies, how they came to be, and how they can or should be modified, retracted, or replicated to create an inclusive and supportive policy environment in which these institutions can flourish. Research into the histories of current policies will likely also point to the need for more analysis of the effects of these institutions, on students, families, employees, communities, other institutions and organizations, and perhaps even whole provinces/states, regions, or countries. It would be very difficult to have a reasonable debate about the importance of funding these institutions without more proof of their positive contributions. Finally, there is almost no literature that details the actual philosophies, administrative structures, financial planning, pedagogical practices, student-teacher relations, student activism, or anything else that is happening on the ground at Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada. As a result, scholarship from angles such as educational leadership, institutional finance, curriculum, teaching methods, classroom organization, student behaviors, and extracurricular activities would all offer a great deal of insight into the actual day-to-day functioning of Indigenous postsecondary institutions.

### *Conclusion*

Indigenous postsecondary institutions are a response to oppressive educational policies and practices that damaged Indigenous communities. They arose as part of larger movements seeking change for Indigenous and otherwise marginalized peoples while also relating to other movements seeking changes in education and postsecondary education, specifically. Although there were similar factors that initiated efforts to establish Indigenous postsecondary institutions in Canada and the U.S., the actual structures of and issues affecting these institutions are quite distinct, due to sizeable differences in the education systems of the two countries. Despite the somewhat different natures of their various struggles, Indigenous postsecondary institutions on both sides of the border were historically, are presently, and will continue to be, a powerful force for decolonization both in the education sector and beyond. By acknowledging the role of Indigenous postsecondary institutions in the ongoing North American decolonization project, we can see that decolonization is a lengthy, multi-layered process that involves Indigenous peoples constructing solutions from within Indigenous cultures and knowledges while also transforming the structures and technologies of the colonizers into configurations that benefit Indigenous communities.

Future research will hopefully cover topics that have remained largely unexplored, particularly by examining these institutions in terms of the policies that affects them, their effect on students and communities, their organizational structures, and their educational content. Future research should also employ analysis methods that have been underutilized, especially by incorporating approaches that are expansive, qualitative, critical, and comparative. Extended comparative work in this topic will hopefully lead to greater collaboration as well as positive policy and practice changes in relation to Indigenous postsecondary institutions in both countries. I intend to contribute to this body of literature through a critical decolonizing lens,

and I hope that other emerging scholars will find these institutions to be worthwhile sites in which to invest their intellectual abilities, not only in terms of research, but also in terms of shaping employment and activism.

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