

## Toward a New Relation of Hospitality in the Academy

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In this article I will propose some thoughts for working toward academic hospitality that would enable the recognition of Indigenous epistemologies in an appropriate manner. These suggestions will always remain partial and are by no means intended to be taken as a comprehensive, exhaustive consideration of possible measures. To suggest otherwise would inevitably contradict and negate the idea of hospitality, the fundamental openness to the other. Clearly, the question of hospitality will not and should never come to a close because in the moment we assume the problem solved, we arrive at a totalizing closure—another symptom of the colonial. Instead of yearning for an ultimate answer and solution, we need to accept that, necessarily, hospitality is a continuous, never-ending process of negotiation—a productive crisis in which we work continuously toward a new way of thinking and ultimately a new relationship in which the academy is compelled to recognize and accept its responsibility toward the other.

I will first address the problematic and contentious question of knowing the “other”—a question riddled with dangers of arrogant assumptions and ethnocentrism (which particularly takes the form of Eurocentrism). I consider the issue from the perspectives of both Indigenous scholarship and critical race theories/anti-racist pedagogies. Second, I will bring forth the suggestion of doing one’s homework as proposed particularly by Gayatri Spivak. Finally, I will return to the question of hospitality and responsibility toward the other.

### KNOWING THE OTHER

It is a widely recognized fact that any attempt or claim to know (about)

other peoples and cultures is loaded with problems and dangers. A well-meaning but patronizing humanist-liberalist assumption that a mere cultivation of understanding will facilitate the encounter with the “other”—or even worse, eradicate the systemic social and power inequalities endemic also in the academy—has been seriously challenged by various scholars and discourses.<sup>1</sup> Spivak calls such a view the Eurocentric arrogance of conscience; a simplistic assumption that as long as one has sufficient information, one can understand the “other” (Spivak 1999, 171). The Eurocentric arrogance also is manifested in the academy in other ways such as rejecting vast intellectual traditions of other parts of the world, reflected in the Eurocentric university curricula.

In Indigenous discourse, a commonly heard argument is also that other peoples cannot be known from a perspective of cultures based on entirely different assumptions and perceptions of the world. Postcolonial theories denounce attempts of knowing the other through a colonial, imperial bias, while feminist critiques also remind us of the implications and legacies of the patriarchal gaze. Many anthropologists and ethnographers continue to struggle with the crisis of cultural representation.

Poststructuralists detest the entire idea—how can one possibly imagine knowing other peoples and cultures when a person can never even fully know herself! In Spivak’s view, for instance, “[w]e cannot ‘learn about’ the subaltern only by reading literary texts, or *mutatis mutandis*, sociohistorical documents” (1999, 142); moreover the entire project of knowing the other is somewhat suspect (see Spivak 1999, 283). For many others still, claiming to know and understand the other is simply paternalistic and arrogant. This is further complicated by the argument that understanding does not always increase sympathy and mutual respect but rather results in violence. Tzvetan Todorov (1987) suggests that understanding can also lead to destruction and annihilation as appeared to be the case with Hernando Cortés, the Spanish conquistador who seized the kingdom of Montezuma in present-day Mexico.

According to Todorov, Cortés understood the Aztec and their world relatively well. This understanding, however, not only did not prevent the destruction of the Aztec civilization but, in effect, made it possible. This could be easily explained by arguing that in such a context, knowing and understanding is accompanied by the negation of the value of the other people and culture. This is not, however, the case, as demonstrated by conquistadors’ writings, in which it becomes clear that at least on a cer-

tain level, the Aztecs provoked admiration in Europeans. Yet the marvel of the Spaniards is by and large limited to objects produced by Aztecs. Todorov notes: "Like today's tourist who admires the quality of Asian or African craftsmanship though he is untouched by the notion of sharing the life of the craftsmanship who produce such objects, Cortés goes into ecstasies about the Aztec productions but does not acknowledge their makers as human individualities to be set on the same level as himself" (1987, 129).

Understanding of other cultures as manifested in architecture, design, and objects such as artifacts ("material" physical culture) should not be confused with understanding of different worldviews ("immaterial, intellectual culture"), which requires, in addition to mere admiration of aesthetics, recognition on various levels; not only the recognition of individualities (or collectivities, for that matter) behind the esteemed objects but also the recognition of the historical continuity between the accomplishments of the past and the present-day descendants of the people in question. Particularly with regard to Indigenous peoples, there is a peculiar and common attitude that fundamentally dissociates the past from the present, assuming a process of degeneration and decline if not corruption of contemporary Indigenous peoples as compared to the "golden past" and the period of "high civilization." This gives rise to the pervasive denial, enabling the simultaneous appreciation of the material culture (both in past and present) and disdain of the "sordid, vile Native."

Further, as knowing is often associated with power and control, it is argued that having (or claiming to have) and producing knowledge of other peoples reflects the desire of the knowing subject, if not to possess, then to tame and consume the other. Spivak calls this process of containing the other for colonial, imperial purposes as "othering": domesticating an incommensurable and discontinuous other in order to consolidate the imperialist self (see, for example Spivak 1985, 134–35 and 1999, 130–31). In this way, the other is conventionalized into the dominant discourse, and the epistemic discontinuity that might have existed is neutralized while the "subaltern" is constructed as monolithic (see Spivak 1999, 208, 284). This is certainly the experience of Indigenous peoples worldwide—producing colonial knowledge and representations about the "primitives" in the colonies and other far away places made it possible to claim ownership over territories and resources belonging to people who were not considered fully human (and in the worst cases, not even existent).<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, however, the desire for knowledge or the accompanied problem of understanding will not disappear by declaring it suspect. Even if at times one might be tempted to side with the more pessimistic view of the incommensurability of modern, Western, and Indigenous epistemes, I am convinced that the first step of encountering this complex question must consist of a willingness for transformation, including an acknowledgment that in the process of hospitality, it “is necessary to seek to extend our own [worldviews]—not simply to bring the other way within the already existing boundaries of our own” (Winch 1967, 30). This would inevitably bring with it the need for critically examining our current assumptions and presuppositions, if only because there is really no other way ahead in building a hospitable academy and inscribing hospitality in its practices.

*The Problem of “Indianism”*

“While the white people had much to teach us, we had much to teach them, and what a school could have been established upon that idea?” (Standing Bear 1978, 236). These words were expressed by Luther Standing Bear, who was the first Lakota student to attend the Carlisle Indian boarding school in Pennsylvania when it opened in 1879. More recently, a related question is addressed by the report “Learning about Walking in Beauty,” a survey measuring awareness and attitudes about aboriginal peoples among young Canadians (CRRF 2002). The report was released in Toronto in November 2002, where the chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF), the Honorable Lincoln Alexander, stated:

Clearly, Canadians know little but wish to know more about Aboriginal histories and cultures, which ought to be presented honestly and respectfully in school curricula. . . . At the same time, Canadian students must be prepared to address the economic, social and cultural marginalization of Aboriginal peoples, which in April 1999, the United Nations Human Rights Committee said is “the most pressing human rights issue facing Canada.” (CRRF 2002, November 18)

While not necessarily an entirely new issue, the report reveals the persistence of many of the same problems and concerns exposed several years ago by the report of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP),

which also recognized that “the limited understanding of Aboriginal issues among non-Aboriginal Canadians” presents various obstacles “to achieving reconciliation and a new relationship” (RCAP 1996, 92). The report also notes that while knowledge is much needed and a prerequisite for any human relationship, it is inadequate to change deep-seated hostility and fundamental attitudes, many of which are clearly prejudiced. Like Standing Bear, the report strongly recommends public education as a means to eradicate such attitudes as well as to “move beyond policies that are the failed relics of colonialism”—something that, according to report, would benefit all Canadians (92–93).

The situation in Canada is hardly unique, whether the question is the lack of knowledge pertaining to Indigenous peoples living within its national borders or the inability to address the multiple marginalization of those peoples and their communities. It is suggested that in the United States, Native Americans are the least-understood group, even among academics (Champagne and Stauss 2002, 6; also Marker 2000, 409). Among the majority of Finnish students, including those studying in teacher education, there is also a clear lack of knowledge and correct information about the Sami (see Rasmus 2001). While the need to know more clearly seems to exist, the question remains whether it is possible to know and understand epistemic conventions radically different from those of one’s own worldview. If yes, how do we go about it? If not, are we simply forced to sanction the prevailing ignorance toward Indigenous and other epistemes not only in the academy but in society at large?

Why does the academy appear so hesitant and disinclined to engage in a new relationship with Indigenous epistemes? Considering the endless number of studies on and information about practically every imaginable topic dealing with the world’s various Indigenous peoples, how can the general ignorance on Indigenous epistemes continue to be so pervasive? There are several reasons for the reluctance, ranging from simple laziness of academics to divert their attention to anything else outside their own fields of study, to unwillingness to give up privilege and power and change the status quo that appears to serve best those who are the most unsympathetic and unwilling to recognize—never mind act upon—their responsibility toward the “other.” There are countless examples of how individuals (in many cases students) belonging to the privileged group whose epistemes are taken for granted in the academy feel threatened when faced with perspectives and information that challenges their

earlier knowledge and ingrained views of the world (see, for example, Cleary 2002, 188–89; Mihesuah 1996, 104; see also Ng 1993). As expressed by a non-Indigenous faculty member:

In my experience, when Indigenous perspectives are genuinely included in the curriculum and the classroom, the epistemic and pedagogical changes involved are *huge*. I believe that is why so many otherwise forward-looking faculty resist it or don't manage to "get around" to it—because of implicit recognition that their epistemic and pedagogical power will be eroded. (Pamela Courtenay-Hall, personal communication)

The personal epistemic and pedagogical power usually is the first priority for many academics. The question is, therefore, not only about "not-knowing" but also about power and privilege as well as attitudes and views shaped and constructed by Western rationalism, which considers systems of knowing not based on the superiority of reason less legitimate, unsound, and even erroneous (see Churchill 1995, 246).

Furthermore, it is pointed out that even if there is an interest in Indigenous peoples and their cultures, there is relatively little interest in either addressing them on their own terms or understanding Indigenous perspectives and values (Champagne 1998, 187). Borrowing from Edward Said's notion of orientalism, David Newhouse (Onondaga), Don McCaskill, and John Milloy call this phenomenon "Indianism": articles and studies written in an "attempt to explain Aboriginal peoples" but which "are not voices of Aboriginal peoples or explanations posited using Aboriginal ideas" (2002, 78). This approach, which also could be called the "anthropological mode of knowing," continues to defer to mainstream expertise and dominant discourses, perpetuating the undervaluation of Indigenous perspectives and worldviews (Smith 1992, 12; Battiste 2001, 198–99; Cleary 2002, 186–87; Monture-Angus 2002, 278).<sup>3</sup> A common view within Indigenous scholarship is that it is necessary to move beyond this kind of "Indianist" inquiry, which often proves quite unhelpful if not counterproductive for aspirations of Indigenous peoples, including various forms and different levels of self-determination. It is no surprise, then, that the intellectual tradition referred to as "Indianism" is rather ineffective and insufficient in addressing the problem of epistemic ignorance.

One of the most commonly heard suggestion to change this situation is to more effectively provide information produced by Indigenous people

themselves for the use of the general public. This suggestion, however, fails to recognize that there is already a good number of studies, documents, articles, and various kinds of books for different audiences (scholarly, fiction, children, and even coffee table books) by Indigenous scholars and writers widely available and accessible and that the real problem lies elsewhere. As this material is often written from a perspective based on a different (probably even foreign) epistemic convention, many non-Indigenous people may find it either too challenging or too simplistic—in any case, not what they are looking for—not to mention that writings by Indigenous people often do not conform to or confirm the common stereotypical misrepresentations many people have of Indigenous peoples.

Another suggestion, the often heard encouragement to “listen to our elders,” is not as easy and straightforward as we may think at first either. As it is wrong to assume that anyone without previous knowledge or intensive training can grasp, say, international law, it is improper to expect a person unfamiliar with epistemic and cultural conventions embedded in elders’ teachings, which can be highly metaphorical and complex, to appreciate and understand them.

Many Indigenous scholars maintain that improving the status and role of Indigenous studies programs in the academy is an effective way of increasing accurate knowledge and information regarding Indigenous peoples and their issues. Devon Mihesuah (Oklahoma Choctaw) contends that “The fundamental argument for a good Indian studies program is to educate students who are ignorant about Indians” (1996, 99). The problem is, however, that most Indigenous studies programs remain both intellectually and financially marginal within the university structure, which, in spite of welcoming new fields of study, often fiercely seeks to protect its intellectual core (Atkinson 1993, 74–75).<sup>4</sup>

### *Indigenous Studies Programs*

Indigenous criticism of the academy and attempts to address the educational needs of Indigenous students have led to the creation of various Indigenous studies programs and departments in many universities around the world. It is suggested that Indigenous studies programs are in many cases a response to colonization and relations of oppression (Green 2001, 40). They were also established to provide more accurate and appropriate knowledge and information about Indigenous peoples (see

Moore 1998, 303). Together with the creation of Indigenous pedagogies and research methodologies, these programs are central in the process of Indigenous people validating their systems of knowledge, building capacity for their communities, claiming space, and transforming the status quo in the academy.<sup>5</sup>

While there are important epistemic, psychological, pedagogical, and ethical reasons for such programs, and the establishment of separate programs offer very important, culturally appropriate, necessary, and safe spaces for Indigenous students within mainstream universities, they are not without problems, which have been addressed by several Indigenous scholars. Marginalization and ghettoization of “special” or area studies is considered a form of discrimination and an expression of Eurocentrism, which often leads to dismissing them “as fringe programs of less merit and credibility” (Guerrero 1996, 58). They often are poorly integrated into and ignored by the rest of the academy (Green 2002, 86). Further, the “add-and-stir” model of education is considered insufficient in helping disempowered students to overcome their oppression (Battiste 1996, 21; see also Churchill 1995, 254; Cook-Lynn 2001, 152; Cummins 1986). It is also pointed out that while offering a space where Indigenous students are not marginalized at the outset, the fragmentation of knowledge and objectification of Native peoples also takes place in Native studies programs (Monture-Angus 2002, 278, 282).<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, Indigenous studies programs cannot address or solve all problems (not that they even are intended to do so) pertaining to Indigenous people in the academy. Not only are there always Indigenous people who, for various reasons, study and work outside these programs, but also they do not seriously challenge the hierarchical structures that maintain exclusionary practices in the academy at large, thus leaving the underlying inequalities and marginalization intact. As Ward Churchill argues, the establishment of separate programs “has accomplished little if anything in terms of altering the delivery of White Studies instruction in the broader institutional context” (1995, 254). In his view, the transformation of academic institutions requires a permeation and subversion of the existing structures rather than a creation of parallel structures; a conceptual rather than merely content-based inclusion of non-Western intellectual traditions. He maintains:

Content is, of course, highly important, but, in and of itself, can

never be sufficient to offset the cumulative effects of White Studies indoctrination. Non-Western content injected into White Studies format can be—and, historically, has been—filtered through the lens of eurocentric conceptualization, taking on meanings entirely alien to itself along the way. (1995, 251)

The mere inclusion of Indigenous issues in the curriculum is inadequate, particularly as it usually becomes interpreted through foreign frameworks and epistemic traditions. This aspect of epistemic violence (see Spivak 1990, 14, 77, 95, 126 and 1996, 22; see also Nwauwa 1997, xvii) is rarely addressed when the question of inclusion is discussed and asserted. There are also other problems pertaining to curriculum. If the main objective of Indigenous studies programs is to educate ignorant non-Indigenous students, in many cases it conflicts with the needs and interests of Indigenous students themselves. A large number of Indigenous people maintain that these programs must serve first and foremost Indigenous peoples and be places and spaces where Indigenous people can feel safe and find a sense of community and belonging usually absent in other academic departments (see Newhouse, McGaskill, and Milloy 2002, 76; LaRocque 2001, 71). There are others, however, who view Indigenous studies as just another “academic discipline with an identifiable history, a unique subject matter, an integral literature, a distinct epistemology, and a rigorous pedagogy”—in other words, “a comparative discipline with theories and methodologies that include but extend beyond local cultural interests” (Albers et al. 2002, 148). According to this view, the curriculum of such a program needs to serve and teach the widest possible student body. Another concern are Indigenous epistemologies themselves: Are they supposed to be solely a subject to be taught or are they a way of organizing the curriculum? (Moore 1998, 273).<sup>7</sup>

While increasing the number of Indigenous scholars as faculty could serve as a way of breaking away from the cycle of ignorance, it also poses certain dangers. Increasing the number of Indigenous faculty may offer for non-Native academics another excuse to consider themselves relieved of their responsibilities to Native students (Stein 1994, 107). Even if it is necessary to make the university more reflective of the population and introduce new forms of knowledge and practices, it is important to recognize that these procedures may also reinforce systemic racism and colonial hegemony (see Churchill 1995, 251). It is also suggested that if

the faculty members are seen as Native Informants and/or as qualified to teach Aboriginal subject matter *only*; if they are assumed to be responsible for anti-racist work in the university, and/or, are used as evidence that the predominantly white faculty and the system they inhabit are not involved in systemic racism [then] . . . the “work” is done. (Kelly 2002, 155–56)

Inviting Native faculty and faculty of color as guest speakers in classes may first appear as a reassuring and propitious gesture of inclusion. While it is good that there is willingness to be “inclusive” and offer different perspectives as well as recognition of the expertise of Native faculty and faculty of color, this recognition may confine and ghettoize this expertise as belonging solely to those groups (Luther, Whitmore, and Moreau 2001, 17). It also reveals the lack of knowledge of the rest of the faculty. Continually inviting guest lecturers to speak about issues of race, ethnicity, Native peoples—of “difference”—sanctions the gaps in knowledge and ignorance of faculty members unmarked by these “differences.”<sup>8</sup>

Using Indigenous scholars for educating the non-Indigenous public also poses a problem of the politics of distraction—diverting the attention of Indigenous people from their own priorities to the priorities of the dominant society.<sup>9</sup> For example, in many cases, instructors of various Indigenous studies programs spend a lot of time “unteaching” the ideological baggage and previous misinformation with which many non-Indigenous students come to the classes (Moore 1998, 298). If not Indigenous scholars, who, then, should educate non-Indigenous people about Indigenous epistemologies in a befitting manner? Or should we make this one of our priorities, based on an assumption that it might positively contribute to our other priorities in our communities (the academic community included)? This discussion is yet to happen among ourselves.

### *Teaching “Tribal Values”*

There are a few Indigenous scholars who consider teaching their epistemologies not only impossible but also inappropriate because they will inevitably be either rejected, misinterpreted, appropriated, or misused. Some suggest that all we can ask is respect as it is not possible to properly understand Indigenous thought and perspectives (Bennett 1997, 146). Deloria, who sees a problem in discussing ethnicity and Native cultures

in generalized, abstract terms, maintains that “we would be on very thin ice if we purported to teach what I regarded as the cultural context of Indian life” (1999, 24, 25, 157). Instead, in his view it would be more important to focus on training better policymakers for the future by teaching the history of the relationship between Native Americans and the federal government.

Further, the problem of teaching “tribal values” in a classroom is addressed by Gerald Vizenor. A character in his novel *The Trickster of Liberty* (1988), the director of urban tribal education Marie Gee Hailme, confesses in “The Last Lecture” how she has been teaching “biased and amiss” tribal values. Though humorous, Vizenor’s criticism toward unheeded assumptions of teaching “tribal values” should be taken seriously. First, as Vizenor notes, there hardly is a set of fixed “Indian” or Indigenous values that would have remained unchanged through time or that would be exactly the same from people to people. Second, any articulation of a set of values is inevitably a generalization if not an idealization and, as such, does not apply to every individual even within a group or people. As a generalization, it is always an “invention” even if it does not necessarily have to be a reflection of anybody’s personal “hang-ups,” as is the case with Hailme.

Bearing the possible dangers of assumptions of “tribal values” in mind, it is not, however, entirely false or wrong to argue that there are certain shared principles that characterize Indigenous philosophies and worldviews, principles that could also be called values. The concept of “value” is not, of course, unproblematic. As values differ even on the individual level, it is indeed problematic to assume the possibility of teaching a set of values that would, without a controversy, characterize an entire people while excluding all other peoples or groups. Here it suffices to say that to suggest hospitality in and of the academy does not mean or require teaching a fixed set of Indigenous values to non-Indigenous students. On the other hand, however, openness to and responsibility for the other requires a certain level of comprehension of aspects of Indigenous epistemes. Moreover, there is an obvious need for concepts and tools to deal with complex issues of “cross-cultural” issues and communication, which are not resolved by simply integrating inclusive material into the curriculum.<sup>10</sup>

There are thus two points that need to be clarified here. First, bringing Indigenous epistemes to the academy is not the same as teaching “tribal

values.” Second, the step of bringing Indigenous epistemes and epistemologies into academia clearly has already taken place through the increasing presence of Indigenous people in universities—without awaiting a welcome or an invitation, the “other” or the trace of the “other” has already crossed the threshold of the academy. To argue that Indigenous ways of knowing, philosophies, and traditions should not be brought in is to propose, as is often done by the academy itself at least on an implicit level, that we are required to check “our cultural baggage” at the gates of the university and translate our thinking into the dominant models.

*Problem of “Harmonious, Empty Pluralism”*

In critical and antiracist pedagogy and theory, it is often asserted that teaching that is limited to cultural codes, rules, and values of other people is not only inadequate but also inappropriate for it suggests that the history of oppression no longer plays a role in contemporary relations in society.<sup>11</sup> It is argued that the idea of cultural sensitivity—being aware of certain central cultural behaviors of other groups of people—only produces a “catalogue of cultural differences” while colonial relations remain unaddressed. Focusing on the cultural characteristics of the other suggests that the other is “merely different, rather than oppressed” (Razack 1998, 8; see also Ng 1993, 90). As Sherene H. Razack proposes, “education for social change is not so much about new information as it is about disrupting the hegemonic ways of seeing through which subjects make themselves dominant” (1998, 10). She contends:

What makes the cultural differences approach so inadequate in various pedagogical moments is not so much that it is wrong, for people in reality are diverse and do have culturally specific practices that must be taken into account, but that its emphasis on cultural diversity too often descends, in a multicultural spiral, to a superficial reading of differences that makes power relations invisible and keeps dominant cultural norms in place. (1998, 9)

This kind of “harmonious, empty pluralism” is said to lead to what Chandra Mohanty calls “the race industry,” a process that diminishes collective, historical, and institutional inequities to individual and psychological levels (1990, 198). It implies that dominant discourses are no longer characterized by racism, sexism, and other biased, stereotypical attitudes

and that “with a little practice and the right information, we can all be innocent subjects, standing outside hierarchical social relations” (Razack 1998, 10). This is, of course, not the case even in the academy, which often remains reluctant to engage in a transformative dialogue and responsible relationship with other epistemes and instead desperately clings to the status quo particularly supported by arguments of academic freedom and rigorous standards of research and teaching.

While recognizing the validity of the danger of only teaching cultural codes, I do believe that the struggle for transformation of academia and the establishment of a new relationship must take place *both* on the level of comprehension and learning (“new information”) *and* of practices of disrupting hegemonic ways of seeing. The “problem of knowing” is so complex and multilayered that we cannot limit ourselves and our practices to single solutions. We also cannot neglect the fact that education toward eradicating epistemic ignorance necessitates proper, in-depth awareness and knowledge about Indigenous epistemes.

Though impossible to define or describe the “contents” of proper, in-depth awareness and knowledge of Indigenous epistemes—not only is it always dependent on the particular context, but also how could one say when one knows “enough”?—I think it is fair to suggest that there is a clear need to distinguish between simplistic, generalized, reductionist, biased, or stereotypical (or even racist) interpretations of Indigenous epistemes and more nuanced, culturally sensitive analyses and descriptions by Indigenous people themselves. It is argued that “[i]f universities are to respect the cultural integrity of First Nations students and communities,” there is need for the institutional legitimization and respect for Indigenous knowledge (Kirkness and Barnhardt 1991, 8). Achieving this state of respect remains impossible as long as there is not adequate knowledge and information about Indigenous communities and knowledge.

How can we, then, in the necessary process of learning about Indigenous epistemes, avoid not only teaching tribal values but also “a superficial reading of differences that makes power relations invisible and keeps dominant cultural norms in place?” How can the gift of Indigenous epistemes be brought to the academy in a way that it is not reduced to just another aspect of the “race industry” within the liberal pluralist diversity? How can the academy recognize its responsibility, response-ability, answer-ability, and accountability toward the other?<sup>12</sup>

If we look at the notion of hospitality, both parties, the guest and the host, have their responsibilities to build a lasting, reciprocating relationship. While we as Indigenous people do need to accept educating others as one of our priorities and responsibilities (as most of us have done, willy-nilly, already), non-Indigenous people in the academy, as well as in the rest of society, need to assume their responsibilities. As Jennifer Kelly notes, arguments that non-Native instructors should not teach issues related to Native peoples “can function to marginalize it as separate from the Canadian social, historical, and political fabric, and can absolve us from *our responsibility to do the cultural and historical homework* necessary to teach the materials effectively” (2002, 156, emphasis added). Further, as Mihesuah points out, “Indians are not the only people with knowledge about Indians” (1996, 103). Quite obviously this also holds true among other Indigenous peoples. Such knowledge, however, as Kelly points out, comes with certain responsibilities of continuing to do one’s homework.

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DOING HOMEWORK

For Spivak, doing homework is a continuous practice to find out as much as possible about the areas where the scholar takes risks. In teaching, this would mean knowing the field as well as possible and familiarizing oneself with the main texts and arguments of the area (1996, 21).<sup>13</sup> In general, one of the central aspects of doing one’s homework is the process of unlearning one’s privilege, often addressed in critical and antiracist pedagogy as well. Here I will limit the discussion to a few examples by Spivak, who is particularly critical of claims by white male “politically correct” students who feel they can no longer speak because of their privileged position.

Instead of disavowing responsibility by simplistic breast beating (“ok, sorry, we are just very good white people, therefore we do not speak for the blacks”), which allows business go on as usual, she urges these people—the holders of hegemonic discourse—to “de-hegemonize their position and themselves learn how to occupy the subject position of the other” (1990, 121). She also exhorts: “Try to behave as if you are part of the margin” (1990, 30). Instead of taking a deterministic position, one has to examine the historical circumstances and articulate one’s own participation in the formation that created this and other forms of silencing. Further, one has to take a risk, because “to say ‘I won’t criticize’ is salving

your conscience, and allowing you not to do any homework” (Spivak 1990, 62–63; see also 1999, 284).

The central goal in the process of unlearning privilege is not only to be able to listen to the other constituency but to learn “to speak in such a way that one will be taken seriously by that other constituency,” which does not need to imply patronizing the other or resorting to anti-intellectualism (Spivak 1990, 42, 57). Calling for the responsibility of the academy is primarily to ask to learn about Indigenous epistemes, particularly by learning to listen and learning to learn (see Spivak 1999, 391). This is the first ethical responsibility. We also may need to draw a difference, however tentative and unfixed, between knowing and learning, as suggested by Spivak.<sup>14</sup> She argues:

I have no doubt that we *must learn to learn* from the original practical ecological philosophies of the world. Again, I am not romanticizing. . . . We are talking about using the strongest *mobilizing discourse* in the world in a certain way, for the globe, not merely for Fourth World uplift. I say this again because it is so easy to dismiss this as quixotic moralism. This learning can only be attempted through the supplementation of collective effort by love. What deserves the name of love in an effort—over which one has no control yet at which one must not strain—which is slow, attentive on both sides—how does one win the attention of the subaltern without coercion or crisis?—*mindchanging on both sides*, at the possibility of unascertainable ethical singularity that is not ever a sustainable condition. The necessary collective efforts are to change laws, relations of production, systems of education, and health care. (1999, 383, emphasis added)

The “original practical ecological philosophies of the world”—Indigenous epistemes and philosophies—can not only teach us how to learn, but they also function as a powerful mobilizing discourse for the entire world, not only Indigenous peoples. Perhaps this is what Luther Standing Bear had in mind over a hundred years ago: that “white people” learning about Indigenous philosophies and epistemes would not only benefit Indigenous peoples (in that they would be understood better) but possibly even more so “white people” themselves who are not usually forced to know other ways of thinking and perceiving the world in the same way that peoples and groups of nondominant positions in society are. Draw-

ing on ancient notions of hospitality of nomadic peoples, Parker Palmer suggests that “[g]ood teaching is an act of hospitality” (1998, 50).<sup>15</sup> He insists that

hospitality is always an act that benefits the host even more than the guest. . . . By offering hospitality, one participates in the endless re-weaving of a social fabric on which all can depend—thus the gift of sustenance for the guest becomes a gift of hope for the host. It is that way in teaching as well: the teacher’s hospitality to the student results in a world more hospitable to the teacher. (1998, 50)

Hospitality, therefore, cannot ever be a one-way street. While we have focused primarily on the responsibilities of the academy as the (assumed) host (or the host-guest), it is clear that the guest (or rather, the guest-host) has her own responsibilities (see Kirkness and Barnhardt 1991, 10). The first responsibility—responsibility as part of one’s identity—is giving the gift of the opportunity to learn about Indigenous epistemologies to the host-guest. This takes place, of course, all the time but usually goes unnoticed, with the result that the gift is not truly received. If this gift would be recognized—that is, not taken for granted—as part of hospitality on the part of the host (the teacher, the professor, the academic institution itself), not only good teaching but also good learning would be an act of hospitality, benefiting particularly the host.

In the collective efforts toward a change, the other also carries the responsibility to be willing to participate. Patricia Monture-Angus (Mohawk), writing about her personal experiences in the academy, notes that “I must continually balance my sense of responsibility against feeling like I am perpetuating the silence around certain exclusions by deciding not to participate” (1995, 55). If we seclude and isolate ourselves, and refuse to engage in striving toward hospitality, we cannot ask for unconditional welcome either.

Further, it is the role of Indigenous people to assist others to pay more attention and become more familiar with ideas, premises, and concepts characterizing Indigenous thought. This does not need to imply a merging of the different epistemologies, as some scholars have suggested, but rather becoming more aware of each other and reciprocating with one another in the spirit of openness, not only of limited give-and-take (that is, restricted reciprocity).<sup>16</sup> Thus the role of Indigenous people would be, among other things, to guide others in listening, in learning to listen, and

in becoming a guest instead of automatically assuming the role of the host (or a host-guest).

Standing Bear would have liked to see a school established on the idea of “white people” learning about the many things “we”—whether he meant the Lakota, Native Americans, or Indigenous peoples in general—have to teach them. What school, indeed, could be established upon the idea? We have already seen that Western universities have not been established upon that idea—as Delores Huff (Cherokee) argues, the academy remains “a system not designed to include an American Indian perspective” (personal communication). Meanwhile, learning is defined as one of the main pillars of universities as, for example, in the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) *Trek 2000* report. According to the document, the university strives for providing “a learning environment that will inspire and enable individuals to grow intellectually, recognize their social responsibilities, be prepared to live and work in a global environment, and achieve personal fulfillment” (UBC n.d., 6). Moreover, one of the goals of learning at UBC is to offer “education that takes advantage of our unique social and cultural make-up” (6). Left perhaps purposefully unspecified, one can wonder what “taking advantage” might imply in this context. Should we understand it as “drawing upon” and “benefiting” or “exploiting” and “abusing”?

Whatever the correct interpretation, open-minded learning appears to rank high in the university’s priorities. If this is the case (and not only rhetoric in official documents), the focus must indeed be on learning—and, of course, learning to learn—instead of implicitly obliging Indigenous people to conform or accommodate to the culture of the academy. It has also been suggested that universities are the most appropriate places to develop mutual respect and “an understanding and appreciation of ‘the other’ ” (Axtell 1998, 72). The appropriateness of universities and colleges for developing mutual respect is not only because they are “an intense, voluntary field of personal and cultural encounter” where “students are thrown together in close quarters with several thousand self-selected and usually friendly ‘others’ in a relatively safe environment where speech and thought are ideally free and intellectual stretching is encouraged by parents, faculty, and society at large” but also because this “intellectual stretching” is done through philosophical inquiry (Axtell 1998, 72–73).<sup>17</sup>

Developing an understanding and appreciation of “the other,” how-

ever, is inadequate if it does not involve engagement. In other words, even a solid understanding and appreciation without interaction—there is no responsibility without action—tends to remain at the level of “anthropological knowing” characterized by detached observation.<sup>18</sup> The responsibility of mutual engagement—which Spivak calls ethical singularity—requires a recognition of the agency in others that is different from a distorted version of liberal multiculturalism embedded in and determined by the demands of contemporary transnational capitalisms (1995, 182, 183). For her, liberal multiculturalism

is an important public relations move in the apparent winning of consent from developing countries in the dominant project of the financialization of the globe. . . . If we are to question this distorting rationale for multiculturalism while utilizing its material support, we have to recognize also that the virulent backlash from the current *racist* dominant in this country is of step with contemporary geo-politics. *We* are caught in a larger struggle where one side devises newer ways to exploit transnationality through a distorting culturalism and the other knows rather little what transnational script drives, writes, and operates it. It is within this ignorant clash that we have to find and locate our agency, and attempt, again and again, to unhinge the clashing machinery. (1995, 183)

One of the greatest dangers of liberal multiculturalism is to either lapse into a distorting culturalism, also problematized by critical and antiracist theorists and educators, or to remain unaware of the ties of this multiculturalism to the global capitalist market economy; that is, to not see how its limits are carefully crafted and controlled by market powers.<sup>19</sup> For Spivak, it is between these two positions—culturalism and multiculturalism’s complicity in global capitalism—where the transformation may start taking place. She brings forth the idea of “transnational literacy,” which seeks to “distinguish between the varieties of decolonization on the agenda, rather than collapse them as ‘postcoloniality’ ” (1995, 193). It also enables and allows us to read “stylistically noncompetitive” writings without attempts of forced comparisons (1995, 194). Drawing upon Spivak’s notion, I would propose further that in Indigenous contexts, such a practice is applied not only to reading but also to learning in general as a means of continuously seeking to avoid the temptations of the colonial containment—whether arrogant or benevolent—of the

“other,” constantly reminding itself to guard against superficial, stereotypical cultural representations and constructions presented to us by the media and market. It would also work particularly hard to escape idealistic and simplistic assumptions of the “race industry.” As a starting point and a continual point of reference, it also must acknowledge the impossibility of uncomplicated understanding of other epistemes (that is, assumptions of the transparency of the “other”) and recognize the reciprocity and responsibility toward the other and emphasize the openness toward learning (as well as the necessity of learning to learn).

A central, indispensable part of responsibility in this context is to accept and be guided by the fact that as “knowing other peoples and cultures” is about increasing knowledge and understanding or changing attitudes, it is also equally about addressing systemic power inequalities and hegemony in the academy as well as in larger society that prevent hospitality between Indigenous and dominant Western epistemes. Put another way, the academy can and must start doing its homework by rethinking its relationship as well as epistemological and ontological assumptions, structures, and prejudices toward Indigenous peoples and their epistemes. The cenge to the academic imagination is to rethink Indigenous peoples and, consequently, the gift of their epistemes “not only as repositories of cultural nostalgia but also as part of the geopolitical present” (Spivak 1999, 402).

I suggest, then, that we have to recognize and accept that there is no single, uncomplicated, and exhaustive answer to the complex question of “knowing the other.” The gift of Indigenous epistemes must be recognized, accepted, and respected even if it might not be possible to fully grasp and contain it. Asking for a full comprehension may not only prove impossible but also represent a colonizing, totalizing attempt to contain the other. In our practices and endeavors, it is necessary to bear in mind that while historically knowing Indigenous peoples has been an integral part of colonization, there is nevertheless an urgent need to raise the level of understanding and comprehension about Indigenous epistemes. Hospitality as articulated in this inquiry offers one way to approach this cenging and complex task, enabling and making the gift of Indigenous epistemes possible in the academy.

Thus there is a need in the academy to revive an understanding of hospitality grounded on a sense of social responsibility and reciprocity, in which they are considered an integral part of a worldview rather than as

burdensome obligations; they must be seen as dimensions of identity so much so that they cannot be ignored or neglected.<sup>20</sup> In other words, in such a worldview, it would be inconceivable to do otherwise than carry one's responsibilities as part of one's being. There is, however, certain danger in suggesting that Indigenous epistemes need to be perceived as a gift to the academy. The gift, as noted before, is not an exchange or a credit or a form of limited give-and-take but rather a gift that implies unconditionality; it is a free gift without return. In the context of a long history of plunder, appropriation, exploitation, and, more recently, commodification of Indigenous knowledge, however, the idea of Indigenous people giving their epistemes freely, without expectations of a return, is not only foolish but risky and dangerous. Further, to propose a free gift may appear squarely in opposition to the principles and codes of conduct formulated by Indigenous scholars and communities for the protection of Indigenous knowledge. One could even argue that it is entirely unreasonable and wrong to suggest that now that Indigenous peoples have finally gained some control over their epistemologies and intellectual property through both their own mechanisms as well as national and international laws and regimes, we should again start giving freely without any expectations of return.

How, then, can we enter into the new system of thought that views Indigenous epistemes as a gift? In other words, how can Indigenous peoples trust to give the gift? Quite clearly, it is not a question of giving freely in the current system, where the necessary ways of proceeding and acting are not in place—that is, the gift can only exist in a system where the notion of reciprocal responsibilities is in operation. In other words, first there is a “need for reciprocal relationship” in the academy (Battiste 2001, 201). This implies circumstances where not only is it possible to give freely without the danger of appropriation or exploitation but also where the academy is not considered as owing Indigenous peoples, as such thinking conflicts with the gift. It is rather a situation where the question is about establishing a reciprocal relationship—reciprocal as in gift circulation, not in obligated, restricted exchange—characterized by hospitality.

Moreover, hospitality also necessitates a level of trust (see Rosello 2001, 75). The idea of trust is informed, among other things, by the historical treaties signed by many Indigenous peoples in the world. Discussing the situation in Canada, Georges Erasmus (Dene) notes:

Aboriginal treaties are often described in legal terms as creating a *trust relationship*, one that invests the trustee with superior power and greater ethical responsibilities. For Aboriginal peoples, treaties created a *relationship of mutual trust* that was sacred and enduring. The bond created was like that of brothers [*sic*] who might have different gifts and follow different paths, but who could be counted on to render assistance to one another in times of need. (2002, 106)

Addressing particularly the concerns in the political and governmental spheres, Erasmus also sees a burning need for renewing the relationship between aboriginal and nonaboriginal peoples in Canada, also the main focus of the 1996 *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP). While for some the notion of a trust relationship may sound paternalistic and colonial in its implicit assumptions of hierarchy and unequal relations, it is also possible to perceive it in a slightly different way, which emphasizes the fact that if the host (or the trustee) has superior power, it must come with greater ethical responsibilities. It even could be argued that if the host does not accept this condition or prerequisite inseparably associated with its role, the relationship between the host and the guest, including superior power, is cancelled and annulled. As Erasmus points out, entering a treaty requires that both parties engage in negotiations about establishing good relations. As treaties grant certain rights and responsibilities to Indigenous peoples, they do the same to non-Indigenous people as well (Erasmus 2002, 106). Therefore, like hospitality, treaties between Indigenous peoples and the crown or the state do not belong to Indigenous peoples only, but they inevitably construct and characterize the reality and lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

#### NOTES

1. Discussing the question of the encounter with the "other," James Axtell writes: "The first aptitude we should cultivate, and perhaps the last as well, is *understanding*. This may sound terribly obvious, but it is seldom the first response we make when we encounter the other unexpectedly or even in familiar surroundings; defensiveness, fear, and denigration are more typical. . . . It is so easy to disparage or, what is no better, to pity and condescend to others of different color, culture, or circumstance" (1998, 82). In a similar but even more arrogant fashion, Steven C. Rockefeller contends that liberal democracy is a "social strategy for

enabling individuals to live *the good life*. It is unalterably *opposed to ignorance*. It trusts that *knowledge and understanding* have the power to *set people free*" (1992, 91, emphasis added).

2. See, for instance, Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), particularly paper 3. See also Spivak and her notion of "worlding," the process by which imperial discourse is inscribed upon the colonized "space" by activities of mapping, naming, and simply being present (1985).

3. This kind of knowing is reflected, for instance, in Clifford Geertz's *Interpretation of Cultures*, where he writes: "understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity. It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity" (1973, 14). There are several rather unexamined and problematic assumptions at play here such as normality, transparency, and accessibility of a culture (see Spivak's discussion on the complicity of Western intellectual in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" [1994]).

4. These circumstances, however, might well change in the future. The report "Learning about Walking in Beauty" urges the Canadian government together with other institutions to turn their attention to "collaboration between all education authorities to enable and promote *mandatory* Aboriginal Studies" (CRRF4; emphasis added).

5. The early discussion on Native studies programs include Thornton 1978, 1981; Kidwell 1978; and Deloria, Jr. 1986.

6. The fragmentation of knowledge is one of the major challenges for Indigenous scholars and students attempting to deal with Indigenous systems of knowing in the academy. Deloria remarks: "Indians have found even the most sophisticated academic disciplines and professional schools woefully inadequate because the fragmentation of knowledge that is represented by today's modern university does not allow for a complete understanding of a problem or of a phenomenon" (1999, 146).

7. Moore also points out that "[t]he fundamental problem is that undergraduate programs [in general] are organized and structured, spatially and temporally, according to principles about the world very different from the Native American principles that Native American studies programs would like to communicate" (1998, 293).

8. The problematics of the notion of difference is a vast field of research and discussion, ranging from feminism to postcolonial and poststructural theories, and beyond the scope of my current inquiry.

9. Similar concerns are addressed by bell hooks, who in a conversation with Jackie Huggins discusses the role, or a "maid service position," into which black women are often put to help white women unlearn their racism, for instance (in Huggins 1998, 61).

10. A good example demonstrating this need is the case that shook a New York City school in 1998 when a white teacher included the book *Nappy Hair*, written by African American scholar Carolivia Herron, in her third grade class readings. The teacher was well-intentioned but ill-equipped to deal with the complex issues emerging from a narrative on self-esteem that is not as straightforward as the media, for example, presented it (see Scapp 2003, chap. 2).

11. Since Paolo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the field has grown enormous. See, for example, works of Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, Joe Kincheloe, Peter McLaren, Roxana Ng, and Graham Smith, to mention only a few.

12. Besides accountability as related to the responsibility toward the other, there has emerged a relatively new trend of demanding accountability of universities to the government and society at large. In Canada this includes the *Maclean's* surveys since 1991, new schemes and models of accountability of the 1990s, performance indicators, and the Ontario Task Force on University Accountability, which "supports the trend that sees 'ultimate responsibility' for an institution reside in a goad of governors that monitors the universities' adoption of objectives set by outside political appointees" (Emberley 1996, 129). In Peter Emberley's view, "[a]ccountability, in this state of affairs, becomes little more than a means to bring universities more under the direction of government, because representatives of the academic community on boards of governors are deliberately kept in a minority" (1996, 129). This kind of accountability is, of course, quite different from the discussion of my inquiry, and there is no need to further delve into it in this context.

13. This should not be taken for granted by teachers and educators. bell hooks, for instance, argues that educators are poorly prepared to confront diversity. "This is why so many of us stubbornly cling to old patterns" (hooks 1994, 41). The same sentiment is shared by Pamela Courtenay-Hall, above.

14. Spivak writes: "Without falling into too strict an adherence, to the iron distinction between the constative and the performative, I still have to hang onto a working difference between knowing about something and learning to do something" (1995, 181).

15. See also Alan Bleakley (2002), who suggests a practice of teaching based on a gift economy and feminine ethics of care instead of the current model of a market economy and commodity exchange. According to this model, teaching is constructed as a gift given freely "through recognition of difference and resistance to totalising the other through identity" (82).

16. See, for example, Vine Deloria Jr. in *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (1979), where he insists on the need for creating a new, unified worldview and metaphysics by drawing upon Native American and European scientific traditions.

17. Moreover, Axtell argues that despite the responsibility of teaching to consider other human beings both *different from* and *equal to* themselves in order to “understand them as much as possible in their own terms,” the lion’s share of this responsibility belongs to the academy “simply because of the psychodynamics of human development. Most of us are much too busy before our late teens and early twenties trying to fashion and shore up our self-identities. . . . Only in college do we normally have at once the need, the opportunity, and the curricular encouragement to confront otherness on both a personal and a philosophical level” (1998, 70–71).

18. In order to make my point, I use this caricature of anthropology, which does not necessarily characterize all contemporary practices of anthropologists and ethnographers.

19. Indigenous people also have their particular reasons for arguing against their inclusion under the rubric of the multicultural. See, for instance, the discussion by Gloria P. Simms and Marianne Couchie (1990).

20. See the notion of unconditional responsibility articulated by John Caputo (2002).

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