8-2012

Indigenous Métissage: a decolonizing research sensibility

Dwayne Donald

International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education

Indigenous Métissage: a decolonizing research sensibility

Dwayne Donald [a]

[a] 341 Education South, Faculty of Education, University of
Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2G5, Canada
Version of record first published: 16 Mar 2011.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Indigenous Métissage: a decolonizing research sensibility

Dwayne Donald*

341 Education South, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5, Canada

This paper is a report on the theoretical origins of a decolonizing research sensibility called Indigenous Métissage. This research praxis emerged parallel to personal and ongoing inquiries into historic and current relations connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in the place now called Canada. I frame the colonial frontier origins of these relations – and the logics that tend to inform them – as conceptual problems that require rethinking on more ethically relational terms. Although a postcolonial cultural theory called métissage offers helpful insights towards this challenge, I argue that the postcolonial emphasis on hybridity fails to acknowledge Indigenous subjectivity in ethical ways. Instead, I present an indigenized form of métissage focused on rereading and reframing Aboriginal and Canadian relations and informed by Indigenous notions of place. Doing Indigenous Métissage requires hermeneutic imagination directed towards the telling of a story that belies colonial frontier logics and fosters decolonizing.

Keywords: métissage; colonial frontier logics; ethical relationality; braiding; Indigenous; decolonizing

In recent years, there has been a rising Canadian public policy shift towards acknowledgement of the historic and current influences of Aboriginal peoples and communities in shaping the character of Canadian society (Alberta Learning 2002; Green 2003; King 2003; Saul 2008). Focus has been on rereading the influence of the past on current relationships and contemplating the ways in which Indigenous wisdom traditions and knowledge systems can enhance our understandings of what it means to live in the place now called Canada. On a policy level, at least, there seems to be a growing awareness that our tipis are held down by the same pegs now.[1]

However, despite these promising shifts, Aboriginal and Canadian relations are still often delimited by colonial frontier logics[2] that continue to circumscribe the terms according to which people speak and interact (Donald 2009a, 2009b). Tensions exist over the history, culture, and identity of the people who live together in the place now known as Canada and the particular conceptions of nation, nationality, and citizenship considered most appropriate there. In short, there are dissonances regarding the significance of historic and current relationships connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians. The tensions persist because the problems and paradoxes created by processes of colonization also persist. 'Coloniality of power' (Mignolo 2002, 81–5) lingers in the Canadian context and continues to haunt these relations.

---

*Email: dwayne.donald@ualberta.ca

Locating myself within an emerging research sensibility

This paper is a report on the theoretical origins of Indigenous Métissage and the major influences that have informed its emergence[3] as a research sensibility focused on decolonizing Aboriginal and Canadian relations. As a researcher, inquirer, writer, and teacher educator, I struggle to locate a research standpoint that attends to the complex difficulties of these relations and frames them as shared educational concerns. As a descendent of the Papaschase Cree,[4] a community whose land was expropriated by Canadian government officials in the 1880s, I experience this complex difficulty in deeply personal and embodied ways. The Papaschase Cree were dispersed from their traditional lands and their communitarian connections slowly eroded. Family memories of this legacy focus mostly on survival amidst tumultuous change. It was during this era of Indigenous disenfranchisement and dispossession that my maternal great-grandparents arrived from Europe and settled in Western Canada. What this means is that while ancestors from one side of my family were displaced from their traditional lands and suffered numerous hardships stemming from 'spatial and ideological diaspora' (McLeod 1998), the other side was just settling in and beginning to enjoy the numerous economic and social benefits derived from colonialism. This intimate inside–outside relationship goes deeper still: my mother was raised on the very stretch of land that my father's family was displaced from in the 1880s. I was raised on this same land. I continue to live in this same place with my family today.

My particular problem, in terms of identity and belonging, is that I have been led to believe that I cannot live my life as though I am both an Aboriginal person *and* the grandson of European settlers. As a citizen and aspiring academic, there has been considerable pressure to choose sides, to choose a life inside *or* outside the walls of the fort (Donald 2009a). It is for these very personal reasons that I am committed to problematizing and deconstructing the commonsense socio-spatial assumptions of colonial frontier logics that continue to influence thinking on Aboriginal and Canadian relations. We need more complex understandings of human relationality that traverse deeply learned divides of the past and present by demonstrating that perceived civilizational frontiers are actually permeable and that perspectives on history, memory, and experience are connected and interreferential. The key challenge is to find a way to hold these understandings in tension without the need to resolve, assimilate, or incorporate.

Métissage, 'as a conceptual trope and as a practical tool or strategy', offers a textual way to honour this tension (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, and Leggo 2009, 8). In their book *Life Writing and Literary Métissage as an Ethos for Our Times*, Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, and Leggo identify the spirit and intent of métissage as such:

> We take métissage as a counternarrative to the grand narrative of our times, a site for writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages, particularly in colonial contexts; a way of merging and blurring genres, texts, and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy, and pedagogical praxis…We braid strands of place and space, memory and history, ancestry and (mixed) race, language and literacy, familiar and strange, with strands of tradition, ambiguity, becoming, (re)creation, and renewal into a métissage. (2009, 9)

Inspired by these commitments and insights, I initially explored métissage as a research sensibility that could help me make sense of the multiple influences at play in the *Kainai*[5] educational context. As a teacher at Kainai High School, I listened to the stories and memories of the *Kainai* people, witnessed the critical roles played by

Elders, and attended to the tensions and ambiguities felt by the students. Rather than separately analyzing and interpreting the experiences of Elders, students, and teachers, I began to see their formal and informal interactions as a collective expression of larger conversations regarding education, ways of knowing, and the stories young people are told in and out of schools. Thus, the relational concept of stories linking Elder, student, and teacher became a way to conceptualize a new insight in the *Kainai* educational context, called métissage (Donald 2003).

Building on these insights, and inspired by the work of Dussel (1993), I envision a hopeful future for Aboriginal and Canadian relations founded on a transmodern[6] spirit that works to rethink the significance of these tensions through the assertion of '*a new way of living* in relation to Others' (Goizueta 2000, 189, emphasis added). I am convinced that the task of decolonizing in the Canadian context can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across historic divides, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that their present and future are similarly tied together. Like Dussel (1995) and Turnbull (2005), I view existing tensions as potential sources of creativity that encourage complex and transdisciplinary approaches to research, in support of the emergence of new knowledge and insights that turn on respectful attentiveness to the local knowledges and memories of those who have experienced the underside of modernity and concomitant processes of colonial takeover.

These emphases emerged from a lengthy inquiry process that avoided naming an explicit research methodology or theoretical framework at the outset. The ambiguous and complexly relational standpoint that I brought to research questions did not fit well with most of the methods and frameworks that I encountered and studied. I found myself piecing together aspects of different ideas and influences and working them in ways that maintained a focus on what I wanted to say. As the inquiry process continued to move and flow, I increasingly felt a strong desire to speak, write, teach, and act with a spirit and intent that enabled me to assert Indigenous philosophies and ways, while also drawing on the diverse influences and affiliations that have constituted my life. I wanted to find a way to hold seemingly disparate standpoints together without necessarily choosing sides.

As I will show, Indigenous Métissage is a research sensibility that enables me to do this. One central goal of doing Indigenous Métissage is to enact ethical relationality as a philosophical commitment. Ethical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other. I use the term 'ecological' in association with this concept of human relationality to draw attention to the complex interrelationships that comprise the world as it is understood in Plains Cree and Blackfoot wisdom traditions. Ecology, in this case, does not refer to concerns about the natural environment[7] separate from the lives of human beings. Rather, human beings are seen as intimately enmeshed in webs of relationships with each other and with the other entities that inhabit the world. We depend on these relationships for our survival. This insight finds expression through philosophical emphasis on the need to honour and repeatedly renew our relations with those entities that give and sustain life.

Importantly, however, ethical relationality should not be interpreted as a universalized philosophy emphasizing 'sameness' (Cooper 2004, 25). This form of relationality is instead an ethical stance that requires attentiveness to the responsibilities that come with a declaration of being in relation. It means that there is something at stake

in saying so beyond postmodernism, new-age spiritualism, or 'playing nice'. These philosophical teachings emphasize that relationality is not just a simple recognition of shared humanity that looks to celebrate our sameness rather than difference. Rather, this form of relationality carefully attends to the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a person or community understands and interprets the world. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across perceived frontiers of difference. This concept of relationality instantiates an ethical imperative to acknowledge and honour the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences position us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people in the world are tied together. It is also an ethical imperative to see that despite our varied place-based cultures and knowledge systems, we live in the world together with others and must constantly think and act with reference to these relationships. Any knowledge we gain about the world interweaves us more complexly with these relationships and gives us life.

Thus, Indigenous Métissage is inspired by Plains Cree and Blackfoot philosophical insights that emphasize contextualized and place-based ecological interpretations of ethical relationality (Donald 2009a, 2009c). These influences come together to support the emergence of a decolonizing research sensibility that provides a way to hold together the ambiguous, layered, complex, and conflictual character of Aboriginal and Canadian relations without the need to deny, assimilate, hybridize, or conclude. It describes a particular way to pay attention to these tensions and bring their ambiguous and difficult character to expression through researching and writing. Indigenous Métissage has thus emerged as a decolonizing research sensibility that helps me interpret and express – tell – what I know firsthand of the colonial character of contemporary relationships linking Aboriginals and Canadians. It has been a 'situated response' (Hermes 1998).

Métissage as theory and praxis

Métissage, from which the Canadian word 'Métis' is derived, is a word of French language origin, loosely translated into English as 'crossbreeding,' that originally referred to racial mixing and procreation in derogatory terms (Dickason 1985, 21). Historically, especially with reference to colonialism, Europeans regarded métissage as a damaging biological process that weakens gene pools and mongrelizes the human race. The desire was for the maintenance of racial purity (1985, 21).

More recently, métissage has been used to denote cultural mixing or the hybridization of identities as a result of colonialism and transcultural influences. Glissant (1989), in his seminal work *Caribbean Discourse*, analyzes the cultural hybridity of the people of the Caribbean and asserts that it is an expression of the sense of displacement, dislocation, and lack of shared collective memory experienced as a result of the history of slavery and colonialism. The intermixing of people from all over the world in the Caribbean region has caused, almost out of necessity, a reconciliation of the values of literate societies and repressed oral traditions (1989, 248–9). The result has been the growth and nurturing of a particular kind of métissage or cultural 'Creolization' praxis and process that expresses an ongoing rapprochement between cultures and peoples usually essentialized and considered to be at odds with each other (1989, 140–1).

Glissant conceptualizes métissage as a process that requires a shift in thinking from a preoccupation with individual imagination and identity (*intention*) to an

emphasis on group consciousness (*relation*) (Dash 1995, 91). This group consciousness can only be established if people are willing to negotiate and work past persistent racial and binary categories of difference that serve to essentialize and segregate identity. For Glissant, then, this notion of 'creolization is an active, affirmative principle of cultural heterogeneity and innovation' (Zuss 1997, 167). In the following passage, Glissant theorizes the potential for métissage as a way to envision and embrace this heterogeneity as composite culture:

> Cross-cultural Relating sweeps the world towards an enriched creolisation.[8] Those who live this condition are no longer (in their consciousness) pathetic victims: they are laden with an exemplariness. Beyond its experience of suffering, the community held together by creolising forces cannot deny the other, or history, or nation, or the poetics of self. It cannot but transcend them. (Dash 1995, 97)

With this point, Glissant emphasizes that human relationality becomes an organic cultural process when we work to see beyond parochial and imposed understandings of self, history, and context.

In the field of literacy education, Zuss (1999), following Glissant, ties métissage directly to autobiographical explorations of identity – life-writings – and, 'attempts to refigure subjectivity, representation, and agency… as ways and means to explore radical forms of difference and the expression of individual and collective agency' (1999, 86). Such acts of autobiographical métissage are textual strategies consciously dedicated to the depiction of heterogeneous subjectivities, origins, situations, and connections. 'The pedagogic significance of métissage is in its placing emphasis on processes of hybridity and mutability inherent in any discourse, practice, or identity claim … in eluding the representational straits of categorization and the shoals of essentialist or nativist claims' (Zuss 1997, 167). Zuss considers autobiographical métissage as one powerful way to contest exclusivist and divisive identity claims. The assumption is that life-writings achieve worth when they are written in direct interface with the stories and contexts of others.

Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, and Donald (2002), also working with autobiography as a critical point of departure, have theorized métissage as a curricular practice that can be used to resist the priority and authority given to official texts and textual practices. This curricular form of métissage shows how personal and family stories can be braided in with larger narratives of nation and nationality, often with provocative effects. Thus, rather than viewing métissage as solitary research, this form of métissage relies on collaboration and collective authorship as a strategy for exemplifying, as text and research praxis, the transcultural, transdisciplinary, and shared nature of experience and memory. Métissage, in this example, calls for authors to work: 'collectively to juxtapose their texts in such a way that highlights difference (racial, cultural, historical, socio-political, and linguistic) without essentializing or erasing it, while simultaneously locating points of affinity' (Chambers et al. 2008, 142).

Intimate relationality in specific contexts and the implicative nature of experience are key aspects of my version of métissage. For me, métissage is a research sensibility that mixes and purposefully juxtaposes diverse forms of texts as a way to reveal that multiple sources and perspectives influence experiences and memories. Métissage, as research praxis, is about relationality and the desire to treat texts – and lives – as relational and braided rather than isolated and independent. I explicitly connect métissage to the legacies of colonialism and the need for recognition of the mutual vulnerability

and dependency of colonizer and colonized, insider and outsider, as well as the presumed primacy of 'literate' societies over repressed oral traditions and storytelling. In this regard, I follow the suggestion of Said, in articulating a 'methodology of impe- rialism', to be mindful that when: 'we look back at the colonial archive, we begin to reread it not univocally, but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts' (1995, 29, emphasis in original). This research orientation is only possible if, like Pinar, we acknowledge that, 'in the singularity that is an individual alive on a certain day during a certain moment is a complex configuration of political, economic, and cultural forces' that can only be interpreted by immersing ourselves in and engaging with the ongoing relationships that constitute that particular context (1979, 105). These are the research sensibilities and commitments at work in a paper exploring the life history of my great- grandmother, a member of the Papaschase Cree, in the context of frontier Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in the 1880s (Donald 2004).

My interest in métissage as a research praxis stems from my commitment to facil- itating decolonization in educational contexts. The creation of decolonizing education demands specific commitments from educators:

> [T]hey will need to decolonize education, a process that includes raising the collective voice of Indigenous peoples, exposing the injustices in our colonial history, deconstruct- ing the past by critically examining the social, political, economic and emotional reasons for silencing of Aboriginal voices in Canadian history, legitimating the voices and expe- riences of Aboriginal people in the curriculum, recognizing it as a dynamic context of knowledge, and communicating the emotional journey that such explorations will gener- ate. (Battiste 2002, 20)

I choose to do this by reaching out to Canadians rather than creating an exclusive culturalist manifesto. In this sense, métissage is a way to reconceptualize and decolo- nize culture and historical consciousness in the context of teaching and learning today.

However, in analyzing the theoretical foundations of métissage, I have come to realize that these are problematic because of their overreliance on postcolonial theo- ries of hybridity. What is needed is an Indigenous form of métissage, specific to Canada, and focused on an interreferential understanding of Aboriginals and Canadi- ans that acknowledges and respects difference. To this end, in the next section, I argue that postcolonial theories of hybridity are inappropriate guides for rereading and reframing[9] Aboriginal and Canadian relations.

Can postcolonial theory help?

Postcolonialism is a field of study concerned with the aftermath of colonial rule and thus turns on the suggestion that colonialism, as an organizing ideology and logic governing relations between different people, has ended (Shohat 1992). Following Dirlik, I understand postcolonialism as a conceptual term that guides transdisciplinary theoretical explorations into the significance of the colonial experience to diverse and contentious inter-cultural and inter-national interactions today (1994, 332). Emphasis on the postcolonial as *cultural theory* appears to have the potential to offer helpful insights into the colonial condition in the Canadian context, especially as this pertains to the relationships connecting Aboriginals and Canadians. However, it is critical to point out that most postcolonial theorists come from formerly colonized nations in

Africa, Asia or the Caribbean, and thus write and theorize with reference to particular colonial experiences in those areas of the world.

I mention these issues to draw attention to the problematics of positionality created by adherence to postcolonial theories as a generalized interpretive framework when colonial experiences are so clearly contextually unique. While colonial dynamics *are* strikingly similar across contexts and locations, the assumption that postcolonial theory can anatomize the histories of Canada and India, for example, as congruent and equidistant to an imagined imperial centre, seems colonizing in itself (Shohat 1992, 102). One particularly prominent poverty of postcolonialism is that it is unable to fully comprehend Indigenousness, as it manifests itself in settler societies like Canada, Australia, and *Aotearoa* (New Zealand).[10] This is mostly because Indigenous peoples are not a prominent concern in the home countries of the more influential postcolonial theorists, but also because postcolonial theory generally dismisses deeply rooted identity claims as illusory, thereby discounting Indigeneity as expressed and manifested through collective identity claims and organic traditions (Bhabha 1994, 1; Hall 1996; Weaver 2000; Moreton-Robinson 2003, 28–32). Another conceptual poverty of postcolonialism is that it operates on the assumption that colonial logics and structures have been diminished or replaced in (former) colonial societies (King 1990; Shohat 1992, 102; Cook-Lynn 1997, 13–14).

For Indigenous peoples living in the aforementioned settler societies, however, such 'postcolonial societies do not exist' (Battiste 2000, xix). Some Indigenous scholars working in Canada have instead co-opted the term *postcolonial*: 'to describe a symbolic strategy for shaping a desirable future, not an existing reality. The term is an aspirational practice, goal, or idea … used to imagine a new form of society' (2000, xix). Similarly, Moreton-Robinson purposefully attributes action and ongoing process to the postcolonial in Australia with the use of the term *postcolonizing*, 'to signify the active, the current and the continuing nature of the colonising relationship that positions us [the Indigenous] as belonging but not belonging' (2003, 38). This strategy of theoretical co-option stems from dissatisfaction with postcolonial theory for its overlooking and disregard of Indigenousness as a critical and viable subject position today.

Perhaps the most prominent *leitmotif* of postcolonial cultural theory, and the issue most problematic to Indigenous notions of identity and place, is the concept of hybridity as forwarded by the well-known theorist Homi Bhabha. For Bhabha (1994), hybridity is a process that begins when the colonial governing authority undertakes to forward a specific identity theory of the colonized within a singular universal logic, but fails. Bhabha theorizes that a new hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from this process of interweaving of elements of the colonizer and the colonized that serves to challenge the validity of any claim for authentic cultural identity.

The theoretical zone wherein such hybridity is created is called the 'third space' by Bhabha (1990). The third space is an unrepresentable interpretive enunciation that intervenes in-between the aged and tired antagonisms pitting developed societies and peoples with History against their character foils – the people outside of History and development (Bhabha 1994, 37). 'It is in this Third Space between former fixed territories that the whole body of resistant hybridization comes into being in the form of fragile syncretisms, contrapuntal recombinations and acculturation' that are the result of translation, interpretation, rereading, and thus re-presenting of appropriated signs and symbols in a spirit of hybrid renewal (Wolf 2000, 135). Importantly, Bhabha asserts that hybrid acts in the third space are constantly occurring and new possibilities are constantly being revealed, but that the significance of this newness is often

overlooked because people usually rely on outdated conservative and traditional principles to understand them (1990, 216). The third space is seen as a theoretical subversion of this problem by instead emphasizing that cultural representations, though ambivalent in character, are continually engaged in processes of hybridity (1990, 211).

The third space is thus theorized as a dynamic in-between zone wherein age-old colonial divisions can be transformed. As such, it appears to be a threat to colonial and neo-colonial power and seems to offer the potential to contest colonial frontier logics and help reframe Aboriginal and Canadian relations in more contextually hybrid terms. However, from the perspective of an Aboriginal person living in Canada, embracing postcolonial hybridity as a panacea is rife with problems and must be undertaken with numerous caveats in mind.

Hybridity is placeless. This message of fluidity, homelessness, and geographic placelessness is in direct opposition to Aboriginal notions of place, traditional land, and spiritual connections to specific locations in the world (Deloria 1991, 4; Basso 1996; Borrows 2000; Grande 2000, 482). Postcolonial theory suggests that hybrid acts are occurring in various places all over the world, but that the specifics of these locales are unimportant.[11] Hybridity has become a space, third or otherwise, that subverts place; it has become an abstract universal human experience, a Oneness that is both limitless and diverse in its effects. In other words, acts of hybridity, as theoretical concerns that shift our attention away from essentialist and foundationalist notions of culture and identity, promote an ongoing engagement with third spaces – the theoretical liminalities where people and cultures mix – rather than the actual places where people live their lives.

This points to one of the main problems postcolonial hybridity attempts to overcome – place-bound essentialisms of culture and identity. However, by pitting place-based cultures and identities against the logic of the hybrid and placeless space, the theoretical priority comes to be on the erasure of boundaries, without recognizing that such boundaries are sometimes necessary to sustain viable forms of difference that honour the need for continuity and balance (Dirlik 2001, 29). While hybridity must be placeless in order to transcend the local particularities of Indigenous peoples who continue to maintain place-based traditions, it must be acknowledged that this postcolonial preoccupation with contesting essentialisms ironically promotes the further colonization of places in the name of reified forms of postcolonial hybrid spaces.

A related point regarding the role of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is that as colonial subjects, they have often been stereotyped as remnants of a dusky and distant past (Francis 1992). Hybridity, then, could be seen as a way for Aboriginal peoples to reassert themselves in Canadian society by providing them with the opportunity to occupy a 'third space' of liminality in-between the colonial stereotypical binaries of savage and civilized, tradition and progress, reserve and city (Bhabha 1990). However, such hybrid subjectivity is prioritized as worthy of celebration without realizing that these preoccupations amount to a fetishization of culture and identity in the third space at the expense of sustained deliberations on socio-economic power and problematic notions of difference (Slemon 2001, 114). In this sense, postcolonial hybrid subjectivity becomes a universalized utopian concept through which culture can be celebrated. Postcolonial hybridity, evinced by the in-betweenness of Bhabha's third space, becomes the new *telos*. A linear conception of Progress itself – moving from precolonial to colonial to postcolonial – implies that hybridity is the new endpoint and final arbiter of all contemporary cultural practice that might be esteemed as valid, meaningful, and sufficiently 'new' (McClintock 1992, 85).

Accordingly, then, this notion of Progress would necessarily discount cultural practices that are directly tied to Indigenous wisdom traditions.[12] In postcolonial theory, notions of culture and identity that are rooted in particular places and histories are dismissed as overly nostalgic while relation-identity derived from hybridity is viewed as anticipating the future and celebrating the potentiality of the present as a necessary part of the process of becoming. This is the utopian postcolonial *telos*:

> The utopian element in hybridity inheres in the notion that transnational cultures, which are discontinuous and unstable systems, can survive and are strong enough to neutralize disturbances from outside. Hybridity has a bad memory, because change prevails over permanence and continuity. (Kaup 2002,186)

The problem with this universalizing teleological impetus called hybridity, as conceptualized in postcolonial studies, is that it allows for the lumping of all colonized peoples into categories of analysis in relation to colonizers, refusing to consider them in depth, thereby rendering the specific historical and political circumstances of various nations subordinate to the 'post' (Shohat 1992, 102). In these ways, then, hybridity and postcolonial forms of métissage can be criticized for being dangerously ahistorical.

To overcome these shortcomings, we need a theory of métissage that can help us comprehend the intimacy of Aboriginal and Canadian relations in Canada – a theory that will enable a deeper understanding of the complex nature of the relationships connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians and that will foster the creation of more ethical terms for extending these relations. This is different from the institutionalized logic of multiculturalism, which ensures that the relative worth of various forms of cultural expression will be filtered through Eurocentric notions of culture, identity and community, and also different from postcolonial theorizing of hybridity, which relies heavily upon an anti-essentialist discourse and strives towards perceived 'newness' through the displacement of place-based notions of tradition and collectivity. Although such theorists have important insights to offer, we need an Indigenous form of métissage that encourages theorists to pay closer attention to the particular character of colonial discourses in specific Canadian contexts. Such a theory needs to be able to comprehend and respect the *indigenous* quality and character of instances of cultural interaction.

Indigenizing Métissage

I have several reasons for using the term *Indigenous* in combination with métissage. First, the kind of métissage I have in mind is focused on interpreting and reconceptualizing the historical and contemporary interactions of Aboriginal peoples and Canadians. The significance of these interactions will certainly be informed by Indigenous values, ethics, and ways of knowing, but will not be specifically limited to those perspectives. Therefore, the use of the term *Indigenous* does not connote an exclusionary type of métissage done for, by, and with Aboriginal peoples only. The term is used to draw attention to the idea that the kinds of interactions that I have in mind with this type of inquiry must be interpreted in a Canadian context.[13] In that sense, they are specific in origin or *indigenous* to Canada; they could not happen elsewhere.

Second, Indigenous Métissage is about particular places in Canada. There are sites across Canada that have contentious histories in that the stories that Aboriginal peoples tell of them do not seem to coincide with Canadians' histories and memories

of those same places. Hundreds of cities, towns, and communities across Canada today, for example, grew from forts that were built at places that have specific cultural, spiritual, and social significance to Aboriginal peoples, and Canadians living in those places do not and cannot have those same connections. Such affinities for significant places in the cultural landscape are often mapped through stories. Aboriginal peoples come to know the land and identify with significant places through such stories.

A central goal of doing Indigenous Métissage is to bring Aboriginal place-stories to bear on public policy discussions in educational contexts in appropriate and meaningful ways. Such place-stories encourage people to rethink and reframe their received understandings of the place now called Canada and thus better comprehend the significance of Aboriginal presence and participation today. When a specific place is conceptualized as uniquely layered with the memories and experiences of different groups of people who now live together, the possibility of those different groups facing each other in ethically relational terms is enlivened. Based on this vision, Indigenous Métissage purposefully juxtaposes layered understandings and interpretations of places in Canada with the specific intent of holding differing interpretations in tension without the need to resolve or assimilate them. The goal is to resist colonial frontier logics and instead forward new understandings of the relationships connecting Aboriginals and Canadians. It is for these reasons that place is a key aspect of Indigenous Métissage.

Third, to provide an aperture into the unique character and complexity of the particular place of concern in the inquiry, interpretations stemming from Indigenous Métissage are grounded in the use of a specific artifact that comes from that place. The artifact must be considered *indigenous* to the place in that it is perceived to belong there, naturally or characteristically. Artifacts are products of culture that are symbolic of meaning or significance, 'tangible incarnations of social relationships embodying the attitudes and behaviors of the past' (Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowki 1991, 150). Artifacts are imbued with meaning when human hands craft them, but also when human beings conceptualize them as *storied* aspects of their world. So, for example, a rock can be considered an artifact when it is fashioned into an arrow point. However, at the same time, a rock can also be considered an artifact if it is directly associated with a particular place and the history, culture, language and spirituality of a particular group of people (Christensen 2000, 34; Donald 2009c, 12–18). It is worthwhile to quote Holland and Cole at length here:

> An artifact is an aspect of the material world that has a collectively remembered use. It has been, and in the case of living artifacts continues to be, modified over the history of its incorporation in goal directed human action … their material form has been shaped by their participation in the interactions of which they were previously a part and which they mediate in the present. They are, in effect, one form of history in the present. Their history, collectively remembered, constitutes their ideal aspect. (1995, 476)

In other words, even though most artifacts are tangible, there are subtle and abstract meanings and concepts – metaphysicalities – inseparable from their physical matter that emanate from their history, their use, and the ways in which they are presently conceptualized based upon this history. I use *artifact* in a socio-cultural and historical sense to denote a vestige fecund with contested interpretations of culture and identity, rather than in an archaeological sense referring to findings fit for museums that attempt to 'capture' and 'define' meanings of culture and identity.

Doing Indigenous Métissage involves interpretation of the significance of an artifact to a place by showing how Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives of the artifact and place are both rooted in perspectives of colonial constructs and histories. They are simultaneously and paradoxically antagonistic and conjoined. In many ways, these types of contradictions and ambiguities are reflective of what it means to be an Aboriginal person in Canada today. Indigenous Métissage, as theory, enables a thoughtful engagement with these contradictions by providing a way to plan, conceptualize, strategize, and make cogent various forms of resistance to the logic of colonialism (L.T. Smith 1999, 38). It is done not to overtly *oppose* colonial frontier logics, but rather to circumvent those logics through the assertion of ethical relationality.

Braiding Indigenous Métissage

There are several metaphors that inform this research sensibility called Indigenous Métissage. These metaphors are helpful in bringing an imaginative conceptual language to describe the quality, character, and movement of the research process. The first has to do with the significance of the fort as *Sto:lo* writer Lee Maracle describes it:

> … we are plagued by our colonial condition. Inside the fort, Canadians seem to think [a meeting place] can be built despite the disentitlement of our land, our words, our very selves. Outside the fort, we hear laughter and feel we must shed our ancient selves, move away from our homeland and give up words. If Canadians are locked in the fort, we are locked outside of it. (1992, 15)

The metaphor of the fort is powerful because it conjures up so many conflicting images of colonizer and colonized, the duality of insider/outsider, and the differing relationships to land and place. Yet, the fort represents commonality of place for both Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, even though they have differing perspectives on its significance. More compelling for me as a researcher is the prevalence of the fort in the consciousness of the average Canadian. Almost every major city in Canada has some nostalgic rendition of a historic fort that has been resurrected as a *celebration* of colonial history (Peers 1996). You would not find many Aboriginal people visiting these places; they remain outside. The walls of the fort are symbolic of the perceived divides separating Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives (Donald 2009a). Deconstructing colonial frontier logics – mythically symbolized by the fort – by doing Indigenous Métissage will help lessen this divide.

The second is *pentimento*,[14] a concept borrowed from the study of paintings, which I have chosen as a metaphor for the problem of historicism.[15] The history of Indigenous peoples before and after contact with Europeans has been 'painted over' by official versions of history. In that sense, we can say that an attempt was made to displace or replace Indigenous history and memory (as the history of Canada) with a new 'painting' of a new civilization (Donald 2004). The Indigenous 'painting' was not considered to be a useful or viable portrayal of the new brand of Canadian society that was emerging. It became a separate and distinct item in an isolated part of the museum of Canadian history. However, Indigenous history and memory have begun to show through in the official history of Canada, conceptual holes in the historical narratives have become obvious (McLeod 2002, 37), and this has caused many to look more closely to see what has been missed. This kind of rereading of history is predicated on the desire to recover the stories and memories that have been 'painted over'. *Pentimento* implies a desire

to peel back the layers that have obscured an artifact or a memory as a way to intimately examine those layers. The idea of *pentimento* operates on the acknowledgement that each layer mixes with the others and renders irreversible influences on our perceptions of it. Doing Indigenous Métissage, then, engages researchers in a process of peeling back these layers to reveal what has been concealed and interpreting the significance of what has been uncovered.

The third metaphor that brings unity to this research sensibility is the idea of the researcher as the weaver of a braid (Chambers et al. 2008, 141–2). Staying true to the intricate layers of colonial constructs suggested by the first two metaphors guiding this interpretive inquiry, the fort and *pentimento*, the weaver as researcher would produce a textual braid or *bricolage*, 'that is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of prac- tices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation' (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, 2). The act of weaving a textual braid through Indigenous Métissage provides a means for researchers to express the convergence of wide and diverse influences in an ethically relational manner. 'This braid addresses the question: What does métissage look like?' (Chambers et al. 2008, 141).[16]

While the spirit and intent of Indigenous Métissage are rooted in ethical relation- ality exemplified through braidedness, it is also true that the 'look' of the braid will reflect the particular research context under scrutiny. The weaver of the braid must remain mindful that each research context must be explored and evaluated based on the particular character of the situation. The *bricolage*, then, is a braided and emergent construction created by the researcher 'that changes and takes new form as different tools, methods, and techniques are added to the puzzle' (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, 2). The textual quality of the braid emerges as the researcher engages with the artifact and place that inform the inquiry, makes decisions on issues that need closer attention, and decides how best to interpret the significance of the character of the inquiry to the interests of ethical relationality.

Indigenous Métissage thus emerged as a research sensibility and theory best suited to address the imaginative language of the metaphors. The deconstruction of the fort as a mythic symbol suggests a traversal of the fortified boundaries of inside and outside – to turn the *outside in* and the *inside out* – and have Aboriginals and Canadi- ans face each other (Donald 2009b). Revealing the quality and character of the histor- ical and current relationships linking Aboriginals and Canadians involves a peeling back of the many layers of artifact and place that have been concealed. The textual braid can then be woven once the various layers and standpoints have been laid bare, anatomized, juxtaposed, and then connected through interpretation. This is how these three metaphors (the fort, *pentimento* and *bricolage*) interact to inform and create Indigenous Métissage. One prominent goal of this process is to attend to the complex- ities of colonial and neo-colonial engagements in a reciprocal manner and find ways to write about those complexities using a language that sparks shifts in historical consciousness and enacts ethical relationality.

Doing Indigenous Métissage requires dedication to the reciprocating interpretive process and attentiveness to the insights that arise from it. In this sense, then, Indige- nous Métissage is a research sensibility that is against prescribed method. What is required instead is *aokakio'ssin* or careful attention to the details of the research context with the hope that a story will arise that will need to be told. Artifact and place provide apertures into these stories and their associated discourses. These are critical starting points that offer abundant opportunities for deep interpretations that can be reread, reframed, and then braided in diverse ways. The focus on particular artifacts

associated with specific places causes researchers to closely consider the contextual complexities of Aboriginal and Canadian relations because, by their very nature, they are conspicuous aspects of our shared society.

Attending to the difficulties and complexities of these relationships by revealing the braided quality of understandings promotes an ethical form of relationality that is able to acknowledge and comprehend difference. Thus, rather than reinscribing the Aboriginals as passive victims of change, I wish to demonstrate Aboriginal presence, participation, resistance, and agency in the events of the past. These are survival stories that give life back to those of us living today. To properly honour them from Plains Cree and Blackfoot pedagogical and philosophical standpoints, I tell these stories guided by ecological understandings of connectivity and renewal. In doing so, I am not intending to invisibilize the severe power imbalances between Aboriginals and Canadians. Rather, I wish to take up the principle of relationality in an organic and ethical manner. The braid accomplishes this for me.

A central aim of Indigenous Métissage is to *reconstruct* understandings of the colonial constructs people (including the researcher) hold so that: 'over time, everyone formulates more informed and sophisticated constructions and becomes more aware of the content and meaning of competing constructions' (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 113). The researcher becomes a 'passionate participant' in the deconstruction, reconstruction, and juxtaposition of contentious versions of historical realities by engaging in the process of interpreting and braiding standpoints identified through the research (1994, 115). Through this process, the meaning of a historical situation or context, derived from an artifact rooted in a particular place, 'accumulates only in a relative sense through the formation of ever more informed and sophisticated constructions via the hermeneutical/dialectical process, as varying constructions are brought into juxtaposition' (1994, 114). Thus, Indigenous Métissage is a research sensibility closely affiliated with a hermeneutic understanding of lived experience and historical consciousness.

The role of hermeneutics in Indigenous Métissage

Following Caputo (1987, 1) and Jardine (1992), I think that meaningful and provocative interpretive work requires a commitment to a hermeneutic that is focused on the 'restoring of life to its original difficulty'. This is in contrast to more prescribed and instrumentalized solutions to perceived problems that are directed towards management and incorporation. The difficulties and ambiguities associated with interpreting the significance of life and living in relation to others cannot be explained away with static models.

Hermeneutics is a form of radical thinking suspicious of prescribed solutions that seeks to engage with difficulty and ambiguity – 'the fix we are in' – by remaining right in the midst of tensionalities rather than searching to rise above or move beyond them (Caputo 1987, 3). It is this desire to remain amidst the messiness and difficulties of a situation or context that creates opportunities for new knowledge and understanding to arise:

> The returning of life to its original difficulty … is a return to the essential generativity of human life, a sense of life in which there is always something left to say, with all the difficulty, risk, and ambiguity that such generativity entails. Hermeneutics is thus concerned with the ambiguous nature of life itself. It does not desire to render such ambiguity objectively presentable … but rather to attend to it, to give it a voice. (Jardine 1992, 119)

Rather than working to remove ambiguity, hermeneutics works to interpret and give voice to the difficulty and ambiguousness of life itself. The hermeneutic call to immerse oneself in the complexities and ambiguities of a given situation or context of engagement requires deep attentiveness to the centrality of history, culture, tradition, and philosophy in producing standpoints of interpretation. It is a provocative call to come to better understand the 'fix we are in' that eschews foreclosure and conclusion. Emphasized instead in the call to hermeneutic inquiry is organic recursive engagement with, 'life as it is lived, with a desire to understand the same, interpreting it in a way that can show the possibilities for life's continuance' (D.G. Smith 1999, 47).

Researchers confronted with these challenges require a certain kind of hermeneutic imagination that fosters careful attentiveness to the conditions which make it possible for them to 'speak, think and act' in the ways that they do (Smith 1991, 188). Hermeneutic imagination helps us make sense of ambiguity because interpreting culture demands a creative ability to speak across disciplines, cultures, and boundaries. There are no direct methodologies that can describe how this moving across can occur; we must rely on our own skills of interpretive imagination and creativity.

However, Smith does identify four requirements that must be attended to by researchers engaging in interpretive work. First, researchers must develop a deep attentiveness to language and its uses 'to notice how one uses it and how others use it' (1991, 199). This requirement expresses the need for critical awareness of the historical nature of language and the realization that there are multiple layers and assumptions associated with words and their uses that must be considered when using and choosing them. Second, researchers must act with a deep sense of the 'basic interpretability of life itself' so that they can 'meaningfully deconstruct what is going on and propose alternative, more creative ways of thinking and acting' (1991, 199). Third, researchers need to interpret their chosen research context in light of the ways in which they themselves are implicated in how the research is carried out and interpreted:

> This means that hermeneutical consciousness is always and everywhere a historical consciousness, a way of thinking and acting that is acutely aware of the storied nature of human experience. We find ourselves, hermeneutically speaking, always in the middle of stories, and good hermeneutical research shows an ability to read those stories from *inside* out and *outside* in. (1991, 201, emphasis added)

Fourth, researchers are required to work to create meaning through their interpretations rather than simply reporting their findings. To require such meaningful interpretations places added emphasis on the importance of the skilled weaver of the textual braid who employs certain sensibilities in order to make meaning tangible and palpable. This imaginative creativity of hermeneutic inquiry stems from the desire to provoke new ways of understanding and meaning-making, not to bypass tradition and historical consciousness, but instead to re-engage with these in light of the present context and shared interpretations of the world (1991, 202).

Indigenous Métissage is very much inspired by a hermeneutic dedicated to 'restoring life to its original difficulty' (Caputo 1987, 1; Jardine 1992) that is informed by the four requirements outlined by Smith (1991). Hermeneutic attentiveness to the original difficulty of life fits well with this research sensibility because past and present relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians are *difficult*. The central difficulty of these relationships stems from the displacement of Indigenous peoples in their own lands and the systematic attacks on Indigenous

knowledge systems and ways of life justified under the guise of progress, development, and the spread of universalized liberal democratic values. The severe power imbalances that enabled Canadians to assert their own forms of sovereignty over Indigenous lands and unilaterally enact legislation designed to assimilate and eliminate Indigenousness have had very damaging effects on Indigenous peoples and their communities.

These difficult stories have not been told in schools or publically acknowledged by Canadians until very recently. At the heart of the lovely story of the Canadian nation and nationality is a deep denial of the physical, epistemic, and ontological violence committed against Indigenous peoples and their ways. This denial makes it difficult for most Canadians in the present day to understand the complexities of the relationships today. Heavily influenced by the settler story of freedom, progress, equality, equity and opportunity, as well as the prominent international reputation Canada enjoys for these same reasons, most Canadians are unable to comprehend the difficult and ambiguous character of Aboriginal and Canadian relations today. The contradictions at the centre of this relationship must be acknowledged and deconstructed before meaningful movement towards decolonizing can occur.

The task of interpreting the difficulties and contradictions of Aboriginal and Canadian relations requires 'hermeneutic imagination' (Smith 1991). Indigenous Métissage is an imaginative interpretive sensibility conceptualized amidst these difficulties. By proposing through interpretation more creative ways to understand such encounters between Aboriginals and Canadians, Indigenous Métissage can help restore artifact and place with renewed vitality and significance for both parties. They will begin to hold them in common.

During the recursive process of deconstructing and then reconstructing an interpretive account of this type, I trace the hermeneutic circle many times. Such interpretive movement has 'no natural starting point or endpoint' (Ellis 1998, 16) and involves a constant interplay between the 'specific and the general, the micro and macro' (Smith 1991, 190). What fuels the movement around the hermeneutic circle is the desire to understand.[17] It is the tension created when someone fails to understand somebody or something – a negativity of experience – which generates the desire to find out more about that situation. According to Gadamer, the work of hermeneutics is based on the 'polarity of familiarity and strangeness … in regard to what has been said: the language in which the text addresses us, the story it tells us' (1975, 262). The true home of hermeneutics, then, is the space in between the familiar and the strange and in the interpretation of the experience or feeling that things were not as they were assumed to be (Carson 1986, 75). This realization inspires questions:

> It is clear that the structure of the question is implicit in all experience. We cannot have experiences without asking questions. The recognition that an object is different and not as we first thought obviously involves the question of whether it was this or that. The openness that is part of the experience is, from a logical point of view, precisely the openness of being this or that. It has the structure of a question. (Gadamer 1975, 325)

The hermeneutical priority of the question emphasized by Gadamer addresses the experience of living in the world with others because when we ask questions, we inevitably instigate and sustain conversations with others regarding the individual and collective experiences of being-in-the-world. This conversation is both dialogical and cyclical in that it is an exchange that generates and renews interpretation and understanding.

Indigenous Métissage is instigated by a heightened critical consciousness of a particular negativity of experience surrounding Aboriginal and Canadian relations – that things are not as they were assumed to be. The assumptions associated with colonial frontier logics promote a constrained conceptualization of the world. In doing Indigenous Métissage, I seek to deconstruct these assumptions and reveal their origins. I then move on to the task of rereading, reframing, contextualizing, and juxtaposing Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints to foster a more ethically relational understanding of what passes between them. I contend that tracing the interpretive routes followed in reading these contextual histories provides ample opportunities for interrogation of the histories, logics, traditions, assumptions, and power dynamics at play. Texts of Indigenous Métissage dwell with the difficulties and ambiguities of Aboriginal and Canadian relations and often cause readers and listeners to realize that things are not as they assumed them to be. The intention, then, is to inspire readers and listeners to examine the routes of their own interpretations – to see themselves implicated in the stories told – and make critical connections to teaching, learning, and public policy issues today.

In sum, then, the hermeneutic that informs Indigenous Métissage is very much affiliated with the desire to acknowledge and address the complex difficulties that characterize Aboriginal and Canadian relations. One of the more salient difficulties of this work is the possibility for the recognition of difference while simultaneously emphasizing ethical relationality. How can we be simultaneously different and related? Here, I rely upon Torres Strait Islander Indigenous scholar Martin Nakata (2002), who calls the intersection of Euro-Western and Indigenous knowledge systems the 'Cultural Interface'. For Nakata, the daily lived realities of Indigenous peoples are circumscribed by the tensionalities and ambiguities of this intersection. What is critical for him is not the attainment of some form of cultural authenticity in response to this ambiguity, but instead the recognition of this reality and the assertion of an Indigenous standpoint[18] from which to understand and interpret the contentious intersections that take place at the Cultural Interface.

Telling a story

Once the interpretive process has reached a certain point, I use hermeneutic imagination to braid together a story that relates how, in an indirect way, Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints are interreferential, interconnected, and yet simultaneously rife with the power dynamics of coloniality. Such stories demonstrate that relationality and difference can be productively held in tension. This is done by telling a story that braids parallel perspectives together to show that our individual preoccupations with certain artifacts, places, and colonial constructs are really part of a larger collective and difficult understanding of those concerns. In this sense, then, such stories not only describe actions, but also transformations. 'The line which a story follows is not straight, logical, step by step. It varies from life to life. Most often, it zigzags, as if seeking out the spot for a breakthrough' (Novak 1978, 53).

When researchers come to view themselves as storytellers, they become conscious of the ways in which their autobiography influences how they make sense of their lives and experiences. They realize that their personal stories cannot be easily differentiated from the larger research stories they wish to tell. This is what it means to possess a sense of the 'collective self' or the 'collective subjective' (Casey 1995, 220–2):

> In order to create the kind of story I have been describing, the writer, as researcher, must occupy a standpoint from which he can see himself in the collective and the collective in him. A story – to put it another way – is a linking of standpoints. A standpoint is not a theory. It is the subjective context in which a theory is held. It is a sense of who. *Who* specifies the direction in which the theory looks, establishes the way of perceiving required for it, supplies the imaginative context and uneasiness out of which the theory grew, shapes the judgments and actions which follow. *Who* is to a theory what blood and air are to a human being. A standpoint is the *who* at a given point in time. A story links these points in time. (Novak 1978, 53)

A standpoint is like a perspective that is a manifestation of the particular subjective reality of a person. Who this person is, in terms of their history, experiences, memories, prejudices, and cultural practices, specifies the distinctive character of their standpoint.

This storied concept of *who* offers important insights, but also must be expanded beyond a singular preoccupation with identity to include the particular context from which a researcher addresses and interprets. Who cannot be separated from where.[19] A person confronted with a negativity of experience will be unable to bypass these senses of *who* and *where*. However, researchers know that 'who we are' is always in a state of flux as long as we remain open to the standpoint of another; this openness creates the possibility that our sense of *who* can be transformed through encounters with difference. This is why story is so powerful to the human consciousness. We are drawn into a story by the desire to make meaning and transform our sense of *who* and *where*. The story we hear has the potential to become part of our own story and thus change our lives (King 2003).

These intertwined concepts of standpoint and story have critical points of affinity with the goals of doing Indigenous Métissage. From the standpoint of an Aboriginal person living in the place now called Canada, the task of facilitating transcultural dialogue between Canadians and Aboriginal peoples has been tainted by colonial constructs and legacies. Canadian society is so thoroughly suffused with this history of colonialism that we fail to see, like a fish swimming in water, how markedly our daily practices of living together are determined by it. Thus, inquiries focused on Aboriginal and Canadian relations must reconceptualize the colonial past as a present concern. This is one reason that I have chosen artifact and place as critical starting points when doing Indigenous Métissage – articulating an understanding of them will inevitably require a tour through contested colonial terrain. Interpreting differing perspectives on artifact and place requires the development of a critical sense of *who* has formed the perspective, *where* the perspective is situated, under what circumstances, and according to which values, prejudices, and assumptions it has gained currency.

Doing Indigenous Métissage requires work with artifact, place, and context in the hope that a story will emerge that will need to be told. To weave this story requires a provocative juxtaposition of Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints to bring about a shift in the critical consciousness of writer and reader, storyteller and listener. Such relationality needs to happen in theory because it has not been perceived and appreciated in the daily interactions and practices of living together in this place we call Canada. It has been concealed by colonial frontier logics. We must first reread and reframe colonial constructs in order to see more clearly the language and logics that have clouded our thinking. Such theorizing will help deconstruct the colonial frontier logics of inside/outside and facilitate meaningful reconstruction through sustained engagements that traverse perceived civilizational divides. Only then will the stories

linking Aboriginal peoples and Canadians revitalize relationships with a common sense of place.

Notes

1. This description was shared by *Kainai* Elder Andy Blackwater and is cited in Blood and Chambers (2009, 274).
2. Colonial frontier logics are those epistemological assumptions and presuppositions, derived from the colonial project of dividing the world according to racial and cultural categorizations (Willinsky 1998), which serve to naturalize assumed divides and thus contribute to their social and institutional perpetuation. Schools and curricula are predicated on these logics, and both have served to enforce epistemological and social conformity to Euro-Western standards established and presumably held in common by their proponents.
3. The use of the term 'emergence' here is a purposeful reference to the research insights shared by Marlene Atleo (2008). Indigenous Métissage emerged as a research sensibility as the inquiry process continued on. Her title 'Watching to see until it becomes clear to you' resonates with the Blackfoot concept of *aokakio'ssin. aokakio'ssin* is a pedagogic call to *pay attention* to what is going on around us, interpret these insights in relational ways, and attempt to bring the understandings gained from the interpretive process to expression through language and ceremony – to share them with others.
4. This reserve was located on land that is now a large section of south Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. For more on this history, see Donald (2004).
5. The *Kainai* people are members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Their community, commonly referred to as the Blood Reserve, is located in southwestern Alberta. I taught at Kainai High School on the Blood Reserve for 10 years.
6. Transmodernity, as described by Dussel (1993), is a project of liberation founded on the principle of 'incorporative solidarity', which refers to the process through which established oppositional categorizations such as primitive/civilized, colonizer/colonized, center/periphery, settler/Indigenous, Aboriginal/Canadian, and insider/outsider are recognized as intimately and mutually co-dependent, yet also ambiguous and contradictory, dualities that can be held in incommensurable and irresolvable tension (1993, 76).
7. Davis (2004) points out that the term 'environment' (derived from French *en*, to place inside, + *viron*, circle) describes the separation and enclosure of natural settings from each other and the organisms that inhabit them, not the relationships and interconnections they have (2004, 103). This tendency to conflate ecology with environmentalism likely stems with the extensive anthropocentric training we have received in schools to separate and differentiate ourselves as human beings from the natural systems that we depend upon for our survival and prosperity. Colonial frontier logics are a particularly virulent human form of this separation and differentiation that presents such divides as natural and necessary.
8. Note that métissage is consistently translated into English as cultural creolisation.
9. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith provides the following explanation of rereading:

> The genealogy of colonialism is being mapped and used as a way to locate a different sort of origin story, the origins of imperial policies and practices, the origins of imperial visions, the origins of ideas and values. These origin stories are deconstructed accounts of the West, its history through the eyes of indigenous and colonized peoples. (1999, 149)

She has this to say about reframing:

> Reframing is about taking control over the ways in which indigenous issues are discussed and handled … The framing of an issue is about making decisions about its parameters, about what is in the foreground, what is in the background, and what shadings or complexities exist within the frame. The project of reframing is related to defining the problem or issue and determining how best to solve that problem. (1999, 153)

10. Since I am advocating here for careful attentiveness to the particularities of colonial experience, it would be helpful to distinguish between *invaded* colonies and *settler* colonies (Weaver 2000, 223). Invaded colonies are those places in the world (such as those in Africa and Asia) which were occupied and controlled by a small elite group of colonizers for a long time. In this case, the colonizers eventually relinquished political control of the colony and most returned to their country of origin. Settler colonies are places, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where the Indigenous populations were displaced by settlers, who after many generations still remain in control of the colonized country. Settler colonies are considered examples of *internal colonialism* because the colonial condition of Indigenous peoples within these states remains largely unchanged. For more on this, consult Tully (2000a, 2000b).

11. This statement will be supported more fully in the paragraphs that follow. The main contention here is that 'post' theories – postcolonialism in this example – generally conceptualize hybridity as a liberatory cultural crossover event worthy of celebration. What are typically considered celebratory are the ways in which hybrid notions of culture subvert and bypass pre-existing schemata for organizing people and ideas. Ironically, though, postcolonial hybridity can lead to an assimilation of tradition to suit an already determined purpose that arises regardless of the specific context under scrutiny. It is worthwhile to quote Smethurst at length on this point:

> Today's multicultural and post-colonial societies are an integral part of postmodernity … In this context, traditional definitions of 'authentic' and 'organic' place rising out of tradition, lived experience and history, clearly will not do … Postmodern globalization will inevitably lead to a condition of placelessness where society loses that sense of belonging customarily found in traditional constructions of place. (2000, 222)

12. Indigenous wisdom traditions are those particular philosophies and practices unique to Indigenous peoples that result from their long-term habitation of certain places in the world. This long-term habitation has supported and perpetuated deeply rooted spiritual and metaphysical relationships with the land (and other entities) that thoroughly inform and infuse the specific cultural practices and linguistic conventions of the people. Indigenous communities are considered unique, in relation to other distinct communities, because these venerable connections to land and place have been maintained and continue to find expression in communities today. In this sense, then, Indigenous peoples, as descendants of the original inhabitants, are seen as the holders and practitioners of a *sui generis* sovereignty in their traditional lands that typically finds expression as wisdom tradition.

13. Certainly, the Canadian context has many strong similarities with other settler societies around the world, especially in terms of the conventions and institutions governing the ways in which people interact. However, this paper is not interested in such comparisons.

14. Pentimento: the phenomenon of earlier painting showing through the layer or layers of paint on a canvas (Canadian Oxford Dictionary).

15. 'Historicism – and even the modern, European idea of history – one might say, came to non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody's way of saying "not yet" to somebody else' (Chakrabarty 2000, 8).

16. Although Indigenous Métissage has a different focus and purpose from that of my métissage mentors and friends, I wish to maintain affiliations with the aesthetic qualities of the research praxis.

17. The concept of the hermeneutic circle that informs Indigenous Métissage has also been heavily influenced by *Kainai* Elders. Bernard Tall Man once gave me the following advice:

> *Okki, amoyi ahkootsiitapiiyoop*. We'll use the circle. Here we'll visualize. We'll visualize what I'm gonna be doing in the future. I'm gonna think about how I'm gonna go about it. Then there's gonna be movement. Then we'll see it. That's initiative. *Sapataniip ni kiitsipoowasin iis sapahtaaniip*. We didn't just talk about it. We're being initiative. I learned it from the elder. That's why I use the circle. (Donald 2003, 140)

18. 'An Indigenous standpoint … has to be produced. It is not a simple reflection of experience and it does not pre-exist in the everyday waiting to be brought to light. It is not any sort of hidden wisdom that Indigenous people possess. It is a distinct form of analysis, and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention of others. It is not deterministic of any truth but it lays open a basis from which to launch a range of possible arguments for a range of possible purposes' (Nakata 2007, 214).
19. This statement is informed by Chambers (1998), who theorizes a topographical orientation for Canadian curriculum theory based on the question, 'Where is here?' It has also been influenced by Plains Cree and Blackfoot Elders and notions of place-based citizenship.

Notes on contributor

Dwayne Donald is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. His work focuses on the ways in which Indigenous wisdom traditions and knowledge systems can expand and enhance conceptualizations of curriculum and pedagogy.

References

Alberta Learning. 2002. *First Nations, Métis and Inuit education policy framework.* Edmonton: Alberta Learning.
Atleo, M. 2008. Watching to see until it becomes clear to you: Metaphorical mapping – A method for emergence. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 21, no. 3: 221–33.
Basso, K. 1996. *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache.* Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
Battiste, M. 2000. Introduction: Unfolding the lesson of colonization. In *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*, ed. M. Battiste, xvi–xxx. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
Battiste, M. 2002. Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations. Prepared for the National Working Group on Education and the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). http://www.yorku.ca/hdrnet/images/uploaded/Battiste_review.pdf.
Beaudry, M., L. Cook, and S. Mrozowski. 1991. Artifacts and active voices: Material culture as social discourse. In *The archaeology of inequality*, ed. R. McGuire and R. Paynter, 150–91. Oxford: Blackwell.
Bhabha, H. 1990. The third space. In *Identity: Community, culture, difference*, ed. J. Rutherford, 207–21. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
Bhabha, H. 1994. *The location of culture.* London/New York: Routledge.
Blood, N., and C. Chambers. 2009. Love thy neighbor: Repatriating precarious Blackfoot sites. *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 39/40: 253–79.
Borrows, J. 2000. Landed citizenship: Narratives of Aboriginal political participation. In *Citizenship in diverse societies*, ed. W. Kymlicka and W. Norman, 326–42. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Caputo, J. 1987. *Radical hermeneutics: Repetition, deconstruction, and the hermeneutic project.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Carson, T. 1986. Closing the gap between research and practice: Conversation as a mode of doing research. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy* 4, no. 2: 73–85.
Casey, K. 1995. Chapter 5: The new narrative research in education. *Review of Research in Education* 21: 211–53.
Chakrabarty, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Chambers, C. 1998. A topography for Canadian curriculum theory. *Canadian Journal of Education* 24, no. 2: 137–50.
Chambers, C., E. Hasebe-Ludt, and D. Donald. 2002. Creating a curriculum of métissage. *Educational Insights* 7, no. 2. http://ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v07n02/metissage/metiscript.html.

Chambers, C., E. Hasebe-Ludt, D. Donald, W. Hurren, C. Leggo, and A. Oberg. 2008. Métissage. In *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*, ed. A. Cole and J. Knowles, 141–53. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Christensen, D. 2000. *Ahtahkakoop: The epic account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, his people, and their struggle for survival, 1816–1896.* Shell Lake, Saskatchewan: Ahtahkakoop Publishing.

Cook-Lynn, E. 1997. Who stole Native American Studies? *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no. 1: 9–28.

Cooper, D. 2004. *Challenging diversity: Rethinking equality and the value of difference.* Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dash, J.M. 1995. *Edouard Glissant.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davis, B. 2004. *Inventions of teaching: A genealogy.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Deloria, V. 1991. *Indian education in America.* Boulder, CO: American Indian Science and Engineering Society.

Denzin, N.K., and Y.S. Lincoln. 1994. Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In *Handbook of qualitative research*, ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, 1–17. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dickason, O. 1985. From 'one Nation' in the Northeast to 'New Nation' in the Northwest: A look at the emergence of the métis. In *The new peoples: Being and becoming Métis in North America*, ed. J. Peterson and J. Brown, 19–36. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Dirlik, A. 1994. The postcolonial aura: Third World criticism in the age of global capitalism. *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2: 328–56.

Dirlik, A. 2001. Place-based imagination: Globalism and the politics of place. In *Places and politics in an age of globalization*, ed. R. Prazniak and A. Dirlik, 15–52. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Donald, D. 2003. Elder, student, teacher: A Kainai curriculum métissage. Unpublished Master of Education thesis, University of Lethbridge, Alberta.

Donald, D. 2004. Edmonton Pentimento: Re-reading history in the case of the Papaschase Cree. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 2, no. 1: 21–53.

Donald, D. 2009a. The pedagogy of the fort: Curriculum, Aboriginal-Canadian relations, and Indigenous Métissage. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Canada.

Donald, D. 2009b. The curricular problem of Indigenousness: Colonial frontier logics, teacher resistances, and the acknowledgment of ethical space. In *Beyond presentism: Re-imagining the historical, personal, and social places of curriculum*, ed. J. Nahachewsky and I. Johnston, 23–39. Rotterdam/Boston, MA/Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Donald, D. 2009c. Forts, curriculum, and Indigenous Métissage: Imagining decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in educational contexts. *First Nations Perspectives* 2, no. 1: 1–24.

Dussel, E. 1993. Eurocentrism and modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures). *Boundary* 20, no. 3: 65–76.

Dussel, E. 1995. *The invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the myth of modernity.* Trans. M. Barber. New York: Continuum (Original work published 1992).

Ellis, J. 1998. Interpretive inquiry as a formal research process. In *Teaching from understanding: Teacher as interpretive inquirer*, ed. J. Ellis, 15–32. New York/London: Garland Publishing.

Francis, D. 1992. *The imaginary Indian: The image of the Indian in Canadian culture.* Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.

Gadamer, H.-G. 1975. *Truth and method.* Trans. G. Barden and J. Cumming. New York: Seabury Press (Original work published 1960).

Glissant, E. 1989. *Caribbean discourse: Selected essays.* Trans. J.M. Dash. Charlotteville, VA: University Press of Virginia (Original work published in 1981).

Goizueta, R. 2000. Locating the absolutely absolute Other: Toward a transmodern Christianity. In *Thinking from the underside of history: Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation*, ed. L. Alcoff and E. Mendieta, 181–93. New York: Rowman & Butterfield.

Grande, S. 2000. American Indian identity and intellectualism: The quest for a new red pedagogy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 13, no. 4: 343–59.

Green, J. 2003. *Self-determination, citizenship, and federalism: Indigenous and Canadian palimpsest.* Public policy paper 13. Regina: Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy, University of Regina. http://www.uregina.ca/sipp/documents/pdf/PPP_green_March2003.pdf.

Guba, E.G., and Y.S. Lincoln. 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In *Handbook of qualitative research*, ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, 105–17. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hall, S. 1996. Introduction: Who needs identity? In *Questions of cultural identity*, ed. S. Hall and P. du Gay, 1–17. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hasebe-Ludt, E., C. Chambers, and C. Leggo. 2009. *Life writing and literary métissage as an ethos for our times*. New York: Peter Lang.

Hermes, M. 1998. Research methods as situated response: Towards a First Nations' methodology. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 1: 155–68.

Holland, D., and M. Cole. 1995. Between discourse and schema: Reformulating a cultural-historical approach to culture and mind. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 26, no. 4: 475–90.

Jardine, D. 1992. Reflections on education, hermeneutics, and ambiguity: Hermeneutics as a restoring of life to its original difficulty. In *Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text*, ed. W. Pinar and W. Reynolds, 116–27. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kaup, M. 2002. Constituting hybridity as hybrid: Métis Canadian and Mexican American formations. In *Mixing race, mixing culture: Inter-American literary dialogues*, ed. M. Kaup and D.J. Rosenthal, 185–210. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

King, T. 1990. Godzilla vs. post-colonial. *World Literature Written in English* 30, no. 2: 10–16.

King, T. 2003. *The truth about stories: A native narrative*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press.

Maracle, L. 1992. The 'post-colonial' imagination. *Fuse Magazine* 14, no. 1: 12–15.

McClintock, A. 1992. The angel of progress: Pitfalls of the term 'post-colonialism'. *Social Text* 31/32: 84–98.

McLeod, N. 1998. Coming home through stories. *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 18, Fall: 51–66.

McLeod, N. 2002. *nêhiyâwiwin* and modernity. In *Plain speaking: Essays on Aboriginal peoples & the prairie*, ed. P. Douaud and B. Dawson, 35–53. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.

Mignolo, W. 2002. The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 1: 57–96.

Moreton-Robinson, A. 2003. I still call Australia home: Indigenous belonging and place in a white postcolonizing society. In *Uprootings/regroundings: Questions of home and migrancy*, ed. S. Ahmed, C. Castaneda, A.-M. Fortier, and M. Sheller, 23–40. Oxford/New York: Berg.

Nakata, M. 2002. Indigenous knowledge and the cultural interface: Underlying issues at the intersection of knowledge and information systems. *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Journal* 28, nos. 5–6: 281–91.

Nakata, M. 2007. *Disciplining the savages, savaging the disciplines*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Novak, M. 1978. *Ascent of the mountain, flight of the dove: An invitation to religious studies*. New York: Harper & Row.

Peers, L. 1996. Playing ourselves: Native histories, native interpreters, and living history sites. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, McMaster University, Hamilton.

Pinar, W.F. 1979. The abstract and the concrete in curriculum theorizing. In *Autobiography, politics and sexuality: Essays in curriculum theory 1972–1992*, ed. W.F. Pinar, 101–15. New York: Peter Lang.

Said, E. 1995. Secular interpretation, the geographical element, and the methodology of imperialism. In *After colonialism: Imperial histories and postcolonial displacements*, ed. G. Prakash, 21–39. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Saul, J.S. 2008. *A fair country: Telling truths about Canada*. Toronto: Viking.

Shohat, E. 1992. Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'. *Social Text* 31/32: 99–113.

Slemon, S. 2001. Post-colonial critical theories. In *Postcolonial discourses: An anthology*, ed. G. Castle, 99–116. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Smethurst, P. 2000. *The postmodern chronotope: Reading space and time in contemporary fiction*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi BV.

Smith, D.G. 1991. Hermeneutic inquiry: The hermeneutic imagination and the pedagogic text. In *Forms of curriculum inquiry*, ed. E.C. Short, 187–209. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Smith, D.G. 1999. *Pedagon: Interdisciplinary essays in the human sciences, pedagogy, and culture.* New York: Peter Lang.

Smith, L.T. 1999. *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples.* Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press.

Tully, J. 2000a. The struggles of Indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In *Political theory and the rights of Indigenous peoples*, ed. D. Ivison, P. Patton, and W. Sanders, 36–59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tully, J. 2000b. A just relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples of Canada. In *Aboriginal rights and self-government: The Canadian and Mexican experience in North American perspective*, ed. C. Cook and J. Lindau, 39–71. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Turnbull, D. 2005. Multiplicity, criticism, and knowing what to do next: Way-finding in a transmodern world. Response to Meera Nanda's *Prophets Facing Backwards. Social Epistemology* 19, no. 1: 19–32.

Weaver, J. 2000. Indigenousness and indigeneity. In *A companion to postcolonial studies*, ed. H. Schwarz and S. Ray, 221–35. Oxford: Blackwell.

Willinsky, J. 1998. *Learning to divide the world: Education at empire's end.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Wolf, M. 2000. The third space in postcolonial representation. In *Changing the terms: Translating in the postcolonial era*, ed. S. Simon, 127–45. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

Zuss, M. 1997. Strategies of representation: Autobiographical métissage and critical pragmatism. *Educational Theory* 47, no. 2: 163–80.

Zuss, M. 1999. *Subject present: Life writings and strategies of representation.* New York: Peter Lang.