

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND MULTICULTURAL REFORM IN CANADA: PROSPECTS FOR A NEW BINATIONAL SOCIETY

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Abstract. Since the 1960s, some Aboriginal theorists and political leaders have opposed aspects of Canadian multiculturalism. In part this is because multicultural policies and their promise of “tolerance” (within western institutions) and formal equality insufficiently recognize the *sui generis* rights of Aboriginal peoples, while similarly failing to address the continuing economic, social, and political inequalities between Aboriginal and settler populations. This article proposes working towards a “syncretic multiculturalism,” which might involve adopting a “binational” perspective, focusing on the need for partnership between Aboriginal and Shognosh peoples. Such a perspective can help the country move beyond “colonial multiculturalism” which privileges integration into dominant English and French settler societies. Prioritizing Aboriginal involvement in reshaping national institutions and identity, so that newcomers and the rest of us are integrated into Aboriginal ways of knowing and being, can play a role in repairing some of the harms done through residential schooling and other colonial policies.

Keywords: multiculturalism, Aboriginal people, Canada, reconciliation, biculturalism, New Zealand

Résumé. Depuis les années 1960, des théoriciens des questions aborigènes de même que certains leaders politiques ont affiché des vues opposées sur des questions reliées au multiculturalisme canadien. Ces différences sont suscitées par les politiques dites multiculturelles. En fait, les garanties d'égalité officielle et de tolérance (particulièrement au sein des institutions occidentales) qui y étaient attachées ne reconnaissent pas suffisamment les droits intrinsèques des peuples aborigènes pas plus qu'elles ne sont une solution aux perpétuelles inégalités sociales, économiques et politiques séparant autochtones et groupes fondateurs. L'article qui suit propose qu'on se tourne vers un multiculturalisme du type syncretique, une approche binationale plutôt marquée par le besoin d'établir des relations entre les peuples aborigènes et les Shognosh. Pareille orientation éloignerait le Canada de son multiculturalisme à saveur coloniale incitant l'intégration de tous aux groupes dominants, les peuples fondateurs anglophones et francophones. Si l'accent était mis sur le monde aborigène dans la redéfinition

de l'identité nationale et des institutions du pays, les arrivants et nous-mêmes assimilerions les modes d'être et de savoir des aborigènes et serions en mesure de réparer certains des torts causés par les politiques coloniales, y compris des pensionnats d'État.

Mots clés: multiculturalisme, peuples aborigènes, Canada, réconciliation, biculturalism, la Nouvelle Zélande

[A]sking Aboriginal people to respect the institutions, government and people of this country, without, in turn, giving them the opportunity to develop their own self-respect so that they feel that they are relevant to this country, is to ask them to achieve the difficult, if not the impossible. Justice Murray Sinclair ("Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples" 2010)

INTRODUCTION

Canada has long promoted itself as a world trendsetter in multiculturalism (Kymlicka 2012; Kymlicka and Banting 2010; Taylor 1992). Mainstream discourses privilege narratives of social harmony and respect for diversity. Conversely, intolerance, racism, and economic and political disparities between settlers of European origin, ethnic minorities, and Aboriginal peoples sustain relatively little attention (Simpson et al. 2011; Henry and Tator 2006; Thobani 2007; Mahtani 2002). Dominant views often hold that multiculturalism as "unity in diversity" has successfully integrated newcomers into mainstream Canadian society, and can continue to do so into the future (Kymlicka 2010; Kymlicka and Banting 2010; Day 2000; Foster 2006).

While Canada is consistently rated as one of the top countries in the UN Human Development Index, Aboriginal peoples rank alongside citizens of Panama, Belarus, and Malaysia in terms of *their* social and economic prospects, and these gaps are not narrowing (Daschuk 2013:ix). James Anaya, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, concluded in October 2013:

Canada faces a crisis when it comes to the situation of indigenous peoples of the country.... The well-being gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Canada has not narrowed over the last several years, treaty and aboriginals claims remain persistently unresolved, and overall there appear to be high levels of distrust among aboriginal peoples toward government at both the federal and provincial levels. (Anaya 2013)

As I outline here, multiculturalism sits uneasily with many Aboriginal people, in part because multiculturalism as promoted from 1971 was not designed to recognize Aboriginal distinctiveness, but developed from

the same liberal traditions that created the assimilationist *White Paper* of 1969, with a desire to convert collective rights into individual ones (Resnick 2005; Borrows 2008/2009; Turner 2006).

Multiculturalism and its promise of “tolerance” (within western institutions) and formal equality insufficiently recognize the *sui generis* or inherent rights of Aboriginal peoples which existed before colonization and continue still. Aboriginal people are, through the expedient of multicultural policies, often placed alongside perceived ethnic minorities. This article advances the merits of working towards a “syncretic multiculturalism,” which will involve adopting a “binational” (Maaka and Fleras 2005) perspective, focusing on the need for partnership between Aboriginal and Shognosh peoples. Recognition of the *sui generis* rights of Aboriginal peoples can help the country move beyond what could be called “colonial multiculturalism” which privileges integration into the dominant English and French settler societies. Further, in an era of reconciliation, reforming multiculturalism can play a role in repairing some of the harms done to Aboriginal peoples through residential schooling and other colonial policies.

In this article, I adopt the term “Shognosh” to refer to Canada’s European settler populations, primarily those of British origin (Spielmann 2009). This Anishinaabeg term may also refer to nonwhite people like me (of mixed Indo-Caribbean and Scottish ancestry) who are assimilated into European ways. This is consonant with the use of *Pākehā* in New Zealand to designate those of European ancestry who are not Māori, and reflects a sense of respect and partnership between settler and indigenous peoples (Wevers 2002). Since it is acceptable in scholarly work to refer to Aboriginal people as Aboriginal, we should be willing to categorize ourselves using Anishinaabeg, Cree, Haida, and other languages of this country. This helps create balance in how we re-present theories and theorists — since our own ethnic and cultural backgrounds may have an impact on what we perceive as normal and reasonable. So the use of Shognosh throughout, is, in my view a crucial signifier in the interests of academic rigour.¹

Shognosh, however, is only a start, and it will be necessary, if this type of analysis is to be taken further, to expand the terminology to more

1. Shognosh and Aboriginal are not essentialized categories, and forms of “metissage” are relatively common. There are also Anishinaabeg names for French, American, Asian, Quebequois, etc. My thanks to Dawnis Kennedy and Edward Benton-Banai for their help. I hope I did not get things wrong. The more official phonetic spelling of Shognosh is zhaaganaash, but I am using Spielmann’s spelling (2009). See also *The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary*. Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota. <http://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/english/search/%2A%3A%2A?page=2&browse=1&index=e> (Accessed 31 October 2013).

inclusively encompass non-European peoples in Canada who do not fall under the Shognosh label. The same issue applies to New Zealand, where the term *Pākehā* is sometimes set aside for the more inclusive *Tauīwi* (or non-Māori),² or in favour of a legal relationship between *Tangata Whenua* (indigenous people of the land, i.e., Māori) and *Tangata Tiriti* (those who are part of New Zealand society because of their honoring of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi) (Snedden 2005:58; King 2011:191).

This article proceeds in a series of sections. First, it engages with definitions of multiculturalism, then develops the argument that multicultural policies promote positive images of the state, while obscuring relations of domination within Canada. Second, this article examines how Aboriginal peoples fit into the multicultural framework successive Shognosh governments have established. The article reviews the work of prominent multiculturalism theorists like Will Kymlicka, then examines some Aboriginal perspectives, which suggest that multiculturalism undermines the political interests of Aboriginal people. The third and final section of the article asks: if multicultural policies do not reflect Aboriginal realities and aspirations, what types of policies would be preferable? One option is Maaka and Fleras' (2005) binationalism — a partnership ethos between indigenous and settler peoples. The article concludes by briefly outlining the contours of what this might look like.

DEFINING MULTICULTURALISM

Standard definitions of multiculturalism include institutional descriptions such as the “management of diversity through formal initiatives in the federal, provincial, and municipal domains” (Dewing and Leman 2006:1), or more idealized portrayals:

a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society. (Rosado 1996:2)

This article expands on the above definitions by also recognizing that multiculturalism, like most other policies implemented by the state, is grounded in a worldview that ultimately benefits dominant interests in society. Lukes' third face of power, or Bourdieu's habitus, both describe a condition where belief in and adherence to the status quo and its norms and values exists “below the level of consciousness in a way that is resistant to articulation, critical reflection and conscious manipulation”

2. At the time of writing I am still looking for an acceptable cognate for *Tauīwi*.

(Lukes 2005:140). Power, Lukes (2005:82) has argued, can be manifest in “the ability to constrain the choices of others, coercing them or securing their compliance, by impeding them from living as their own nature and judgment dictate.”

I seek in this article to demonstrate how multiculturalism as a tool to legitimate and strengthen state power can produce harms while seeming on the surface to be relatively benign, even very positive. I will do this by focusing on Aboriginal peoples as continued targets of state policy, since Aboriginal marginalization has occurred largely outside the discourse of Canada’s multicultural success. As Dhamoon has observed recently (2010:x),

the histories of oppression experienced by people of colour and indigenous peoples are virtually absent in celebrations of multiculturalism: there is little talk of colonialism, racism, white privilege, sexism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, or capitalism....

Work on “critical multiculturalism” centred on the United States has sought to expose some of the racial hierarchies and configurations of power left out of contemporary accounts of multiculturalism. A critical perspective, Nylund (2006:28) argues, is more attuned to “the political, social, and historical situatedness of white ethnicities, and the hegemonic processes, which lead to their universalization and normalization.” A critical approach also seeks to uncover the unspoken assumptions about assimilation at the heart of some multicultural policies, while unpacking whiteness as an “invisible norm by which other ethnicities are judged” (2006:29). Similarly, as Giroux (1995:108) has noted, “a critical multiculturalism” should offer an analysis of “how racism in its various forms is produced historically, semiotically, and institutionally at various levels of society.” A focus on those who control the terminology of multiculturalism, who create its accompanying policies, and who use multiculturalism to serve their interests can help generate new ideas for change. This buttresses McClaren’s (1995:42) assertion that “Multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda can be just another form of accommodation to the larger social order.”

COLONIAL AND SYNCRETIC MULTICULTURALISM

While critical multiculturalism theorists draw distinctions and similarities between liberal and conservative forms of multiculturalism, focusing on issues of race, class, and gender (McClaren 1995; Giroux 1995; Nylund 2006), indigenous peoples are not normally highlighted in such accounts, and the state is rarely presented as being overtly *colonial* in its

domination. In this article I make a distinction between *colonial multiculturalism* and *syncretic multiculturalism*. The adjective preceding multiculturalism refers to the institutional context wherein such policies develop. What we have seen from 1971 to the present can be defined as colonial multiculturalism, which replaced policies of colonial British monoculturalism and mononationalism (excluding Quebec). Colonial multiculturalism narratives tell a positive story of potentiality: a story of integration into a tolerant, equal, and liberal society, where immigrants are not melted into an amalgam, but are encouraged to celebrate their distinctiveness, while also integrating themselves into a country with a high level of civic tolerance and respect (Kymlicka 2010; Kymlicka and Banting 2010; Day 2000; Foster 2006).

Using “colonial” when referring to Canada is not designed to be inflammatory, but reflects a growing scholarship on what Docker has called “settler colonialism.” Alongside Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, Canada can be seen as a “settler colony,” that is “a colonial society where the indigenous population was reduced to a small or tiny proportion of the overall population, whose majority population becomes composed of colonizers/migrants” (Docker 2004:2). In claiming that Canada remains a colonial state, this article departs from the traditional “blue water” thesis that the colony and the *metropole* must be divided by a body of salt water. Rather, “internal” or “settler” colonialisms in the Americas and the Antipodes are recognized as being as destructive as the more “classic” or “invaded” colonial models, which applied to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. This view of colonialism rejects the assertion that once a colony becomes a UN-recognized state, it is, by some sleight of hand, postcolonial (Weaver 2004:223–24).

So what does colonialism mean in Canada? At the most obvious level, we have Queen Elizabeth II as our head of state, English as the primary official language, Westminster style legislatures at the federal and provincial levels, the British common law (except in Quebec), European-derived educational systems, and towns, cities, rivers, streets, and so on named after their European counterparts. Think of Stratford, on the Avon River for example, or London, on the Thames — previously known as *Askunessippi*, or “the antlered river,” before being renamed by John Graves Simcoe (Goldenberg 2004:71). European-based culture has become the norm, with the majority of active and assertive Canadians in politics, the economy, education, and the arts coming from European Shognosh backgrounds (Galabuzi 2006:233–35). Colonial multiculturalism has arguably occurred against the backdrop of a European style nation state, and Shognosh Canadians, as Resnick (2005:19) has observed, in contradistinction to Americans, “remain a good deal more European

in their sensibilities and will continue to be the more European part of North America into the foreseeable future.”

Certainly the demographics of Canada are changing: European Shog-nosh populations are now in the minority (as of 2006: 46%). Populations on the rise are Aboriginal peoples (status and nonstatus First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) at 4% of the population, and immigrants from so-called nontraditional regions such as the Caribbean, Asia, and the Americas (Dewing and Leman 2006). However, through their acceptance of the state, its institutions, symbols, and national culture and values, immigrants, sometimes unwittingly, participate in the perpetuation of Shog-nosh colonialism (Mathur 2011). Some Aboriginal people see racialized minorities as merely new settlers, living on expropriated Aboriginal lands and continuing the colonial project, albeit in somewhat different ways (Lawrence and Dua 2005).

That Canada remains a colonial entity is palpable in the contributions of theorists such as Elizabeth Furniss, who reasons that we cannot be postcolonial because we have not even tried to be. We have *not* attempted to decolonize; the culture remains predominantly Shognosh, as does the “structure of political authority” which assumes that predominantly Shognosh practices are the norm (1999:11–14). As Taiaiake Alfred (2009b:43), a prominent *Kanien'kehaka* academic, has argued, colonialism continues to include “resource exploitation of indigenous lands, residential school syndrome, racism, expropriation of lands, extinguishment of rights, wardship, and welfare dependency.” Such “imposed externalities” are the more obvious manifestations of domination, but colonialism has also exerted a systematic toll on the physical and mental health of Aboriginal people (Alfred 2009b:43). Helleiner, in an earlier issue of this journal, suggested that the Canada-US border itself has been seen as an affront to Aboriginal people, first because it denies them the right to come and go freely as they did before colonization, while second, the border is often presented as a “white” border, in contradistinction to the supposed white/brown US border with Mexico (2012:111–112).

One solution to the problem of continued colonial structures, as I will articulate more fully later, is “syncretic multiculturalism.” This can be thought of as a process of creating a balance between current institutional forms (European style parliamentary democracy) and Aboriginal understandings of the world and methods of collective governance, as a fundamental precursor to welcoming immigrants into Canada (MacDonald 2013). It also implies knowledge of and respect for the *sui generis* rights of Aboriginal people. Used to describe forms of religious fusion, “syncretism” has wider applicability and can be used to better understand the blending together of different forms of culture and governance,

in our case Shognosh and Aboriginal worlds. In contrast to “conversion,” which implies missionary zeal and dismissal of the belief-systems encountered, syncretism implies “mutual respect and reciprocal exchange of values and beliefs” (Balme 1996:10–12). However, syncretism does not imply further assimilation of Aboriginal peoples, the expropriation of language, culture, spirituality, or other forms of Aboriginal civilization. Syncretism as outlined here honours the treaties and respects Aboriginal distinctiveness. Syncretism would imply that Aboriginal peoples rather than the government freely determine what aspects of their civilizations should be part and parcel of the multicultural process.

The achievement of syncretic multiculturalism can be facilitated by moving towards a reimagined binational foundation for Canada, based on recognition of the *sui generis* rights of Aboriginal peoples and their nation-to-nation relationships with Shognosh peoples through the crown. As George Erasmus, in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation’s recent book, *Cultivating Canada* makes clear:

Aboriginal people have a unique historical relationship with the Crown, and the Crown represents all Canadians. From this it follows that all Canadians are treaty people, bearing the responsibilities of Crown commitments and enjoying the rights and benefits of being Canadian. (2011:vii)

It is necessary that immigrants as well as Shognosh Canadians understand what the crown means in their lives. Syncretism does not imply however, that Aboriginal peoples should be further integrated or assimilated into the Shognosh mainstream. Rather the assumption here is that if immigrants integrate into Canada, they should be cognizant of both Aboriginal and Shognosh values and traditions.

COLONIAL MULTICULTURALISM

If we take Kymlicka’s division of minorities in Canada according to types of group rights, we have three categories:

Self-government rights (the delegation of powers to national minorities, often through some form of federalism); polyethnic rights (financial support and legal protection for certain practices associated with particular ethnic or religious groups); and special representation rights (guaranteed seats for ethnic or national groups within the central institutions of the larger state). (1995:6–7)

In this tripartite classification, immigrants are considered “polyethnic,” while both Aboriginal peoples and Quebecois are “national minorities.” Kymlicka (1995:19) makes the distinction this way: national minorities

are “distinct and potentially self-governing societies incorporated into a larger state” while ethnic groups are “immigrants who have left their national community to enter another society.” Problematically, those with *sui generis* rights and those without are lumped together.

Multiculturalism has gone through a series of phases. Much of the period leading up to 1971 can be described as a bicultural colonial Shognoosh society, with divisions between French and British settlers, but in practice largely a colonial mononational society dominated by the descendants of British settlers. During this period, the three groups identified by Kymlicka had a challenging relationship with the state. Until 1947, all Canadians were considered to be British subjects, with British traditions seen as the norm. Non-British symbols were generally unwelcome, and ethnic expression that deviated was seen as detrimental to the unity and integrity of the country (Dewing and Leman 2006). This marked a period of assimilationism in the ways Hartmann and Gerties have modeled multiculturalism (2005:226–28).

Late 19th and early 20th century immigration laws discriminated against Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans, while Shognoosh public intellectuals like Stephen Leacock and Andrew Macphail cast aspersions on central European and other “non-traditional” immigrants who also hailed from Christian European countries (Resnick 2005:25). Aboriginal people were on more tenuous ground, since they were governed by successive incarnations of the *Indian Act*, needed passes to leave their reserve communities, to sell produce or cattle, while many of their religious and cultural rights were curtailed (MacDonald 2013). Many Aboriginal children were forced to attend residential schools, while their parents could do very little to protest, since they did not have the right to assemble, to hire a lawyer, or to vote (Furniss 1999:22–23). During this period, both immigrants and Aboriginal peoples were targeted for overt assimilation. It was no coincidence that in 1947, the *Canadian Citizenship Act* combined its management of Indian Affairs, immigration, naturalization, and citizenship services together under a new department: Citizenship and Immigration (DCI). Until 1960, Indian Affairs was located within the DCI (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009).

A massive population influx from other parts of Europe and elsewhere after World War II fundamentally altered Canada’s demographic fabric. Demands for change paved the way for the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which in 1969 recommended the integration rather than the assimilation of non-British ethnic groups (Dewing and Leman 2006). Pierre Trudeau’s understanding of multiculturalism needs to be contextualized within his desire to promote French Canadian identity at the national level, and his individualized liberal perceptions

of citizenship. The federal government's *White Paper* in 1969 laid out a vision where Aboriginal people would be "made" the same as every other Canadian. In August of that year, Trudeau delivered a speech in Vancouver, in which he unveiled a controversial plan, using a fairly blunt method of delivery:

We can go on treating the Indians as having a special status. We can go on adding bricks of discrimination around the ghetto in which they live and at the same time perhaps helping them preserve certain cultural traits and certain ancestral rights. Or we can say you're at a crossroad — the time is now to decide whether the Indians will be a race apart in Canada or whether it will be Canadians of full status. (Trudeau 2009:631)

Trudeau's goal was to remove "obstacles" to Aboriginal people becoming equal members of Shognosh society. In the same speech he argued "perhaps the treaties shouldn't go on forever." He found it inconceivable "that in a given society one section of the society [should] have a treaty with the other section of the society. We must be all equal under the laws and we must not sign treaties among ourselves" (2009:632). On this occasion, Trudeau fundamentally rejected the concept of a separate class of "aboriginal rights" on the basis of the argument "We were here before you" (2009:632). The *White Paper* was to bring the unilateral abrogation of the treaties. It was proposed a scant four years after the churches had relinquished their control over Indian Residential Schools, and also reflected a long tradition of forcibly enfranchising Aboriginal peoples. Citizenship, while scripted as a desirable goal by Trudeau, was historically presented as a reward to Indians who had attained a degree of "civilization" — gaining a university education, joining the ministry, or the armed forces. Citizenship meant the right to vote, buy alcohol, purchase land, leave the reserve without a pass, and operate without the onerous provisions of the *Indian Act*. Citizenship was also a punishment, since it took away an Indian's status under the *Indian Act*, separating them legally and physically from their home reserve (Voyageur and Calliou 2000/2001:117).

The *White Paper* provoked strong reactions in Aboriginal communities, who derailed the initiative, refusing to accept the legitimacy of the federal government to abrogate the treaties and disburse tribal lands (Indian Chiefs of Alberta 1974). As Turner has articulated from a critical indigenous perspective, Trudeau's "White Paper liberalism" was entirely consistent with Western European political ideals, which privileged the individual as the central unit of a political system, while seeking to balance the freedom and equality of individuals operating in society. Liberals may disagree about: "the 'proper' relationship between freedom

and equality, but they all accept that any good theory of justice has to be couched in the language of individual freedom and equality” (Turner 2006:13). In practice this discriminated against group or collective rights.

For many Aboriginal peoples, the Multiculturalism Act in 1971 was closely tied to the same vision represented by the *White Paper*. Both represented two sides of the same liberal coin — everyone should, if possible integrate into “our” Shognosh society. While Trudeau felt it was legitimate to strip Aboriginal peoples of most of their collective rights, he forged ahead with bilingualism, which promoted collective rights for French Canadians, and led to their increasing influence at the national level. When introducing both multiculturalism and bilingualism to the House of Commons in 1971, he made the following claim:

[A]lthough there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly. (Trudeau 1971)

Trudeau’s claim about the lack of “official culture” and the lack of “precedence” of one ethnic group over another, perpetuated a myth of liberal equality in a settler colonial society still dominated by settler values and institutions. For liberals like Trudeau, multiculturalism was not designed to fundamentally change Canada. As Resnick has noted, the primary beneficiaries of these policies were non-British/French people who had hitherto been the targets of discrimination. He locates the origins of the policy in “ethnic communities of Eastern European origin, concerned to ensure that their non-British and non-French attributes not be drowned out in Canada’s pursuit of a bilingual strategy” (2005:57). While multiculturalism would later be used as a vehicle for absorbing what one might call radical difference, it did not begin with this objective in mind.

The federal government devoted considerable resources to put principles of multiculturalism into practice, creating a diverse range of institutions to acculturate new immigrants into Shognosh society. Funds were made available for language training and ethnic studies courses in universities and schools across the country. In 1972, a Multicultural Directorate was created, followed a year later by a Ministry of Multiculturalism. In 1982, a period of “institutionalization” began, when multicultural policies were enshrined in Section 27 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter was seen to give what one former Human Rights Commissioner called an “interpretative prism” to help courts decide the appropriate balance between individual and collective or multicultural rights (Mahtani 2002:69–70; Dewing and Leman 2006). A *Multiculturalism Act* was adopted by Parliament in 1988, making Canada the first country to pass a national multiculturalism law (Dewing and Leman 2006).

TOLERANCE AND THE LIMITS OF MULTICULTURALISM

While on the surface multiculturalism appears to be about celebrating diversity, liberal multicultural theorists like Kymlicka stress the integrative dimensions of such policies over its potential to glorify and institutionalize collective differences. Kymlicka articulates what are arguably several mainstream claims about multiculturalism: first that a core goal is integration into mainstream Shognosh Canada. He observes: “Canadian policy has also long placed a heavy emphasis on integration,” while similarly noting that this “integrationist impulse is powerfully reinforced by the immigration program itself and the settlement services offered to newcomers” (Kymlicka 2012:16). The nature of what immigrants are asked to integrate into is not adequately explored. Second, he posits that multiculturalism is achieving its objectives (see below). Integration for Kymlicka (2010) can mean many things, such as:

economic integration into the labour market; political integration into the electoral process and other forms of political participation; social integration into the networks and spaces of civil society, from informal networks of friends and neighbours to membership in more formal organizations.

In evaluating these different forms of integration, we can gauge whether multiculturalism is actually working. He makes a number of forceful points worth considering.

1. Multiculturalism in Canada versus the US “melting pot” has fared extremely well, with naturalization rates more than double those of the US, at 84% in 2001. Further, “according to one recent survey, ‘Canada has the highest proportion of foreign-born legislators in the world’” (Banting and Kymlicka 2010:56).
2. Regarding political participation: ethnic minorities have not formed ethnically based parties but have become members of Shognosh pan-Canadian ones. “Indeed,” Kymlicka argues, “the two parties in Canada that are closest to being ethnic parties were created by and for those of French or English ancestry” (Kymlicka 1998:18–19). Kymlicka and Banting note the continuation of this trend, seeing francophone Québécois and Aboriginal people as falling behind other groups in society in terms of their integration, “on measures such as pride in Canada, a sense of belonging in the country and trust in other Canadians” (2010:54).
3. Rates of intermarriage have been steadily increasing since 1971 and Shognosh Canadians have generally been increasingly accepting of mixed marriages (Kymlicka 1998:20).

4. Tolerance for Muslims amongst Shognosh people has meant better ethnic relations when compared with European countries. “Members of ethnic minorities will be more likely to identify with a new national identity if they feel their ethnic identity is publicly respected” (Kymlicka 2010).

Kymlicka is a strong advocate for multicultural policies, and dismisses the perception that multiculturalism leads to fractionalism or a division:

The idea that multiculturalism could enable immigrant groups to form and sustain their own societal cultures reflects, I believe, a failure to recognize what is actually involved in such a project. To maintain a separate societal culture in a modern state is an immensely ambitious and arduous project. (Kymlicka 1998:31)

With Banting, Kymlicka drew out similar themes more recently, observing: “the Canadian record on integration is relatively strong,” and: “In comparison with other western nations . . . the integrative power of Canadian society for newcomers should not be under-estimated” (2010:56–7).

The same theme of integration into the Shognosh mainstream was explored recently in another issue of this journal. Sociologists expanding on Kymlicka’s work study how readily immigrants integrate into the mainstream, which has ramifications for how Aboriginal people are situated. For example, Wu and his colleagues focus on “two aspects of integration: sense of belonging to Canada and feelings of discomfort living in the host society” (2012:381). The concept of a “host” society may be difficult for some Aboriginal people living off reserve, since in urban contexts dominated by Shognosh economic and political elites, they may not possess the structural power to be hosts themselves, and yet are obviously not “guests” either. Further the authors assert: “An immigrant’s sense of belonging is a reflection of integration into social networks and institutions, and it fosters feelings of social solidarity with the core or socially predominant group.” The key here is on the predominant group — immigrants are gauged against the predominant society and their success, while the success of multiculturalism is evaluated with reference to both the host and immigrant populations (Wu et al. 2012:383). There simply is no consideration of Aboriginal peoples in such an analysis.

Immigrants, as economic and social success stories, are often held up as models, contrasted with Aboriginal people, who statistically have a marked disparity with Shognosh Canadians (Castellano et al. 2008; Proulx 2003; Warry 2007). Such disparities demonstrate performance gaps, which stress the need for Aboriginal people to do “better,” or for Shognosh-led governments to “help” Aboriginal people to attain the same

level of “success” as their Shognosh brethren. Rarely do we question the validity of the benchmarks being used to evaluate success. Wotherspoon and Hansen (2013:32) trace the high percentage of Inuit school dropouts as primarily a reflection of “the difficulties posed for them to identify with the education system provided by the colonizer and which has historically been used to force Indigenous people to deny their own culture and assimilate into the mainstream.” Is it morally just to understand Aboriginal “success” by Shognosh standards while ignoring centuries of Aboriginal knowledge about education, law, justice, and living with the natural environment? Some academics like Friesen and Friesen (2002:17) promote spreading indigenous forms of knowledge to all Canadians, focused on “ecological, spiritual, and humane” components. This may shift the dynamic to a more equitable exchange of values and knowledge, versus the one-sided educational system imposed on Aboriginal peoples.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND MULTICULTURALISM

Certainly, mainstream theorists like Kymlicka and Banting recognize that Aboriginal leaders “have sometimes viewed multiculturalism with suspicion, and while here again there is no inherent opposition between the federal multiculturalism policy and aboriginal rights, more work needs to be done on how they interact” (2010:64). The conflict, however, stems not from Aboriginal misunderstanding, but from a realistic assessment of the legacies of colonial multiculturalism, and the reality that these policies elide many problems in contemporary society.

While Kymlicka recognizes Aboriginal distinctiveness, this recognition is hardly permanent. Turner ably notes the limits to what Kymlicka is prepared to concede. Aboriginal peoples are a national minority who deserve protection because they are *vulnerable* and have been incorporated into Canada against their will, not because they have a *sui generis* relationship with the crown which marks them out as fundamentally different. As Turner quotes Kymlicka, “the rights accorded to Aboriginal groups are justified only ‘if there actually is a disadvantage with respect to cultural membership, and if the rights actually serve to rectify the disadvantage’” (2006:64). Further, Kymlicka constrains Aboriginal rights through his own sense of “justice”:

One could imagine a point where the amount of land reserved for indigenous peoples would not be necessary to provide reasonably external protections, but rather would simply provide unequal opportunities to them. Justice would then require that the holdings of indigenous peoples be subject to the same redistributive taxation as the wealth of other advantaged groups, so as to assist the less well off in society. In the real world, of

course, most indigenous peoples are struggling to maintain the bare minimum of land needed to sustain the viability of their communities. But it is possible that their land holdings could exceed what justice allows. (Kymlicka quoted in Turner 2006:65–66)

Precisely what “justice” means in this context is unclear, although historically, “justice,” when it concerns the taking of Aboriginal lands, has largely been for the benefit of Shognosh society and has followed pragmatic rather than legal objectives (Miller 1996:62–3). Kymlicka’s rather decontextualized view of Aboriginal people fails to fully engage with their legal distinctiveness, their *sui generis* rights (Ladner 2009; Borrows 2007; Alfred 2009a). Such rights, enshrined first in the Royal Proclamation and affirmed in the 1982 Constitution and the Charter, gives Aboriginal peoples a status quite different to that available to Shognosh peoples. This provides them with “collective rights to self-determination ... guaranteed by virtue of their ancestral occupation, not because of difference, need, or disadvantage” (Fleras and Elliot 1999:189). In other words, Aboriginal rights were not given to them by anyone; they simply had them before the Europeans came. Fleras and Elliot (1999:189–90) put it this way: “Three dimensions are prominent: autonomy rights to control lives and life chances, identity rights to preserve distinctiveness, and land rights to ensure economic self-sufficiency.”

Desiring Aboriginal peoples to behave in a similar fashion to newcomers fails to recognize the legal differences, as well as the great differences in Aboriginal and Shognosh collective memories. As Keira Ladner (2009:279) expresses the divide:

For Indigenous peoples, the story of Canada is one of myth, magic, deceit, occupation, and genocide. For Canadians, the story is one of discovery, lawful acquisition, and the establishment of peace, order, and good governance.

The Idle No More movement, which developed during the writing of this article, is another example of perceptive differences. “Point 1” of their 2013 handout stresses the broken relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the government:

[T]he Government of Canada must acknowledge the systematic nature of Canada’s colonial past and present. Recent governments have issued apologies for specific colonial programs, such as the Residential School System, but have yet to acknowledge responsibility for the full range of colonial institutions, including legislation currently enforced under the Indian Act. (Alfred and Rollo 2012)

The movement makes continual and explicit references to colonialism, and stresses the need for nonviolent resistance to a federal government

that is violating the treaties, destroying the environment, and refusing to consult with First Nations. Both colonialism and racism are seen to be active and pernicious elements in Canadian life (Wotherspoon and Hansen 2013).

While at a certain level colonial multiculturalism helps to defuse antagonisms between different ethnic groups, it reproduces the Shognosh power dynamics of the state. Fleras and Elliot (1999:28) put it this way:

Multiculturalism is most effective in terms of fostering a false consciousness: It either camouflages the real source of exploitation in society by suggesting cultural solutions to structural problems, or, alternatively, recourse to multiculturalism creates the illusion of radical change by reinforcing its image as ‘assimilation in slow motion’.

Fleras and Maaka (2005) note that multiculturalism is designed primarily to tolerate mild forms of diversity, but does poorly when confronting overt challenges to Shognosh perceptions of Canada, and even more poorly when confronting challenges to the state’s sovereignty and legitimacy. At a superficial level, multiculturalism is positive, “insofar as it promotes inclusion and tolerance while providing an important model of how members of a pluralistic society can live together in peace, civility and justice.” However, if differences imperil the dominant claims of state sovereignty and legitimacy, they cannot be welcomed, especially an Aboriginal view which “challenges, resists, and transforms, while an official multiculturalism tends toward consensus, adjustment and reform.” What is clear for the authors is that “An official multiculturalism is anchored in the deep structures of a colonial discourse, thus tending to uphold the very thing it is seeking to resolve” (2005:177).

As Fleras and Maaka point out, many of the detractions of multiculturalism could be ameliorated through a “binational” relationship, which would imply a reworking of dominant institutions and narratives, privileging both narratives and practical realities of partnership. The central differences in these two approaches have to do with what happens to the “mainstream core.” If multiculturalism implies “grafting bits of diversity onto a mainstream core,” binationalism fundamentally alters the core, promoting power sharing in an ethos of “majority-to-majority partnership” rather than “majority-minority relations.” Of central importance is shared sovereignty, and “complementary coexistence,” where respect for difference is embedded into the way the state is structured. An overarching emphasis on shared goals and values gives way to “a dualistic constitutional order involving a compact across a deep divide” and recognizes “the necessity to stand apart before the possibility of belonging together differently” (2005:275–76). All of this is already guaranteed under the

treaties, and has been affirmed by the 1982 Constitution and the Charter (Wotherspoon and Hansen 2013).

A binational relationship, which could work alongside forms of Aboriginal self-determination, offers the possibility of constructing narratives based on a new settler relationship with Aboriginal peoples as a “majority-to-majority partnership,” rather than based on domination. This relationship would be premised on sharing sovereignty, respect for diverse institutions, and the potential for creating new institutions devoted to the sharing of power and resources (Maaka and Fleras 2005). While Canada would still continue its multicultural policies, Aboriginal-settler binationalism would be regarded as the “first principle,” (Spoonley 2005) the basis on which cultural, economic, and political negotiations would proceed. Binationalism might contribute towards a process of “reframing” — that is, changing the symbols, terms, and narratives used to interpret the past and chart a course for the future (James and Bonner 2011).

While it is clear that some Aboriginal leaders promote the idea of full Aboriginal self-determination on their own lands (Murphy 2008:182), this does not mean Aboriginal peoples could not also seek representation in existing political institutions, especially given the large percentage of urban Aboriginal peoples. This reflects what Murphy calls a “relational model of self-determination,” which can be described as having, “multiple points of access to political power and decision-making.” While autonomous self-government would help some Aboriginal peoples empower themselves, Murphy argues: “indigenous representatives may also need an effective voice in local, regional, and national institutions that have the capacity to influence their individual and collective futures” (2008:197–200).

A binational model offers the potential for a wider recognition of diversity, given that Turtle Island was in a sense multicultural before western contact with well over 50 distinct linguistic and cultural groups (Day 2000; Voyageur and Calliou 2000/2001). We might thus come to understand Canada as a binationalism of two multiculturalisms — between those who were here before colonization, and those who came after. A binational multicultural model would not promote homogenized standards of what constitutes Aboriginal identity. Rather the analysis would be framed by the polyvalence of Aboriginal communities over millennia (Voyageur and Calliou 2000/2001). The approaches by which Aboriginal peoples have engaged with their own diversity might introduce new avenues for exploring how best to work with newcomer diversities; this can be conceived as a process of relationship-building, based on movement, exchange, and future-oriented discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

Arguably multiculturalism has been successful in the sense that it has helped immigrants to integrate culturally and economically into Shognoosh Canadian society. However, multiculturalism is not perfect, in that it has obliged immigrants to integrate into a fairly rigid set of values and ideas. Rather than the presumption that these values are universal, such values are very much tied to the colonial state, and its Shognoosh institutions. While multicultural policies purport to celebrate diversity, Canada has gravitated closer to the American style melting pot, and away from the “salad bowl” or “mosaic” ideal (Hollinger 2006). The process of integrating immigrants has produced tropes of what constitutes a desirable immigrant: linguistic and cultural integration, intermarriage, mainstream political participation, economic equality, and patriotism (Kymlicka and Banting 2010; Kymlicka 2010). These often run counter to the legal rights and demands of many Aboriginal people. Further, multiculturalism can promote misleading narratives of the innocence and goodness of Canada’s foundation, glossing over continued colonialism (St Denis 2011; Regan 2010).

Unfortunately, Aboriginal peoples have often been marginalized for not “integrating” as well as immigrants. In the process, multiculturalism elides the distinct historical, legal, and constitutional aspects of Aboriginal rights, as well as Aboriginal languages, values, governance traditions, and other aspects of Aboriginal ways of knowing and being. The time to honour the treaties and promote restorative justice is now. This should include re-presenting Canada as the site of binationalism with the two treaty peoples as equal founders of the country, its institutions, and its political and social cultures. Thus we can move from colonial multiculturalism on the basis of mono-cultural rule, which we currently have, to a binational syncretic form of multiculturalism.

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