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Contextualizing Approaches to Indigenous Peoples' Experiences of Intractable Conflict

Michele A. Sam

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This article contextualizes intractable conflict within the lived experiences and worldviews of an Indigenous person, imbued with academic and scholarly research. The text illustrates how intractable conflict is experienced within the “developed world,” resulting in both freedom and fragmentation. Whether intractable conflict stems from colonial and postcolonial development and influences current Indigenous Peoples’ self-development efforts in Canada, specifically, and possibly across British colonies in general seems to be a new inquiry. The author relates her intergenerational experiences of contact, unpacking research and development in its many forms alongside the characteristics of intractable conflict and related federal Indian and social policy. An Indigenous Peoples’ transformative research framework is presented as a mechanism for conceptualizing an approach to the resolution of intractable conflict.

Jacob Bercovitch defines “intractable conflict” as including issues of time; historical grievance; identity, sovereignty, values, and belief; and the perception of the other as violent, undesirable, and problematic. He points to the existence of a geopolitical buffer zone, adding that attempts at conflict management have been unsuccessful.¹ As a Ktunaxa Nation and a registered Status Indian and ʔaq̓am band member, I was easily able to conceptualize my own lived experiences and those of my direct ancestors within Bercovitch’s definition. But I recognized that determining whether conflict resolution can occur and be sustainable depends on how a conflict is defined and by whom.² Thus, I identified spaces of “freedom and fragmentation” in which perspective is core to understanding.

In *The Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflict*, Daniel Bar-Tal cites Louis Kriesberg’s characterization of intractable conflict as protracted, violent, irresolvable, and requiring immense psychological and resource investments and expands it to include being total, central, and zero sum.³ Bar-Tal defines intractable conflicts as “conflicts over existential goals that last for a long time and that neither side can win,” adding that such conflicts “involve violence, are viewed by the parties as a zero-sum dispute, and are unsolvable” and that “they greatly preoccupy society members of the parties that invest in them in order to manage the conflict successfully.”⁴ He goes on to discuss the role of spatial and temporal attributes within intractable conflicts and how these attributes impact the individuals, the people, the places, and the relationships between people and place and across generations, including inflicting psychological harm, and the cumulative impacts of these characteristics.

The freedom and fragmentation currently experienced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada living within intractable conflict are a result of colonialism and, more recently, of decolonization, undertaken as self-development. Indigenous Peoples are attempting to better understand their

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current context and the intergenerational experiences of their peoples since contact. Indigenous Peoples' very ways of being, knowing, and doing that enabled our inherent socialization to being, in this instance, Ktunaxa *ʔaqłsmaknik*, were deemed primitive and in need of replacement in order for us to become civilized and on "equal ground" with Canadian nation-state citizens, according to its definitions and aspirations.

According to the principles of Canadian federal Indian policy, "Indians are inferior; there are inherent land use, land misuse, and land abuse issues by Indian people; Indian ways of living are detrimental to ourselves; and finally, Indian extinction is inevitable."⁵ These principles frame the intractable conflict as it has been lived by Indigenous Peoples since contact. Through the Indian Act, Indian and social policies have severely limited Indigenous Peoples' freedoms by treating Indigenous Peoples as though they have no intellectual traditions of value.⁶ The foundations of these policies and the avenues of practice can be traced to research approaches and what Linda Tuhiwai Smith refers to as "intellectual imperialism."⁷

Intellectual imperialism has a long history of generating and then perpetuating colonial practice, policy, and programming, most notably through "helping" professionals in social work, education, and health who are educated according to disciplined canons including "evidence-based practice" gleaned from research and its normative methodologies. The helping professions' mandates are in accordance with Western norms and values, including ethics and ideologies, and are legislated into Indigenous Peoples' social networks, altering them wholly in the process. Understanding how research has supported the restructuring of inherent knowledge relationships that are generative to Indigenous people's identity and relationships to lands and waterscapes and to each other presents questions about Indigenous Peoples' experiences of intractable conflict and their resolution.

According to Bar-Tal, "a description of the context of intractable conflict must be based on the recognition that conflicts between societies or nations cannot be viewed as a unitary phenomenon."⁸ Indigenous Peoples' local experiences of colonialism are unique to place and time and continue to influence our actions and inactions, attitudes and beliefs even in our current time of relative freedom. This distinction of time and place and Indigenous peoplehood is vitally important but often ignored in British Columbia and throughout Canada.⁹ But the inclusion of these realities enables a turn toward the deep intellectual work of reconciliation needed to transform our collective relationships from the past to a more equitable future.

This point must be understood in addressing the "ignorant but interested" mindset, as well as the paradox of "freedom and fragmentation." In this article, I purposefully contextualize an interpretation of Indigenous Peoples' experiences of intractable conflict by offering my lived experiences, creating a dialogue to determine whether intractable conflict is just another theory or may have some value to our self-development as we are currently constructing it.¹⁰ I suggest that we must be mindful about how we approach theory and frameworks to avoid perpetuating intractable conflict further into our self-development.

Research and Knowledge Relationships

The broader context of research and evaluation within which the "Indian or Aboriginal issue" has been constructed and perpetuated is problematic. Research has not addressed Indigenous Peoples in meaningful, sustainable ways. Willie Ermine discusses the role of ideology within normative research as having limited Western research in its ability to carry out truly authentic science.¹¹ Perhaps it is the relative newness of the modern Western scientific method that has unwittingly wreaked havoc on Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, generating programming, policy,

and practice that perpetuates epistemic violence through attempts to include an “aboriginal” population.¹²

The ideologies at work, whether in research for knowledge generation or within evaluative research, perpetuates colonialism by restructuring local Indigenous Peoples’ knowledges, such as creation stories and languages, into universal research products impacting identity, values, and beliefs. The implications for identity development are so far immeasurable, but this form of intellectual violence might be seen as contributing to genocide (experienced as the loss of language, culture, and relationships to lands and waterscapes and to each other) through the institution of residential schools and child welfare programs. A premise of colonialism is that Indigenous Peoples’ systems were once inferior to British and Eurocentric systems and now to mainstream Western ones. As a result, Indigenous Peoples’ knowledges have become “unknown” for multiple reasons, including temporal, spatial, and ideological misinterpretations through research.

The view and subsequent interpretation of Indigenous Peoples as primitive arises from research in which a limited social construction, grounded in previous research, is applied, creating a vicious circle of misinterpretations and misconstrued notions that can be called “primitivist.” This primitivist ideology “filters” accurate and scientific research into the lived experiences of heterogeneous Indigenous populations through the positivist paradigm.¹³ The positivist paradigm has been normalized and is mostly unchecked because of its position within intellectual imperialism.

Since contact, nation-state-sanctioned research, policy, and practice has erased Indigenous Peoples’ original ontologies and cosmologies,¹⁴ enabling the reconstruction of us into Aboriginal, First Nation, and Indians—all nation-state-sanctioned social constructions that includes the characterization of us as “violent, undesirable and problematic.”¹⁵ These legal state identities have become our monikers, and for the majority of us, how we are socialized. That some of us hold cards stating we are “Indians” legally speaks to this state-sanctioned decontextualization of self.

It is common for non-Indigenous people to generalize Indigenous Peoples into an “Aboriginal” culture. Because “Aboriginal” is established in the Canadian constitution, it is the state identity taught in schools and guides funding for services and programs. “Indian” and “Aboriginal”¹⁶ are Canadian legal constructs that forcibly remove and erase the “peoplehood” and the human beingness of Indigenous Peoples, such as I, a Ktunaxa *ʔaqʔsmaknik*.

The “erasure” of Indigenous peoplehoods continues today through research that seeks to construct an understanding of the “Aboriginal,” while the individual exists within lived experiences that are at once colonial and Indigenous but not acknowledged as such.

A normative research approach that denies such a “fractured” ontology is informed by a teleology articulated in policy.¹⁷ The fragmentation we live, as Indigenous Peoples, is seemingly by research design. The disciplined normative research relationships in which Western academic institutions have engaged Aboriginal people in British Columbia have been problematic for more than a hundred years.¹⁸ Thus, research is hugely implicated in intractable conflict, because it perpetuates protraction, a certain collective memory, and the centrality necessary for the perception of the conflict to be internalized as well as subsequently socialized through education and social policy to Indigenous Peoples and Canadian society at large. Bar-Tal explains that “of importance is the fact that during 25 years of a conflict a new generation becomes actively involved in it.”¹⁹

Rather than addressing the problem with sustained resolution, research has become an accounting of the existence of the problem—in essence, illustrating its unresolvability. As Michael McDonald and Eric Meslin state, “research reflects a country’s particular social policy.”²⁰ The social construction of Aboriginal Peoples is perpetuated through the same research proposed to be of use in addressing social adversities and health disparities in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Thus, rather than shedding light on how Indigenous Peoples’ unique lived experiences of social adversities and health disparities could be addressed, data analyses support the management of the underlying social adversities and health disparities, perpetuating deep adversity. Codification serves an administrative task of fiduciary reporting out and as an evaluation of “Indian problem” research.²¹

The Ktunaxa people, for example, were situated within the Canadian social construction first of the “Indian” and now of the “Aboriginal” through policy that identifies “First Nations” as individual bands. Even though the Ktunaxa are a recognized cultural and linguistic isolate to the world, in matters of normative research they are not separated from the Aboriginal data gathered. Instead, they are analyzed and represented through positivist research paradigms. The ways in which Indigenous Peoples may address social inequities and health disparities as specific sociocultural and geolinguistic social groupings is noticeably absent not only because research has had a hand in developing a cultural product but also because it has created a culture of research practice. This inherent flaw within research and its administration decultures and deterritorializes individual Indigenous peoples and perpetuates the homogenization of the “Aboriginal” as it cleanses for identity and hides colonial experience, reifying instead the normative “Indian Problem.”

The Indian Problem

The everyday experiences and opportunities for meaning making by Indigenous Peoples has been restructured through the implementation of programs and services based on the underlying values and knowledge focused on generating “solutions” to problems of living. And this usually means resolving the “Indian problem” as it has been constructed and perpetuated. Noel Dyck contends: “The current social, political and economic difficulties confronting Indian communities emanate from a longstanding and complex pattern of beliefs, relationships and institutional activities that have been given far less attention than they deserve. Acceptance at face value of popular notions about the nature of the Indian ‘problem’ is not, I argue, likely to lead to a resolution of Indians’ present day difficulties nor generate knowledge necessary to address such issues. In order to unmake the Indian ‘problem’ we must first learn what it represents and how it came to exist.”²² Dyck made this observation more than twenty years ago. He implies that a review of the legacies and current realities facing Indigenous Peoples is needed because the circumstances of Indigenous Peoples are complex and complicated.

Indian problem research that negates or neglects to recognize colonialism in its design reifies the narrative necessary for conflict management regimes and investment, hiding micro aggressions within a system of “knowing” that supports intractability. Because colonialism is not considered a “variable” or a context, any research that is generated constructs an assimilation regime, exacerbating the conflict along the “zero sum” perception. According to James S. Frideres and René R. Gadacz, British colonization includes:

- Geographical incursion of colonizing group
- Socio-cultural destruction

- External political control
- Economic dependence[/economic development]
- Provision of low-quality social services
- Racism
- Color line²³

Colonization processes continue through research. The Ktunaxa people exist within the complexity inherent in a colonial history and its contemporary mechanisms for negative affective engagement grounded in institutional socialization and dysconscious racism.²⁴ This complexity is apparent in current concerns regarding resource-extraction-based industries through economic development that is at once a geographical incursion, a sociocultural destruction, an influence of external political control, and economic dependence/development. I believe this complexity of analyses is a key to appreciating current issues of resource development and treaty and land claims.

Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt's work on economic development successes in Aboriginal communities references Michael J. Chandler and Christopher E. Lalonde's work on cultural match, which is focused on the colonial carceral unit: the community built within reserve lands.²⁵ Cornell and Kalt's work suggests that the current impetus of Indigenous Peoples toward good governance, nation rebuilding, and cultural continuity is in accordance with nation-state ideologies of tribal government and nation-dependent sovereignty as is the model within the United States. But sovereignty is not nation dependent in Canada and has not been resolved. Instead, the approach currently undertaken further entrenches the regional strategic competition model, rather than a nation-based approach grounded within linguistic and cultural connections and social ties that could restore Indigenous peoplehood.²⁶

Ktunaxa people are experiencing "regional strategic competition" in two ways: over lands, water, and and resources with neighboring tribal groups whose current assertions and arguments border ours, and internally, within Ktunaxa *?amak?is*. Because we are all engaged in similar "self-administration" initiatives, as bands—First Nations—we are set up against each other, and ourselves as a people, for "regional strategic competition" internally and externally, moving boundaries and erasing our own histories from places. These conflicts, stemming from modern treaty and land claims of the past thirty years are in their infancy and are implicated in development.

Competition is for funding resources, programs, and services to address a lack of access to clean drinking water, and a lack of sustainable housing and the infrastructure necessary to support a community. The research approach is often underexamined, assuming the administration of Indian and social policy implementation by Indian Band or tribal governments and staff, and by funders, all compatriots in addressing the Indian Problem through normalized evidence-based practice and solutions to close the gap, without ever asking how the gap exists to begin with. Father to the field of psychology Erik Erikson approached his research as a matter of addressing the needs of Western society to modernize tribal people through the implementation of the Western definition of childhood into the socialization of tribal people and in the process reified through research an evaluative research an ideological choice.²⁷ The results are that our inherent sovereignty, especially intellectual sovereignty, is compromised with little effort.

Identity

Our identities, like our lands and waterscapes, have been reconstructed and formulated within and by government policy, rather than according to the rich and intergenerational relationships my ancestors propagated and placed into strong and healthy identities, complete with names, roles and responsibilities, and ways of being, doing, and knowing. The ways our identities are muted into legal entities: Indians, and then Aboriginal—Status, non-Status, Metis, and Inuit—is how most “know” us, including ourselves, as figments of the nation-state imagination. These state identities are so far from how we refer to ourselves, within our own languages, usually as human beings or people belonging to a place who hold and perpetuate the ability to respond to that place, its living beings, and supporting its well-being and health.

In *Development as Freedom*, Amrtya Sen concludes his chapter “The Ends and Means of Development,” by stating that “individual capabilities crucially depend on, among other things, economic, social and political arrangements. . . . The people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved—given the opportunity—in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs.”²⁸ But given who we are and how we are, this can be and is a challenge in everyday living. While I am an Indian, and an Aboriginal, I am also a Ktunaxa *ʔaqʔsmaknik*, a Ktunaxa human being. My “nation” has developed, with me, and other Ktunaxa people, a vision, a teleology to guide us in our self-development.

The Ktunaxa Nation vision statement articulates a cultural continuity:

Strong, healthy citizens and communities speaking our languages and celebrating who we are and our history in our ancestral homelands, working together, managing our lands and resources, as a self-sufficient, self-governing Nation.

The Ktunaxa people have never willingly given up sovereignty, even when socially constructed as children of the Crown. We have survived more than two hundred years of colonialism and genocide and are now restoring our knowledge systems, which include an appreciation that our teleology is unique, valid, and supportive of a life lived well and long into the future.

A Ktunaxa Experience of Intractable Conflict

As Ktunaxa people, we have been systemically divided and subdivided by colonial constructs, band membership and then placement on/within reserve lands and reservations, and by the geopolitical boundaries of British Columbia in Canada and Idaho (Kootenai) and Montana (Ksanka) in the United States. We have been separated from our families for generations, by generation, first by residential schools and then by child protection policies and practice. This is the legacy of Aboriginal and Indian childhood. Many of us have internalized dividedness; we now identify ourselves by what reserve we are from rather than by the people we are, the place we are from, and how we are related to one another.

We are tasked with participating in the economy developed upon our homelands, for subsistence living, expected to heal from the impact of the past most won't admit occurred. We have limited access to culturally congruent mental, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being. And if we are lucky, we may even have the energy to find meaning in our continued existence and cultural perpetuation but only as minorities in our own homelands. Our lived experiences are often challenged, but I have grown accustomed to that sort of life.

Because I am Ktunaxa, I am also a legal entity—an Indian with Aboriginal rights according to the Canadian Constitution, though my rights have not always or often been respected or honored. In Canada, not every Indigenous person is automatically an “Indian”—whether one is an Indian is determined by the state in accordance with the Indian Act. “Indian” is a legal term according to the Canadian Constitution, section 91 (24), which legislates the federal responsibility for Indians and lands related to Indians, through the Indian Act.

Blood quantum is not required, though that measurement is problematic for other reasons.

I spent the first half of my life subjected to all the assumptions associated with being an Indian in a colonial state, which enabled my forced adoption and subsequent daily experience of racism, without legally being an “Indian.” Of course, I did not know how to name what was happening to me; nor did anyone around me.

At the age of three, I was adopted out as part of what is known as “the Sixties Scoop.”²⁹ I was nothing like my adoptive parents or their biological children in coloring, size, or stature. I was already a human being with memories and ideas of my own. I was a “problem” child, from the get-go.

The words of the late Patricia Monture-Angus written in 1999 remain meaningful for far too many Indigenous people: “Perhaps if my early years had not been dominated by the exhausting need just to survive, my experience of self-determination might have been a lived one much earlier than now. More recently, I have realized that self-determination is both a personal issue and a collective yearning.”³⁰

My adoptive parents were not told the truth about the circumstances leading to my being in the care of the state. They were not told that my mother was still in my life and what her story was. And they did not ask.

By the time I was twelve years old, I had attempted suicide. My parents were offered the choice by the state to return me, and I was placed in a group home for being “uncontrollable.” I was well on my way to living “as an Indian,” according to that rhetoric of the Indian problem.

In the early 1990s, I “found” my “birth family.”³¹ I was having a challenging transition to adulthood, which was no surprise considering that my early childhood was chaotic and traumatizing. I came “back” without having had any of the usual relationships through which culture and language are transmitted. And it shows. I have relatives but no family other than my children.

I did not know my mother after I was adopted. She is one of thousands of murdered and missing Indigenous women (and men) in Canada—her life was taken before I even knew who my people were. I met my mother’s children—siblings first.

I then learned about my father’s side. My father came from the Haudenosaunee people and was non-Status, meaning that somewhere along his familial line someone became a non-Indian. I learned from his people the concept of seven generations forward and back, that one makes good decisions for seven generations. I turned to shake my finger at my ancestors, who obviously did not make good decisions, because there I was a very messed-up person who was not living a good life, nor did I expect my life to be long or meaningful.

As an adult, I met other Indian people from other nations, other peoplehoods, and began to attend gatherings where various Indigenous cultural knowledge holders would share their knowledge and ways of being and doing. I had the blessing to travel to various gatherings outside of Toronto, Ontario, where I was born and where I was living at the time. And finally I

had the privilege and challenge of attending university, where I had an opportunity to develop my thinking and to read other thinking.

During my university years I learned why it appeared that my ancestors did not make “good decisions for seven generations.” Their freedom to do so was subjugated. Making good decisions was neither life affirming nor sustainable.

As I learned more and more about Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing, I found other stories, other more life-affirming instances connecting me to the sense of freedom my ancestors were denied. Now I recognize myself and my ancestors through a lens informed by the characteristics of intractable conflict. I do this because I am free to do so. And in doing so, I attempt to address the fragmentation that has for so long been apparent and characteristic of being an Indian in Canada.

My mother, because she was an Indian and born on a reserve, was subjected to the residential-school era, as were her mother and grandmother before her. Also, like me, my mother was subjected to the child protection system but for different reasons. Her parents, my grandparents, left Canada with four of their children to keep them from the residential school experience, and as a result my grandparents became international felons.³² I became a ward of the state through child welfare in a city far from our homelands because my mother was now on her own with three children to care for and with no one to help her.

In Canada, Indigenous children and youth are the overwhelming majority in the child protection population. The incarcerated population is overrepresented by Indigenous men and women, the majority of whom first experienced the child protection system. Mental health and addiction issues are real and the interventions are usually well intentioned but grounded in a reified Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD)³³ valuing of the world, which calls into question whether current mental health and addictions interventions are doing more harm than good.

My grandparents and my great-grandparents all experienced the residential school and the reserve system that we were not allowed to leave without permission. All Status Indian people in Canada were placed onto reserves in the late 1880s, with lands set aside for each family. My great-great-grandfather’s social responsibilities for our people, as headman, were usurped when we, the Ktunaxa people, did not easily acclimatize to the reserve lands set aside for us, within our homelands.

Each Indian band in Canada (there are a little more than six hundred) administers Indian policy in keeping with the Indian Act to those living within the lands reserved for Indians—now just called “the reserve.” Recently, Indian bands in Canada have been calling themselves “First Nations”; in British Columbia there are 203 First Nations, though there are 34 distinct language groups. In all there are 6 Ktunaxa/Ksanka bands, which were established beginning in 1885. I consider the reserve system to be the first colonial carceral institution, because the reserves were designed as containment spaces. As Cole Harris points out, “the spaces assigned to Native people did not support them, although the mixed economies they cobbled together, the revised diets they ate, and the accommodations and settlements they lived in had allowed some of them to survive.”³⁴ Even when my ancestors did manage to thrive, local implementation of the Indian Act made it so that any success was short lived.

The military police were called in to deal with us, the Ktunaxa, as an uprising, in the late 1880s, only four generations away from me. My great-great-grandfather’s was the first generation of Ktunaxa to be “Indian.” Indians who served their country through military duty or who attained a postsecondary education in any field were made “non-Indian” and subjected to

the body politic, with all its inherent racism and none of the relationships that matter for life lived long and well, forcibly exiled from the reserves onto which we were corralled. Additionally, women who married non-Status men, and their children were also “disenfranchised” from being Indian and exiled from all their social relationships and place of residence.

Before the 1960s, Indian agents, employees of the federal government, guided by the Indian Act and section 91 (24), were responsible for making decisions that affected the day-to-day lived experiences of Indians, and Indians lived on reserves. Indian agents were mostly self-supervising managers and administrators of programs and services developed and implemented by the federal government of Canada. Indian agents were not Indians themselves; they were usually military men or men with postsecondary educations, and some were church representatives or politicians. And though there were formerly Indian men who were also military men or men with post-secondary education, even church representatives, they were not entitled to become Indian agents because, despite no longer being an Indian, by law, one could not remove one’s being and belongingness so easily.

Local experiences of colonization vary, perhaps reflecting Indigenous Peoples’ water- and land-based cultural and linguistic diversities, including migration by Aboriginal Peoples that has resulted in an “urban” population, many of whom are now second- and third- and fourth-generation removed from their homelands because of a “disenfranchised” ancestor. Framing Indigenous Peoples’ forced diaspora as urban Aboriginal experience has denied that their location has always occurred in someone’s territory, even when it is within their own homelands. “The process of diaspora,” according to Neal McLeod, “involves both physical and spiritual encloement. It is the move away from the familiar towards a new alien ‘space.’ This new space attempts to transform and mutate pre-existing narrative and social structures.”³⁵ My family has survived, though somehow we have no lands to call home within my reserve community and neither did my mother. Through policy set by the federal government not by Ktunaxa people, lands have been “willed” through certain processes, whittling away who received them, until there are no longer any lands set aside for us.

We live in our homelands with a sense of place but not of home, as minorities in our homelands. Of the national population of Indians, about half live away from their reserve communities. The reasons are many: employment, education, housing, access and quality of programs and services and that problematic Indian ideology that results in a lack of belief and faith in our own infrastructures and relationships.

All Indigenous persons have had either in their lifetime, or those of their ancestors, these experiences of erasure and the reterritorialization of place within their lifetime. That children do not know the name of the place we call home, in Ktunaxa, reveals how deep that reterritorialization is. How we are all related is also restructured, with children not knowing how we are related.

When I first returned home, I was registered with one band but was told by a woman who is as close to a grandmother as I will ever have that my family belongs to the band I am now registered to. This move started me on a genealogical journey to better appreciate the social restructuring of myself that also allowed me to consider how I belonged, where I belonged, and with whom I belonged and how these connections became undone. The genealogy helped me to recognize my extended family, while also helping me to understand the lands and waterscapes where I feel at peace—the routes I take, while driving, and the places where I hike and camp.

This is a key leadership factor in that as we are putting forward formal Aboriginal rights arguments and seeking lands and resources agreements, we are doing so without ensuring that young people, who will someday be of age to implement such decisions, know what it means to be Ktunaxa and how to ensure cultural continuity through these agreements into time immortal. Negotiating and implementing any of these agreements requires that people who have the skills, tenacity, vision, and cultural foundations ensure that these agreements support cultural continuity of some sort. Otherwise these agreements and treaties become the fast track to assimilation and an expensive one at that. This is the freedom and fragmentation that exists in Canada—it is an intellectual and spiritual realm in which intractable conflict originates.

Access to place-based language and culture, which is key to the healthy identity development of any society, is limited, and as a result, cultural continuity is at risk. The Ktunaxa language exists, as do our cultural practices, in part because of the sheer tenacity of my ancestors and their connection and attachments to their lands, waterways, and all living beings, according to our creation story, songs, and activities.³⁶ Although we, as Indians, as Ktunaxa people, can now hold decision-making positions, because of the Indian Act and Canadian and British Columbian social policies, we are not free but fragmented in how and what to do moving forward.

As Dennis H. McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb explain, “The fact that different cultures can have radically different world views reveals something very interesting, not just about cultures, not just about language, but about reality itself and the way in which we can come to know it.”³⁷ Generations of Ktunaxa people, myself included, were not raised according to Ktunaxa cultural- and linguistic-based relationships and knowledges, and the chances are great that our children and grandchildren are not being raised that way either.

Because of federal aspirations and beliefs, steeped in British imperialism and enforced through its version of colonialism, the Ktunaxa language and cultural practices were never a priority for the cultural continuity of the Ktunaxa people. Indigenous Peoples’ languages structure and explain human beings’ responsibilities for and relationships with lands and waterscapes and the ensuing cultures and worldviews that are part and parcel of growing a healthy identity for life lived well and long. But historically these languages have also been determined as the root necessitating such interventions as residential schools and child protection, both of which meet the criteria under Article II of the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide.³⁸ For small tribal groups, such as my own, devastation is real and lasting and not easily addressed within the current political systems and structures.

Our collective memory and knowledge systems have been and continue to be destroyed and erased through administrative funding and priority setting, the devaluing of linguistic and cultural competencies, and the lack of research that transforms the past for future generations. As an “infant speaker,” I can say some words. But my children cannot and do not use much of what they know. They have been limited in learning their mother tongue, as was I.

The experience of having my language forcibly removed from my lived experiences as a child and now learning it anew as an adult has allowed me to consider the many ways culture is transmitted and has caused me to make it a priority to go to places where the language is spoken, where songs are sung and stories told—to take part in ceremonies and to be on and with the lands and waterscapes, to learn in a different way—acknowledging that brain development and acquisition of language has focused on WEIRD science. Gaining access to lands, language, and cultural practice according to place-based Indigenous cosmologies requires acknowledging one’s identity and the geography of one’s location as one’s place.

The loss of spoken Indigenous language becomes symbolic of an underlying cognitive justice issue stemming from the applied human development framework over generations. Within the languages is the knowledge of sacred relationships to local environment necessary for local interpretation and cultural continuity. Healthy culturally congruent identity development is impacted.

Even as Indians, we have not been taught and are not being taught what it means to be Ktunaxa or what it means to be Aboriginal or even Indigenous, because the institutions we are subject to—the school system, the social services and supports, and the emerging governance and administrations—are not prepared to do so. Communities and families are fragmented, and as a result language and culture is an option—underfunded and limited in scope and use. Our institutions and organizations have argued before the Supreme Court for our right to religious freedom, but those efforts do not ensure that our sacred time is acknowledged with time off to actually practice our religious freedoms as Ktunaxa or keep in mind and heart the connections for Ktunaxa people at that time.

My lived experiences as an Indian results from the blatant and dysconscious racism that is intrinsic to the very systems we are attempting to rectify through our self-development.³⁹ But our approach has been tantamount to genocide through administration.⁴⁰ I can see at every turn how entrenched my existence has been within an intractable conflict But I do not think others can see it or are aware of this reality, perhaps because, as Bar-Tal suggests, they prefer to live in the conflict rather than to invest in the massive shifts necessary to understanding conflict and how it is understood and conceptualized to begin with.⁴¹

In Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action have been accepted and implemented according to varying interpretations across Canada by education, industry, and business in keeping with their sense of social responsibility.⁴² While the opportunity to reconcile comes easily, through a workshop or typical invitation to a meeting, most actual truth telling is met with anger, hostility, and resentment or worse. And in many situations "truth" is left out of the "Truth and Reconciliation" movement, even within Indigenous circles.

Development

"Development" structures the existence and operation of the band reserve community system, the residential school system, the child welfare system, economic development initiatives, the administration of health services, the urban Aboriginal community as well as the social, emotional, and cognitive interventions for child and cognitive development. These systems and initiatives stem from the same cognitive orientation, premised on the same ideologies that undermine or exclude Indigenous social infrastructures and values, knowledges, and possible contributions to a greater society. The federal government of Canada, since confederation, has not veered from its Indian problem ideology—if Indians are not extinct, or succumbing to extinction, then they are in need of prescribed and measured development. The "development" ideology, prescribing steps for community, economic, social, and now heightened child and brain development, has been implemented in Aboriginal communities across Canada. A normative teleology of assimilation has been assumed, steeped in the ideal of a "universal" knowledge and humanity and supported by early theorists of developmental science and psychology. The foundation on which the perception that Indigenous Peoples were and continue to be in need of moral, economic, and social development is defined by Western European ideals and grounded in developmental research.

Hugh Shewell, tracing the history of social welfare from just after confederation to the policy shifts of 1965, lays out its impact on Indigenous social infrastructures.⁴³ The colonial system of social welfare, through the reserve communities set up by the Indian Act and constitutional law, caused poverty, neglect, and poor health among Aboriginal Peoples. These past actions now support current ideologies regarding Aboriginal welfare and economic development initiatives as a way out of poverty. Current solutions follow the same philosophical and ideological arguments that created the issues.

Hugh Cunningham points out that the social context of childhood is a Western philosophical framework based on ageist ideologies.⁴⁴ “Society” is “adult”; as such, adult society prescribes what and who “children” are and what their subsequent roles and relationships are—including their participation in society. This is a key point in the early colonial discourse of Indigenous Peoples’ being “children” and later on in the Indian Act of their being “wards of the crown.” Ageism related to the socially constructed child illustrates the political role “child” plays within discussions of self-governance as it relates to the Indian Act.

Being Aboriginal and “children” within Aboriginal families must be included in this discussion because development that constructs Aboriginal children without recognition of their inherent belongingness within and to an Indigenous peoplehood that expands beyond the nuclear family denies the impacts of first contact with explorers and the fur trade, the designation of reserve communities, the introduction of residential schools, the extension of provincial child welfare ideologies and programs, and the assumption that Aboriginal children are English-as-first-language speakers. Children of Aboriginal ancestry and identity are targeted for programs that support and develop universal identities that are state sanctioned and constructed through policy. Developmental theories are informing programs and services that, once applied, undermine cultural identity and attachments of Indigenous Peoples, more globally.

Julia V. Emberley has detailed the colonial ways in which Indigenous social relationships have been restructured into the normative nuclear family through the prescribed roles of mother and father and child and behaviors.⁴⁵ Intergenerational impacts on inherent models of peoplehood affect socialization: the roles, responsibilities, and ways of raising people from their earliest years without the same opportunity to participate in the changing local environment and in changing the local environment.⁴⁶

Gender is also an issue: Western systems are patriarchal, with feminism attempting to balance out, while within Indigenous peoplehood, matrilineal systems assume equality and equity of genders and responsibility across genders. This point is further illustrated in Emberley’s work and is evidenced in current court action to address systemic gendered inequities within the Indian Act.⁴⁷

Abuse and neglect within intimate relationships was enabled through the second colonial carceral institution: the residential school. “Care” for their children was legislated away from Indian parents in 1933—for the Ktunaxa, only forty years after they were coerced onto reserves. The historical legalities associated with the denial of the right to care through parenting are not included in discussions of normative outcomes of good parenting or conversations about how Indian residential schools did not support healthy early childhood development. That the current generation did not “learn how to parent” is a direct outcome of the residential school across generations. The family unit suffers intergenerational trauma and stress compounded by poverty, low cultural continuity, and lack of adequate education and functional language either of the mother tongue or of English.

The healing, the deep dialogue about intractable conflict, is not openly shared or appreciated. Instead, the social issues that generations are dealing with are being reformatted into personal problems, with little understanding of the sociopsychological impact of intractable conflict, and its impacts on peoples, including neurocognitive and biological embeddedness of conflict. The litany of experiences and instances I have described stem from the principles of federal Indian policy. And these principles frame the intractable conflict as it is lived at every turn.

Transformative Research Framework

In conclusion, I propose a tool for consideration that is informed by three ideas. The first idea comes from two elements in the Ktunaxa creation story: the articulation of a problem and the opportunity to address it, presented as a responsibility, and the recounting of the creation of human beings from a water monster that was hunted and killed because of its reckless habits. The theme of transformation permeates our belief system, though it is limited in our current approach to self-development, in part because Ktunaxa knowledge and language has been removed through the many ways of intractable conflict. The second idea was inspired by my reading of Daniel Bar Tal's writing about breaking cycles of intractable conflicts, in which he describes transformation of relations and establishing a new functional worldview. The third idea was inspired by Donald W. Braben's statement that transformative research is "research that sets out radically to change the way we think about an important subject."⁴⁸ Figure 1 is an illustration of the transformative research framework

Research as a process has been limited in its frameworks for Indigenous research, by Indigenous researchers, into issues of which it is important for Indigenous Peoples to have an understanding. Research has been limited to the discipline and according to the relationship of methods to methodologies, to theories according to epistemologies, with the teleology assumed.⁴⁹ Until recently, there has been little discussion of ideologies or ethics. I have been struck by the assumption that institutional ethics really are ethical, when research had disregarded Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems as primitive, including what might be systems and structures of ethics within Indigenous Peoples' natural law.⁵⁰

In reviewing the works and contributions of other Indigenous scholars who had been aware of similar issues and unpacking the process, I came to find aspects that were iterative and transformative. I was able to develop a framework that would enable knowledge systems to interact at varying points in the process to ensure that knowledge produced would be of value and would be valid not only to academe but also to Indigenous Peoples in their self-development.

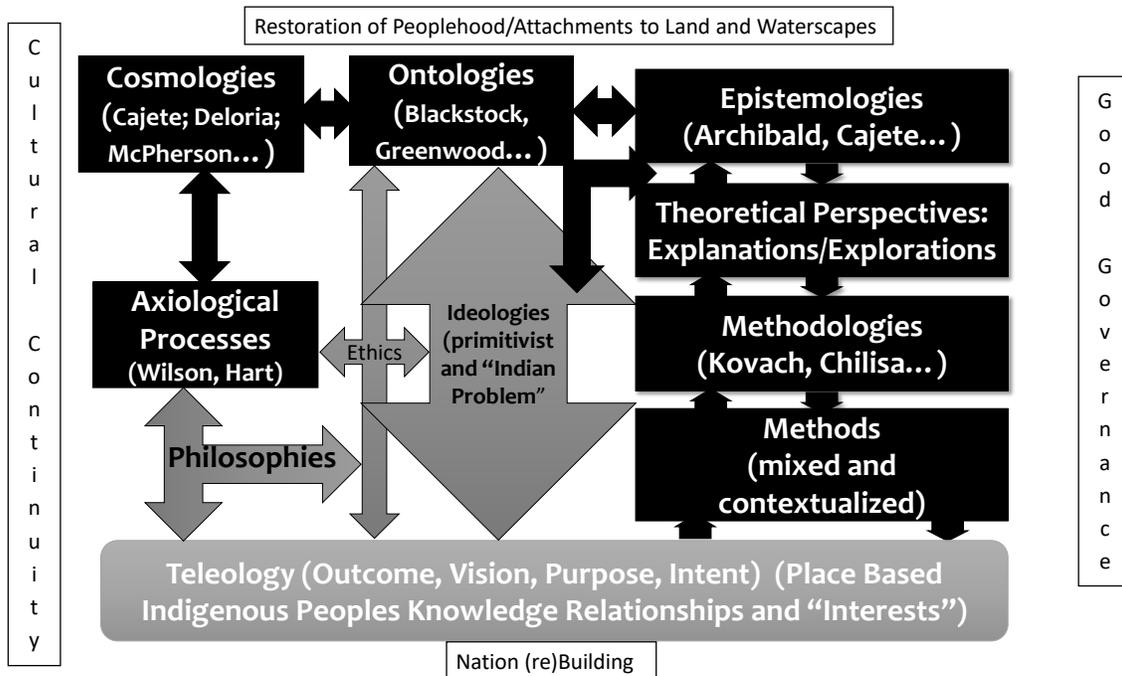


Figure 1. Transforming Research for Indigenous Peoples’ Knowledge Relationships

This framework, which is an article in and of itself, is presented here as a mechanism with which to consider the research processes necessary to transform Indigenous Peoples’ experiences and non-Indigenous peoples narratives toward a resolution stream that does not further perpetuate intractable conflict. Its strength is that it is not prescriptive to a starting point but it articulates points at which local Indigenous Peoples’ knowledges—systems, content, and people—are purposefully considered part of the solution according to their self-development. The work of appreciating and then resolving Indigenous Peoples’ experiences of intractable conflict requires purposeful inquiry. It is worthy work and needed because perception and processes of the past are no longer in keeping with the work of Indigenous Peoples’ self-development during a time of freedom and fragmentation. *Texas.*

Notes

¹ Jacob Bercovitch, “Characteristics of Intractable Conflicts,” in *Beyond Intractability*, ed. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, posted October 2003, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/characteristics_ic.

² *Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation: Twenty Notions for Theory and Practice* (Berlin: Berghof Foundation Operations GmbH, 2012).

³ Daniel Bar-Tal, “Socio-psychological Foundations of Intractable Conflict,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 50, no. 11 (2007): 1432, DOI: 10.1177/0002764207302462.

⁴ Daniel Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 53.

⁵ Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 154–156.

⁶ Section 88 of the Indian Act extends provincial social services to Indian reserves and Indian populations, which are federal responsibilities.

⁷ Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999).

⁸ Daniel Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 35.

⁹ Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis, "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies," *Wicazo Sa Review* 11, no 1 (Spring 2003): 7–24.

¹⁰ Self-development as it is experienced are often community based—including relational communities and not only established geographical communities; participatory and informed by Indigenous Peoples knowledges including our creation stories and relationships to place, cultural practices and intentions.

¹¹ Willie Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. Marie Ann Battiste and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 102.

¹² Shoshana Pollack, "An Imprisoning Gaze: Practices of Gendered, Racialized and Epistemic Violence," *International Review of Victimology* 19, no. 1 (2013): 103–114, DOI: 10.1177/0269758012447219.

¹³ Positivist refers to a philosophy of science that suggests there is one way of knowing, one reality and all fits into this system. From this the 'scientific method' has emerged and is often used in 'evidence based research.

¹⁴.. Axiology refers to the value of knowledge in both how we value, and which knowledge we value, which is often related to ethics. Cosmology is defined as the way in which the universe is as we know it. In this paper, I will use the phrase, 'ways of being, doing and knowing' when referring to Indigenous Peoples knowledges.

¹⁵ Bercovitch, "Characteristics of Intractable Conflicts."

¹⁶ With the changes to the Canadian Constitution in 1982, the term "Aboriginal" was entrenched through section 35—recognizing Aboriginal rights and title. "Indigenous"—meaning heterogeneous people with ties to lands and waterscapes—originates from the global movement of state-identified original peoples coming together and having similar experiences of colonization, oppression, and quite possibly intractable conflict. Most notable is the use of the term "Indigenous" in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>.

¹⁷ In research, "ontology" usually refers to the "the way we understand reality" or have experienced life; "teleology" refers to vision, purpose, and intent within the research process.

¹⁸ Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873–1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

¹⁹ Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts*, 52.

²⁰ Michael McDonald and Eric Meslin, "Research Ethics as Social Policy: Some Lessons from Experiences in Canada and the United States," *Tocqueville Review/La Revue Tocqueville* 24, no. 2 (2003): 61.

²¹ Duncan Campbell Scott was the director of Indian Affairs when his use of the term "Indian problem" was on record. He was also a Canadian confederate poet whose work focused on the "vanishing Indian," to which end his bureaucratic tenure was instrumental. For his comments on the issue appear in his 1920 testimony before the Special Parliamentary Committee of the House of Commons, see [https://tc2.ca/sourcedocs/uploads/images/HD%20Sources%20\(text%20thumbs\)/Aboriginal%20History/Residential%20Schools/Residential-Schools%2010.pdf](https://tc2.ca/sourcedocs/uploads/images/HD%20Sources%20(text%20thumbs)/Aboriginal%20History/Residential%20Schools/Residential-Schools%2010.pdf).

²² Noel Dyck, *What Is the Indian "Problem"?: Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration* (St. John's, NL: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991).

²³ James. S. Frideres and René R. Gadacz, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* (Toronto: Pearson Canada, 2007), 2–10. I have added economic dependence because the definition of economic development does not acknowledge the existence of a place-based economy before contact. Definitions of economic development tend not to include or acknowledge place-based familial and relational economies, such as hunting and berry picking. Instead, these activities are deemed "cultural."

²⁴ Joyce E. King, "Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers," *Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 2 (1991): 133–146.

²⁵ Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, "Two Approaches to the Development of Native Nations: One Works, the Other Doesn't," in *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgenson (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Michael J. Chandler and C. E. Lalonde, "Cultural Continuity as a Hedge against Suicide in Canada's First Nations," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (1998): 191–219.

²⁶ After listening to a presentation by Bijan Khajehpour at the CRIC conference, in which he named "regional strategic competition, I saw easily how intractable conflict was reflected in self-development at home.

- ²⁷ Erik H. Erikson, “Part Two: Childhood in Two American Indian Tribes,” in *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 109–186.
- ²⁸ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 53.
- ²⁹ While I am not a proponent of using sites such as Wikipedia, this entry is appropriate for a brief introduction to the concept “the Sixties Scoop”: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sixties_Scoop. See also Patrick Johnston, *Native Children and the Child Welfare System* (Toronto: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1983), chap. 2, “The Sixties Scoop,” 23–64, which states that the social worker in British Columbia who coined the term admitted that social workers would scoop children out of their reserve communities en masse, out of “genuine concern” because of the state of reserves, which are a fiduciary responsibility of the federal government to administer and maintain.
- ³⁰ Patricia Monture-Angus, *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations’ Independence* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Books, 1999), 8.
- ³¹ Statements such as these suggest that somehow my family was lost—though we were separated by policy—and that my heritage and inherent right to my identity through socialization is limited because of their enforced but limited role in my life.
- ³² I first heard this rendition of my grandparents’ story from my cousin Christopher Horsethief in 2017.
- ³³ Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, “The Weirdest People in the World?” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33, nos. 2 and 3 61–83, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999152X>.
- ³⁴ Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 291.
- ³⁵ Neal McLeod, “Coming Home through Stories,” (*Addressing Our Words: Aboriginal Perspectives on Aboriginal Literature*, ed. Armand Garnet Ruffo, 17–36 (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2001), 28.
- ³⁶ The Ktunaxa creation story takes weeks to tell in its entirety. The publicly available version of the Ktunaxa creation story offers within it an understanding about being—human beings, ʔaqłsmaknik, our responsibilities and structures, and how each one of us has something that is integral to the whole. Though a full telling has not occurred for generations, Chief Joe Pierre, son of Sophie Pierre and current chief of ʔaqam, has been documented telling a shortened version. See http://acip.sd79.bc.ca/transcripts/ktunaxa_creation_story.pdf.
- ³⁷ Dennis H. McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb, *Indian from the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal*, 2nd ed. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2011), 20.
- ³⁸ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948, http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.I_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf.
- ³⁹ Joyce E. King, “Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers,” *Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 133–146, DOI: 10.2307/2295605.
- ⁴⁰ Dean Neu and Richard Therrien, *Accounting for Genocide: Canada’s Bureaucratic Assault on Aboriginal People* (Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood, 2003).
- ⁴¹ Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts*.
- ⁴² http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg, MB: Author, 2012).
- ⁴³ Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873–1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004)
- ⁴⁴ Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (New York: Longman, 1995).
- ⁴⁵ Julia V. Emberley, *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
- ⁴⁶ Holm, Pearson, and Chavis, “Peoplehood.”
- ⁴⁷ Most recently, in *Descheneaux v. Canada*, 2015, QCCS 3555, the Canadian Supreme Court has tasked the Canadian federal government with addressing historical inequities with the Indian Act, referred to as the “double mother clause,” and the “cousin clause.” See Pamela D. Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity* (Saskatoon, SK: Purich, 2011).
- ⁴⁸ Donald W. Braben, *Scientific Freedom: The Elixir of Civilization* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 36.
- ⁴⁹ Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 4.

⁵⁰ Supreme Court of Canada has acknowledged Indigenous Peoples natural law as exists, which underpins such constitutionally protected rights, as Sec 35. *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* 2007 and *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* 2014—both of whom are Indigenous Peoples located within the colonial boundaries of British Columbia Canada.