



A BRIEF TO PROPOSE A NATIONAL INDIGENOUS RESEARCH AGENDA

SUBMITTED TO: THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL

SUBMITTED BY: SASKATCHEWAN INDIAN FEDERATED COLLEGE

I. PREAMBLE

The report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) and other government sponsored research on the costs of social problems affecting Indigenous communities has determined that there is a need, for both ethical and socio-economic reasons, for continued research to inform public policy relating to Indigenous issues. The RCAP report calculates the cost of coping with Indigenous social problems and remedial programmes at 1.7 billion in 1996 alone, which clearly demonstrates that all Canadians bear the social costs of government action. It is significant to note that this cost amounts to almost 1% of Canada's economic output as measured by the GNP. In addition to the cost of social problems and remedial solutions, the costs of foregone production—that is the wealth that Indigenous people could potentially produce but which is not being realized—would have totalled 5.8 billion in 1996 (*RCAP* Vol. 5, 1996). The RCAP findings and other studies agree that a significant element of the solution is the need to shift the research paradigm from one in which outsiders seek solutions to "The Indian problem" to one in which Indigenous people conduct research and facilitate solutions themselves.

SSHRC has determined that a national Indigenous research agenda is needed, and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) is uniquely situated to provide advice on the formulation of such a research agenda. The SIFC is Canada's only Indigenous owned and controlled university-college that holds membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Our mandate includes providing Indigenous communities with university-level post-secondary education that includes generating research that is useful to Indigenous communities. To share our expertise, we present SSHRC with the following brief which will:

- outline some of the previous problems associated with research and Indigenous communities,
- provide examples of specific research projects that simultaneously serve the changing research needs and expectations of Indigenous

communities, enrich our general intellectual repertoire, and demonstrate the potential to inform public policy,

- examine the need for training more Indigenous researchers,
- recommend strategies for shifting the research paradigm to one whose direction which is more appropriate and productive, and
- recommend benchmarks for an Indigenous research agenda.

II. RESEARCH AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: A PROBLEMATIC HISTORY

Indigenous people believe that their communities have been “researched to death” and that some outside researchers have exploited, and continue to exploit, their communities by taking Indigenous knowledge and using it for financial and personal gain in the form of tenure, promotion, public acclaim, or personal development. It has often been the case that outside researchers give little or nothing in return to Indigenous communities for their contributions and, in many instances, communities have never seen or received copies of the research results. It has also been the case that outside research has had negative impacts on Indigenous individuals and communities. As a result, many Indigenous communities distrust outside researchers.

Despite Indigenous apprehension, published and unpublished research reports have proliferated in the last fifty years. However, many mainstream researchers are unaware or lack access to the preponderance of unpublished research findings, especially studies conducted by predominantly non-Indigenous consultants funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), other government agencies, and First Nations themselves. Research results from these studies are often confined to government storage or locked files, or are housed in band offices on reserves across the country, which makes them all but inaccessible to those who have no direct contact with Indigenous communities. Lack of outsider access to these studies places an undue burden on Indigenous communities, which see many outside researchers “re-inventing the wheel” again and again.

Indigenous people have had more than one hundred years of experience with outsiders who have come into their communities to conduct research framed by “The Indian problem.” At first, “The Indian Problem” paradigm was couched in humanitarian efforts: how best could government care for the remnants of the Indigenous population who inevitably faced extinction? When it became clear that Indigenous people were not going to vanish into extinction, “The Indian Problem” paradigm sought to find effective ways to help Indigenous people assimilate into mainstream society. Today “The Indian Problem” paradigm continues to problematize Indigenous peoples by studying Indigenous poverty,

the justice system, education, health, and a host of other complex issues as “Indian” problems rather than as systemic problems inherent in a society that historically treats Indigenous peoples as outsiders or others.

Historically, it has been outsider research that ultimately informed public policy ostensibly designed to address “The Indian problem.” However, to date, public policy has been unsuccessful, and indeed, has often caused even more problems for Indigenous people and their communities than it has resolved. Many Indigenous people still feel as if they are victims of what Prof. Richard Pope of the University of Regina called “scientific colonialism.” In his address to Cree Elders at the Plains Cree Conference, held in Fort Qu’ Appelle, Saskatchewan in 1975, Professor Pope explained:

. . . the general definition of colonialism is when one people rules another people, when they have all the power over another people. And economic colonialism is when all the economic decisions are made somewhere else, not by those people. Now by scientific colonialism, I mean a situation where a people have to turn somewhere else to find out about themselves. . . . Now if you have a situation where young Indian people have to turn outside to find out about their own culture all the time, then I think you have a situation of scientific colonialism. And I hope that this can be stopped. That doesn’t mean, of course, that some individuals from outside can’t do work with another people. Sometimes, the views of outsiders about oneself, about one’s own life, can be very, very helpful But to have the great bulk of the work on one’s society done by people who are not members of it is, I think, a tragedy, and creates a sense of powerlessness among the people (Pope, 1975: 133).

Even in 1975, it was clear that there was a need for a different kind of research agenda, one that was Indigenous-centred and directed rather than one framed and conducted by outsiders.

Since their emergence in the early 1970s, Indigenous/Native/Indian Studies scholars have challenged the conventional research paradigm, but like many initiatives developed by Indigenous peoples, Indigenous Studies departments, scholars, and research approaches are often marginalized, under-funded, or misappropriated by the mainstream. Current conditions in Indigenous communities demonstrate that “outside” solutions do not work. The RCAP and other Indigenous-centred studies demonstrate further that any solutions to the considerable issues confronting Indigenous peoples today need to come from the people themselves.

Many Indigenous communities and political organizations have attempted to take control over the research done in their communities by setting their own

research agendas based on community needs and by engaging researchers whom they trust to conduct that research. In some instances these researchers are mainstream academics who have cultivated trust relationships with individuals within the communities. In other instances the researchers are community members. Nevertheless, it is clearly evident that community-based and collaborative research projects that focus on community needs and produce tangible results are appreciated and valued at the community level.

While numerous non-Indigenous researchers are available and willing to do community-based and collaborative research, Indigenous communities prefer to work with Indigenous scholars. Many Indigenous scholars are already well-aware of the issues, approach research with the goal of promoting community healing and facilitate community development, and perceive 'research' as a life-long commitment rather than a short-term project. Indigenous scholars are in high demand and receive innumerable requests to conduct community-based and community-controlled research, and consequently, they are often over-taxed by the many demands. Funding for this kind of research usually comes from Indigenous communities, INAC or other government departments. When a community initiates research it does so with the intention of owning the results which it puts to use to meet its own needs. Often the research helps communities develop their own policies based on its traditional practices. Sometimes it is used as evidence in court cases that the community has launched in an effort to reclaim traditional lands or get redress for past and present wrongs. Although the research provides a service to Indigenous communities, the results are generally not published in peer-reviewed journals and are not readily accessible to the academy. Furthermore, given the "academic" nature of tri-council funding criteria, many of these community-needs based research projects do not even bother to apply for tri-council funding.

Another reason Indigenous peoples have under-applied for tri-council funding is because of the difficulties encountered with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. There is no question that the new Tri-Council Policy is a tremendous improvement in that it requires informed consent of the subjects/participants. Prior to this requirement, many Indigenous people were exploited for their knowledge. Even though today's Tri-Council Policy is supposed to prevent such exploitation, in some ways it still continues. The vagueness of Chapter 6 allows Research Ethics Boards to take into account culturally appropriate research methods for the Indigenous communities in their areas. However, most boards attempt to interpret and apply the principles without any or adequate input from Indigenous scholars and communities. Furthermore, there are several aspects of Section 6 that are problematic. It fails to recognize that individual rights are as significant as collective rights. For example, some kinds of knowledge are collective, others are owned by individuals or families.

Having confounded research involving Indigenous people with this individual-community relationship, Section 6 is unduly narrow in its conception of ethical issues involving Indigenous people—the document provides little guidance about protocols for working with Elders, especially issues surrounding informed consent in such settings except for the most general platitudes. Furthermore, because Research Ethics Boards rarely understand what is culturally appropriate for the Indigenous communities in their areas, they often interpret Chapter 6 in culturally inappropriate ways. Their primary concern has more to do with protecting the interests of researchers than the research subjects/participants.

This is also reflected in the *Copyright Act* where researchers and their resulting scholarship are protected far more than Indigenous knowledge-keepers are. For many years researchers have been entering Indigenous communities to meet Indigenous knowledge-keepers, who are scholars in the eyes of the community, to collect oral narratives. Under copyright laws, once transcribed the teachings become the “property” of the researcher who can publish them at will in whole or in part unless the original Indigenous scholar/knowledge-keeper expressively retains legal copyright or expressly restricts the use of the material. Many informed consent forms have provisions for use and reproduction, but like the copyright laws themselves, these are based on concepts that are often foreign and incompatible with traditional protocols governing access to and the transmission of knowledge. In most Indigenous intellectual traditions one does not “own” knowledge until one has apprenticed long enough to demonstrate proficiency and has earned the right to practice and live it. In Indigenous contexts, knowledge is intended to be applied not merely studied, and the student/researcher makes a life-long commitment to his/her teacher and community. Just because a traditional knowledge-keeper shares information does not mean s/he “gave” the material to a researcher. Furthermore, copyright laws were created to protect “creations” not traditional oral accounts that go back perhaps centuries and might or might not have a known or tangible original author/creator. How can one stamp “copyright” on an oral narrative? Indigenous scholars and Indigenous communities are responding to this gap by developing their own ethical research guidelines based on traditional protocols and cognizant of implications of existing copyright laws (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2000; Frank, 1997; Canadian Society for Circumpolar Health, 1995).

Other difficulties Indigenous-centered research encounters with the conventional paradigm concerns methodology. For example, in the not-too-distant past, Indigenous students were denied the right to follow traditional research protocols— for example, the exchange of tobacco for access to stories—by university Research Ethics Boards (Michell, 1999). There is also the clash in conceptual understandings about “expertise”. In many Indigenous contexts “researcher as student” is the norm rather than “researcher as expert”. In the

former instance the traditional knowledge keeper is “expert” and researcher is “learner/student”. In the later, the researcher becomes the “expert” after s/he garners the traditional knowledge from the Indigenous scholar/knowledge-keeper. In some instances Elders reject tape-recording or note-taking as they strive to train their apprentices’ memories and oratorical skills. Sometimes Elders even refuse to sign informed consent forms although they freely give their consent (and restrictions) verbally. Chapter 6 does not recognize that in working with Elders the relationship between researcher as expert and Elder as lay informant is turned upside down. In many instances, this might make the issue of informed consent moot, and the customary Social Science precaution of ensuring anonymity could be insulting to the knowledge-keeper. These are just a few of the difficulties Indigenous scholars have encountered, many more examples can be given.

For present purposes it is important to stress that problems such as these present difficult challenges to SSHRC in its effort to promote research into Indigenous issues, especially research that will effectively inform public policy. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. Faculty at the SIFC have engaged in a number of research projects that have been effective in meeting these challenges.

III. INNOVATIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS

A. The Indigenous Peoples’ Education Project

Participants:

Faculty, staff, Elders, SIFC

Faculty and staff, University of Regina

Other community members as appropriate

As a proactive way to enhance understanding of Indigenous peoples’ ways of teaching and learning, as well as provide a mechanism to promote faculty partnerships between the two institutions, the Offices of the Academic Dean at the SIFC and the Vice-President (Academic) at the U of R jointly created the Indigenous People’s Educational Projects Fund in the year 2000 and to support it made available \$15,000 annually for three years. Normally, awards would be of one year’s duration and up to a maximum of \$2,500. Each project team includes faculty members from both the SIFC and the U of R. Teams of more than two members are encouraged and teams could also include members external to the University and the SIFC. A broad range of projects are considered so long as they were designed to increase the awareness of Indigenous education, especially amongst students, to enhance Indigenous content in course curricula, and to encourage Indigenous perspectives in teaching

and learning. Generally projects were expected to relate to Indigenous peoples' knowledge and ways of learning, as well as, understanding of Indigenous issues. The Indigenous Peoples' Educational Projects Fund was greeted with enthusiasm by faculty and staff at both institutions, and membership on research teams has been very diverse and has included faculty, staff, community members, and Elders. Two representative projects are "Cree Stories for Curriculum" and "Time And Again: Cross-Cultural Memories Of Learning To Read And Write."

1. Cree Stories for Curriculum

Participants:

Beatrice Lavallee, SIFC Elder

Prof. Jean Okimâsis, SIFC Department of Indian Languages, Literature and Linguistics (translation, transcription)

Prof. Neal McLeod, SIFC Department of Indian Studies (interviewer and project coordinator)

Prof. Arok Wolvengrey, SIFC DILL (text editing)

Neil Sapp, SIFC student (interviewer, translator, transcriber)

Thomas Roussin, SIFC student (technician)

Melissa Blind, SIFC student (research assistant)

Dr. Volker Griefenhagen, Department of Religious Studies, University of Regina

Dr. Lorna Anderson, Department of Religious Studies, University of Regina

Beatrice Lavallee is an Elder at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and regular participant in the SIFC Cree Language Circle (commonly known as "Cree Toastmasters"). The project team recorded several of her narratives to use for curriculum in Cree Language, Indian Studies, and Religious Studies classes. The narratives were translated and transcribed as well as being recorded onto a CD-ROM, so that the students could hear Mrs. Lavallee's voice, which would help to maintain the "oral" flavour of the narratives and story-telling. Throughout the process, the interviewer and transcribers worked closely with Mrs. Lavallee in order to ensure that all of the information was recorded correctly. Mrs. Lavallee retained copyright of the narratives.

2. Time And Again: Cross-Cultural Memories Of Learning To Read And Write

Participants:

Prof. Angelina Weenie, SIFC Department of Indian Education

Dr. Christine Watson, SIFC Department of English

Dr. Kathleen O'Reilly Scanlon, University of Regina Faculty of Education

Students at the SIFC and the University of Regina

This goal of the project is to address several research questions relating to students' acquisition of literacy: How do early memories of learning to read and write affect adult attitudes towards learning and/or teaching the language arts? In relation to Education students, how do such memories affect the ways in which student teachers may approach the teaching of Language Arts? How do memories of learning to read and write differ cross-culturally? And, by extension, how do attitudes towards the value of literacy differ cross-culturally? In other words, how have wider community attitudes towards literacy affected personal experiences with the language arts? This project is designed to promote greater cross-cultural understanding by encouraging students to tell stories and share memories of past experiences with language arts. During the research component of this project, the three researchers have asked their students to record their memories of learning to read and write.

The underlying assumption of the study is that it is important to understand our own foundations of literacy in order to develop effective approaches to the teaching of Language Arts. The expected outcome of the project is to promote greater cross-cultural understanding by encouraging students to tell their stories and share memories of past experiences with learning to read and write

Recognizing that Indigenous research endeavors validate the experiences and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and connect the research enterprise to Indigenous positions this research project is founded on the premise that Indigenous research practice calls for Indigenous research methods and protocols as opposed to traditional research methods. To this end, the project was launched with a pipe ceremony (Fall of 2001) and following the approval of the ethics board, the researchers participated in a sweat lodge ceremony. An Elder has been involved as advisor throughout.

The researchers have completed the memory work and are doing an initial analysis of the memories. Findings thus far have been presented at the Treaty 4 Education Conference 2002 (April 26, 2002), and the Provincial Literacy Conference in Fort San (May 14-16, 2002).

B. Survival of the Halkomelem Language

Participants:

Dr. Brent Galloway, SIFC Department of Indian Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics

61 Halkomelem-speaking Elders

With the support of a grant from SSHRC, this project has resulted in the completion of a computerized dictionary of the Halkomelem language, one of the most endangered languages in the country. Dr. Galloway is also digitizing and copying 400 hours of Halkomelem tapes (and about 200 hours of Nooksack tapes and about 200 hours of Samish tapes) onto CD-ROMs, copies of which will be housed in to the Sto:lo Nation archives along with a preliminary word list of the Nooksack language (the last fluent speaker died 1977). To give back to the community from which this knowledge originates, Dr. Galloway has become involved in the new Halkomelem Language Revitalization Project in which he and one of his Sto:lo Nation students collaborated in developing digital camera recordings of lessons, a 3000-word list, and a dictionary which will be used by the Sto:lo Nation's Halkomelem Immersion Program. Dr. Galloway's work provides an important service for the Upriver Halkomelem because there are less than eight fluent speakers of these Upriver dialects. Dr. Galloway assigned copyright for his earlier work *A Grammar of Upriver Halkomelem* (1993) to the Sto:lo Nation.

C. Indigenous Oral Tradition Histories

Following the submission of her Ph.D. dissertation *Decolonizing Tribal Histories*, Dr. Winona Wheeler received numerous inquiries and requests for research on various aspects of Indigenous oral history from Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities had learned about the study via the "moccasin telegraph" and immediately recognized its applications. The study emerged out of a decade's work in oral history (land claims and community history) research for the Fisher River First Nation of Koostatak, Manitoba, and from studying with Cree, Cree/Assiniboine, Cree Métis and Saulteaux Elders on her own. Indigenous communities are interested in this work because it is helping to broaden mainstream conceptions of "history" by creating space in the academy and in academic discourse for Indigenous intellectual traditions. The work provides insight into Indigenous ways of knowing and transmitting the past and challenges intellectual colonialism.

Dr. Wheeler has since produced an expert witness report, "Indigenous Oral Tradition Histories: An Academic Predicament," for the Samson Cree First Nation in support of their legal action taken against the Federal Government for breach of trust. She is also working with the Assembly of First Nations to create a community-based Treaty Oral Histories Research manual and has been requested to coordinate impact studies using community-based oral history research methods.

IV. NURTURING INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP

The task of nurturing Indigenous scholarship needs to be tackled on numerous fronts: inclusion of community-based Indigenous scholars in the conceptual categories “researcher” and “scholar”; support and encouragement for the articulation and application of traditional Indigenous research methodologies; development of and support for strategies to encourage undergraduate students to pursue graduate studies; support for graduate students; and increased encouragement of and support for Indigenous scholars already working in the academy.

Because Indigenous scholarship, including research, predates European settlement in North America, Indigenous scholars are not a new or recent phenomenon. Indigenous peoples have their own intellectual traditions and their own scholars on whom they have relied for spiritual and intellectual growth for centuries. It is to these often-overlooked scholars that many younger Indigenous scholars turn for knowledge and guidance to help rebuild our communities. Traditional scholars spend lifetimes conducting research and applying their knowledge but are not judged the same way academic scholars are. The teachings they acquire are useful and their wisdom respected when they internalize, or live by and share, what they have learned. In Indigenous intellectual traditions, knowledge comes with responsibilities. Good knowledge is measured by its positive application in the community, and a true scholar, one who possesses wisdom, is one who has learned how to use knowledge to help the people. Traditional wisdom maintains balance between the physical and metaphysical realms and takes into account categories of understanding—the intuitive, spiritual, and personal—that go beyond the strict confines of the “scientific” paradigm. Indigenous knowledge is grounded in the natural world, which according to most Indigenous peoples includes the physical and metaphysical, and insight requires an understanding of the interrelationship among people, plants, animals and the spiritual realms. Colonialism is as much an intellectual and religious experience as it is physical and economic. Reclaiming Indigenous intellectual traditions and valuing the wisdom of traditional scholars is part and parcel of the larger decolonization movement. The paradigm shift from “Elder as subject” to “Elder as scholar” is concomitant to the shift from “researcher as expert” to “researcher as student” and this shift is necessary if we ever hope to produce research that is truly effective in informing public policy in this country.

Although Section 6 of the “Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans” mentions the use of culturally appropriate methodologies and protocol, the Council also states that they have “not held sufficient discussions with representatives of the affected peoples or groups, or

with the various organizations or researchers involved. The Councils have therefore decided that it is not yet appropriate to establish policies in this area. The text of Section 6, which builds on the extensive literature on research involving Aboriginal peoples, is intended to serve as a starting point for such discussions" (NSERC, Ethics). However, Indigenous communities and scholars have already commenced this process. A few new books address Indigenous research methods, local ethical research guidelines have been developed by Indigenous institutions and communities, and a fair number of research notes and articles on the subject have been published in little-known predominantly Indigenous journals (Dei et al., 2000; Council of Yukon First Nations, 2000 Tribal College, 1993). However, these specialized and local discussions need to be brought more assertively into the larger academy to educate it on the type of work young Indigenous scholars are pursuing.

Faculty at the SIFC have learned that by involving undergraduate students in research they can both assist students to succeed in their undergraduate studies and encourage them to continue at the graduate level. Most begin their undergraduate studies as mature students with families and, as a result, require support, both financial and other. Furthermore, when they commence their post-secondary education as mature students, they are rarely eligible for scholarships. Many Indigenous students with status under *The Indian Act* receive some funding from INAC or their band or tribal council. However, because this funding has not increased at the same rate as the demand for post-secondary education, many other Status Indian students must apply for student loans or pay for their own education. Métis and Non-Status Indians are not eligible for funding under *The Indian Act* and must apply for loans or pay for their own education. Because of the scarcity of funds for post-secondary education from the bands and tribal councils many Status Indians receive no funding to pursue graduate studies. Thus, Indigenous students—including Status Indians, Métis, Inuit, and Non-Status—experience a greater need for funding support for graduate studies than their non-Indigenous counterparts since few come from middle or upper-class homes.

Funding is not the only thing that deters Indigenous students from entering graduate studies and ultimately from pursuing a career in academia. Many Indigenous students engaged in advanced research involving human subjects at the undergraduate and graduate levels believe that they are subjected to a double-standard. They regularly encounter publications relating to Indigenous people that were produced before the requirement to conform to the Tri-Council Policy Statement existed. This research was not obtained with the consent of the Indigenous scholars/knowledge-keepers whose narratives are the foundation of that research, and the Indigenous scholars/knowledge-keepers did not review the outcome of the research prior to its publication. Consequently many of these publications distort or misrepresent the original narratives by taking them out-of-

context. Still, the same flawed material is often canonized as “seminal” works and accepted as truth. Because of their “insider” knowledge, many Indigenous students quickly see the flaws in this material. However, when they challenge the canonized material using knowledge gleaned from grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, and others recognized in their communities as Indigenous scholars/knowledge-keepers, these students are subject to accusations of bias. Like community-based researchers, their knowledge is often considered suspect in the eyes of the academy because it comes from the community rather than coming from “objective” outsiders. Indigenous students are put in a position whereby they either must reject Indigenous knowledge or find “objective” (read western) ways to prove it. However, unlike their non-Indigenous predecessors, they must adhere to the Tri-Council Policy Statement that is often applied so rigidly—as if in an effort to make up for the past—that young Indigenous researchers can become almost paralysed. Having to battle the errors of the past while being hamstrung by new rules can be discouraging for young scholars.

Existing Indigenous scholars employed at Canadian universities are often taxed by community demands for research that falls outside or on the margins of the SSHRC mandate but which takes priority at the Indigenous community level, such as land-claims research, expert witness reports, and other “consulting” projects. These scholars are put in a position where they must choose to conduct research that would benefit their own careers—tri-council grants, peer-reviewed journals—or research that would benefit their communities. Because they are cognisant of the history of outside researchers exploiting their communities, Indigenous scholars often feel responsible, as insiders, and choose to give back to their communities by sharing their skills. This choice is reflected on their *Curriculum Vitae*s, which reveal non-traditional career paths that could ultimately hinder advancement in the academy. At the same time, Indigenous scholars at Canadian universities find themselves in an environment in which mainstream academics engage in theoretical debates over the validity and quality of insider research. Granted, some scholars have begun critically evaluating the debate and questioning whose interests are best served by continuing to privilege outsider research. Still many scholars continue to adhere to the belief that insider research is fundamentally biased or flawed.

The dearth of Indigenous scholars in universities places additional burdens on the few there are to sit on a wide range of committees inside and outside the university system. In some instances also, the legacy of colonialism and their current minority status can result in demoralization and a lack of confidence to compete in the mainstream. It is also true that many potential graduate students or potential academics find serving their communities more directly a more practical and rewarding option than pursuing academic careers.

V. **SHIFTING THE RESEARCH PARADIGM: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE**

The SIFC recommends that SSHRC promote a movement away from narrow conceptions of what constitutes research. When the research paradigm privileges outsider research as objective (read “scientific”) and treats insider research as potentially and sometimes inherently biased, the research that Indigenous communities control and direct often becomes disenfranchised. This paradigm inadvertently promotes the disempowerment of Indigenous communities. Embracing a wider conception of research that would include learning and teaching traditions specific to individual communities and knowledge-keepers would demystify “research” thereby encouraging Indigenous people and communities to become partners in research projects. SSHRC needs to be cognisant of Indigenous communities’ distrust of and antipathy for mainstream research agendas, which are seen to exploit Indigenous knowledge without giving anything substantive back to the community. It is important to communicate to Indigenous communities that SSHRC acknowledges the problems the communities have encountered and is actively working with them to develop strategies to resolve these problems. To that end, SSHRC needs to emphasize to both researchers and Indigenous communities that researchers are equally, if not more, accountable to their “subject” communities as they are to funding agencies and universities.

In line with SSHRC’s *A Vision for the Future*, applicants should continue to be encouraged to place emphasis on the dissemination of “research results” beyond traditional mechanisms. The history of conventional research demonstrates that, in many cases, research results are generated outside the subject community without community input and tend not to be widely disseminated in the subject community and in related and/or similar interested communities. Researchers working in and with Indigenous communities should, therefore, be required to articulate how they propose to disseminate the results of their research to their subject communities specifically. SSHRC guidelines and procedures should be informed either by the “Ethical Guidelines for Research” developed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples or by the guidelines that individual Indigenous communities might have established themselves.

The paradigm that has shaped the research agenda is one that “problematizes the Indian”. This paradigm needs to be rethought and deconstructed for what it is—an anachronistic paradigm that is derived from historically racist ideologies. Indigenous people need a shift in the research paradigm to one that “de-problematizes” Indigenous people in theory, method, and practice, and provides a more holistic approach that takes into account a wide range of historical and contemporary conditions. A holistic approach to research would mean that research is not simply an intellectual exercise. Rather, it takes into account that,

in the various Indigenous intellectual traditions, the search for knowledge, understanding, and skills is inherent in every-day life and even in unconventional venues, such as ceremony. When working in an Indigenous context, relationships are crucial because they make it possible for the knowledge to flow between individuals and generations. Indigenous knowledge, whether in the form of stories, song, dance, or ceremony, contain the beliefs, knowledge, history, and language that sustain cultures. It is important that SSHRC encourage researchers working in Indigenous contexts to include community-based Indigenous scholars/knowledge-keepers not only as Research Collaborators but as Co-investigators, not as tokens but as real partners in the research venture.

To a certain extent, Indigenous/Native/Indian Studies scholars have attempted to advance and facilitate this paradigm shift, and their work has empowered Indigenous communities. However, the attitude in academia that Indigenous/Native/Indian Studies ghettoizes Indigenous people, still exists. The argument continues that if Indigenous content were present across the curriculum, there would be no need for Indigenous Studies as a discipline. This attitude concerns Indigenous people, who believe that the dissolution of Indigenous Studies would be a step backwards and gives them cause to further distrust the academy. That is not to say that Indigenous people would oppose the presence of Indigenous content across the curriculum. Rather it is to emphasize the Indigenous/Native/Indian Studies Departments have given Indigenous people and communities a place and voice of significance in Canadian universities, and those gains should not be taken away.

SSHRC's current review of the CURA program is timely. The CURA program has potential to be of great benefit to Indigenous communities. However, the existing CURA guidelines encourage obscure, short-term benefits, and potentially exploitative research by targeting university-based researchers as lead researchers through conventional publicity campaigns. By targeting university-based researchers CURA inadvertently privileges individual research agendas over community research needs. In this framework, the researcher determines the research agenda and the research methodologies in isolation, and the community is incorporated as subject and resource when locals are hired for specific tasks determined by researcher. This top-down approach encourages researchers go in search of communities that might be interested in the researchers' research agendas, rather than encouraging communities to seek university-based researchers to meet the communities' research needs. If CURA continues, the program needs to be better advertised at the community level to encourage communities to seek research partnerships with university-based scholars. Likewise, the HSSFC's Community Research and Information Crossroads programme should be continued as it too has the potential to benefit Indigenous communities.

VI. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR AN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH AGENDA

- 1) Establish goals for an Indigenous-centred research agenda that would
 - A. Shift the research paradigm from one in which the outsider goes into the community to one in which the community insiders take their knowledge out to the larger community.
 - B. Shift the research paradigm from one in which the “academic as expert” studies the “native as other” to one in which the “academic apprentice” studies with the “native as expert”.

- 2) Recognize and respect the following Indigenous-centred principles:
 - A. That the roles and responsibilities of Indigenous scholars are multifaceted and more far-reaching than those of mainstream scholars in that
 - a) Indigenous communities expect their scholars to be service-oriented and that the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself is not an acceptable or pragmatic prerogative at this time;
 - b) Indigenous scholars are expected to serve as translators of Indigenous knowledge and be bridges to transport Indigenous knowledge from its original Indigenous context into the university context;
 - c) Indigenous scholars are expected to shift the research agenda paradigm from one that is university-centred to one that is Indigenous-centred;
 - d) In addition to the above, Indigenous scholars are still also university scholars and are, therefore, expected to meet the standards and expectations set out by their respective institutions;
 - e) That the adept and creative strategies Indigenous scholars are engaging in to meet the expectations of two distinct and often contradictory sets of standards, needs to be recognised, valued, and encouraged.

 - B. That the research needs of Indigenous communities must be defined by Indigenous communities according to their needs and must adhere to research standards determined by them;

 - C. That Indigenous-centred research methods are viable alternatives to Eurocentric research methods;

- D. That any research agenda concerning any facet of Indigenous history and life be determined by Indigenous people themselves through the collective efforts of their community- and university-based scholars;
- E. That Indigenous, community-based ethical research guidelines be supported by tri-council funding agencies and that where in conflict with tri-council or university ethical research guidelines those of the community take precedence.

VII. SOME ISSUES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

We realize that this brief cannot address all of the issues germane to setting a National Indigenous Research Agenda. Striving for a broader conception of research raises the importance of on-going theoretical, methodological, and practical debates that need to take place within Indigenous communities, within the academy, and in joint forums. In this section, we propose to raise a number of issues that we believe need to be addressed:

- Fundamental tenets of social science research—research, science, scholarship, truth, time, objectivity, subjectivity, intersubjectivity;
- Identifying and protecting community-based Indigenous scholars/knowledge-keepers;
- Research designs where traditional or community-based Indigenous scholars are the lead scholars and academics the collaborators;
- Traditional copyright and intellectual property issues that do not fit or conform to existing definitions and whose transmission and ownership is not covered by existing regulations;
- Un-written informed consent;
- Revising the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans so that it includes a systematic, yet culturally appropriate, strategy for vetting requests for approval of research projects involving Indigenous people and communities.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This brief was based on the premise that it is in the best interest of SSHRC to become more cognisant of the historical and contemporary impact research has

had on the everyday lives of Indigenous people. We hope that this recognition will help SSHRC understand why current conceptions of the role and character of research need to be expanded to accommodate the current research needs of Indigenous communities if the products of that research are to be successful in improving the lives of Indigenous people. We anticipate that SSHRC recognizes the need to support and encourage the development of Indigenous scholars and the need for useful research as defined by Indigenous communities. We challenge the Council to look beyond conventional conceptions of and approaches to research to accommodate the changing nature of the relationship between Indigenous people, public policy, and research agendas. Finally, we want to remind the Council that research is never neutral, so it can either be a tool of oppression or a tool of liberation depending on how it is conceptualized, formulated, implemented, and used in the development of public policy.

Sincerely yours,

Prof. Jo-Ann Episkenew, Academic Dean and Associate Professor of English
Dr. Winona Wheeler, Dean of the Saskatoon Campus and Associate Professor of
Indian Studies
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College
October 2, 2002

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