

# **Dissecting Internal Community Barriers and Subsequent Devaluation of Indigenous Graduates: A Discussion on Stereotypes, Knowledge, Power and Social Space based on an Osoyoos Indian Band experience**

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## **Introduction**

There is a distressing trend in Indian Country today and this is related to the treatment of recently graduated Indigenous students. As students, there is usually an overwhelming sense of accomplishment and enjoyment after completing a degree in a foreign knowledge system existing within Western educational institutions. Countless Indigenous students move away from their reserves to attend university or college, in the hopes that after they finish their degrees, they can return home and contribute to the wellbeing of the community. Often that is not the case and, unfortunately, Indigenous graduates are not being employed by the reserves they previously committed to.

This is the current situation that I hope to unpack in this paper, which are the interlocking obstacles facing Indigenous students. I believe the first step to shaping our own horizons is the ability to filter, through an Indigenous lens, Eurocentric concepts and ideals. Only afterwards, will such ideals be truly applicable and beneficial to our communities. This conceptualization is not new and is well known by Indigenous scholars (Smith 1999; Deloria 1969). Indigenous graduates possess such a lens; unfortunately, they remain idle and devalued in both the Indigenous community and Western society abroad.

I will be looking at the issue from the perspective of space, racism, ignorance, power and identity. All grounded in a historical context that has shaped our realities. It is important to note that there is no single individual or group of individuals that are responsible for this situation, as the situation has been created through colonization, imperialism, popular culture and even Indigenous People themselves. It goes beyond the person or policy and is institutionally located at a societal level.

I am speaking from the position of a Syilx person, one who is visibly *native*, grew up on a reserve and experienced daily, white supremacy, capitalism and paternalism. Therefore, I will be drawing a lot from the experiences of my own reserve, the Osoyoos Indian Band, and will be speaking of the experiences of myself and community members. In doing so I am conscious of the intent of this paper, which is to hopefully spur a critical discussion within my own people. As such, I will be incorporating a narrative discourse because it is not academia that is my intended audience.

As Indigenous People we are told that the knowledge you possess has been created through your experiences in life, therefore, my community is the only space I feel comfortable discussing. Also, I will be incorporating into this discussion a critical discourse analysis, which will be focused on the voice and text of Band leadership and the language of others who describe the Band. This perspective is important because within critical discourse analysis we begin to see the naturalization of society values and ideology, which aren't necessarily Syilx. As Dijk explains critical discourse analysis focuses

on the ways 'discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of *power* and *dominance* in society (2001:353).

Also, I will be incorporating Hooks' (n.d.) interlocking analysis as a frame to the discussion, but will focus more on paternalism instead of patriarchy<sup>1</sup>. Hooks describes the reasoning behind her framing as:

*I began to use the phrase White Supremacy Capitalist Patriarchy, because I wanted to have some language that would remind us continually of the interlocking systems of dominations that define our reality and not to just have one thing, gender or race as an important issue. That particular jargon was a way of saying all of these things are functioning simultaneously in our lives. If I really want to understand what is going on in my life, right now, at this moment, as a black female of a certain age, I won't be able to understand it if I am only looking through a lens of race, I won't be able to understand it if I am looking through the lens of gender, and I won't be able to understand it if I am looking at how white people see me.*

## White Society

In order to fully understand the inner workings of reserve life, we need to take a look at the overall society, which the reserves are embedded. The structures within white society as a whole have not been created by accident. Also, the fundamental ideologies present are very hostile to all people of color, including Indigenous People. Looking at the systems surrounding our reserves is important because there are interlocking ideologies that we can draw from through a white studies analysis. Ideologies such as white privilege, ignorance and color blindness affect the reserve institutions and individuals. I believe that there are distinct parallels that can be seen with the treatment of Indians<sup>2</sup> on reserves and within white society. These are important because the perpetrators of such behaviour can be white people or other Indians.

First, it is helpful to summarize white studies as a theory. Delgado and Stefanic (1997) describe white studies as the look at how race is constructed and they ask questions about race, power and society. When looking at whiteness there is an attempt to understand white privilege, such as: The expectations that come with membership within dominant positions; power relations and hierarchy within society; and, virtual invisibility of institutions economic and material benefits. It is important to note that whiteness is not static and there can be movement upward or downward within near-white groups. However, as we shall see, many minorities only attain near-white status, and are never looked on as

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<sup>1</sup> I have substituted paternalism for patriarchy because I do not feel comfortable speaking from a feminist perspective. Also, I hope that this is not perceived as devaluing or minimalizing the effects of paternalism on our communities. Furthermore, my focus here is on leadership, who have appropriated paternalism into their leadership philosophy and my critique is structural, which falls equally on the shoulders of both men and women leaders who have assumed this style of leadership. Also, I do hope that other Indigenous feminist scholars will add value to this discussion in the future.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term *Indian* here and elsewhere as it is more appropriate to the explanation of certain theories, also, I believe this is how our identities are framed within those theories. As Indians, this archaic view is an important marker to distinguish our identities and allow those theories to appear logical.

being fully white. Within this paper, discussing white studies first is not out of priority or grounding of some sort. The main reason is by understanding whiteness in Western society; we can make correlations and draw conclusions to the whiteness we see within our reserves. This will help in our own discussion of where our identity, race, power and society are located.

Within this analysis I have also consciously chosen the term white supremacy and not simply racism. As Hooks (n.d.) explains, it is an important breakthrough when discussing race and racism to use white supremacy over racism, because:

*[R]acism does not allow for a discourse of colonization or decolonization, the recognition of the internalized racism within people of colour; ... the term racism keeps white people at the center of the discussion. When we use the term white supremacy it doesn't just evoke white people, it evokes a political world that we all frame ourselves in relationship to ... white supremacy ... allow[s] one to acknowledge our collusion with the forces of racism and imperialism. Those words were a constant reminder, one of institutional construct ... not individual beliefs. That we are not talking of personal constructs, such as how do you feel about me as a woman or how do you feel about me as a black person, but they really seem to me to evoke a larger apparatus.*

One of the reasons that Hooks (n.d.) indicates as the original thought behind using the term *white supremacy* is the applicability to her own people. She provided the example of her sister who was discriminated against by her own grandma and often called “blacky” because of her dark skin and hair texture. In terms of Indians, there is a similar example within hiring practices, where white people are hired over Indians, regardless of qualifications or background. Often this occurrence is described as internal racism or lateral violence. However, I could never accept those terms as providing a full explanation for the types of actions I observed. I had to question whether our elected Chief Clarence Louie (Findlay 2006) really believed his explanation for not having any Indians on the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporations (OIBDC) board of directors:

*There's a group of natives that feels entitled, and that needs to be changed to a culture of performance ... [y]ou don't hand over the keys to a multi-million-dollar business to someone who hasn't earned it. That's a recipe for bankruptcy.*

There are people within our community that hold business administration and law degrees, however, they have yet to be involved in OIBDC operations. I will return to this example later but believe it is an important observation because as we have seen within our own communities, there is an appropriation of values originating from within white supremacy. These values have not been abruptly assumed but have been naturalized over time. I believe the naturalization of such beliefs is a good indicator of what Hooks calls institutional constructs because they are beyond racism. Individuals holding such beliefs actually believe them to be *how the world works* and if there was underlying racism, it could be easily recognizable as discrimination. This was seen in MacGregor (2006) observation after hearing some of Chief Clarence Louie's comments that ‘[h]e is, fortunately, aboriginal himself. If someone else stood up

and said these things — the white columnist standing there with his mouth open, for example — [y]ou'd be seen as a racist.' Comments like this creates is a space that allows for the appropriation of white supremacy values because, as Hooks argues above, the problem is more related to institutional constructs and not what individuals believe, regardless of their ethnicity or identity. It should not matter if the person expressing such opinions is Indian or not, it is the message that is being relayed because that message has been aligned with the values inherent within white supremacy.

Therefore, It is the larger apparatus that needs to begin the discussion and this includes drawing a direct link between white ignorance and white supremacy. For Mills (2007:15), the phrase '*white ignorance* implies the possibility of a contrasting *knowledge*, a contrast that would be lost if all claims to truth were equally spurious, or just a matter of competing discourses.' It is not that there can be no truth in competing claims within knowledge but when white people deny or have no comprehension of any other knowledge available in the world, this enables position and subsequent argument of ignorance. Their system of knowledge and understanding becomes *the system*, instead of *a system* embedded within multi-culturally and multi-layered systems. This has direct implications for Indians because as Mills (2001:15) points out:

*The idea of group-based cognitive handicap is not an alien one ... if not normally couched in the terms of ignorance. Indeed, it is, on the contrary, a straightforward corollary of standpoint theory: if one group is privileged, after all, it must be by comparison with another group that is handicapped.*

Therefore, it is not neutral reasoning that shapes society because society's creation is formed from the production and validation of certain knowledge. In terms of our communities, there are still questions surrounding what knowledge is shaping our society. This question is complicated by Lohmann's position that the production of society is more concerned with the means than the ends. Lohmann (as cited in Alcoff 2007: 53) asserts 'all that remains from the social production of the knowing individual is the individual who must submit to reality, who must accommodate himself in order to maintain himself.' Additionally, Alcoff (2007:53) weighs back into the discussion to add:

*This is because the reduction of reason to the calculation of means, and the foreclosure of any interpretation, analysis and critique of ends themselves, results necessarily in a loss of a sense of meaningful ends. The actual ends to which we must accommodate our lives then have no perceptible justification.*

In terms of means of the Osoyoos Indian Band, Clarence Louie (SSCAP 2005) states 'we need First Nations people with business sense and who want to create jobs and make money'. Therefore, the means are capitalist gains validated through economic rationalization. Within this vein of capitalism, Alcoff (2007:56) offers a few comments on Max Horkheimer's view:

*However, the objective reason that Horkheimer champions is not politically neutral, a mere method subject to various political uses but without a politics of its own. He argues that the political implications of reason will emerge from following reason beyond pragmatic concerns,*

*rather than truncating it to a means-ends calculation. Capitalism forecloses rational deliberations over ends, because it well knows that it cannot win that game: its ends are no match for critical reason. Hence, reason must be restricted in order to preempt the objective truths it would reveal. Ignorance is the result. The cognitive norms that produce ignorance ... are those that naturalize and dehistoricize both the process and product of knowing, such that no political reflexivity or sociological analysis is thought to be required or even allowable. If one is simply describing the facts as they appear, then political questions about knowledge are indeed irrelevant and even unintelligible.*

If we accept that capitalism is in itself the means, then the rationality behind not having Indians on the OIBDC board is not one of race or identity, but one of restrictive reasoning within capitalist assumptions of reality. This is dangerous because if we accept Alcoff's analysis that there is no political reflexivity or sociological analysis, then the whole process is consumed in the present. However, that present is framed within a capitalist reality, which has its origins in Western society and carries with it the same assumptions of identity and white supremacy applied to Indians. Profit and jobs become the goals, and all other possible ends are truncated through ignorance. Ignorance in this sense meaning the only knowledge validated is that which relates to capitalist principles. However, Indian communities fail to recognize that this knowledge has been created directly through ideals of white supremacy. We should be aware of that connection, even if we accept it capitalist means we need to be aware of the implications behind such strategies. The absent sociological analysis that results in Alcoff's dehistoricization can be readily seen through examples such as, Indians being herded on reserves to free up lands for settlement and development and inherent fishing rights are now measured in economic terms and not cultural impacts or significance to language revitalizations. Always, there is the underlying assumption within capitalism that Indians are not progressive and therefore primitive. These are the unequal power relations that have been created out of capitalism. By only concentrating on the means, which have been constantly hostile to Indians, there can be no other result other than the unequal power relations that have been present throughout history. If we choose a certain capitalist path we should be aware of the intrinsic reasoning and knowledge behind its creation.

Capitalist ideology is not natural and it is only through ignorance that we can claim so. This becomes clear through and experience that Hooks (n.d.) provides:

*I sat on a panel with black executives and a white female executives at Sony and they all said that race is not the issue, the only color that matters in this society is the color green, the color of dollars, this is another American myth that people want to believe right now, that only dollars matter, because not only does it allow the collusion of people of color with the perpetuation of white supremacy, or women with the perpetuation of patriarchy, it also creates a culture where there is no moral or ethical evaluation that you can bring to bear on anything because the assumption is that we all share the common morality of the*

*dollar, get as much as you can, as quickly as you can, by any means necessary.*

It is hard for Indigenous students to assume ignorance because of the critical mind that is active and fully aware of the underprivileged position that is held. There is inequality present every day within the lives of Indians, as such, this inequality is a constant reminder of our current situations. We grapple with understanding the deeper meanings behind ignorance that recreated white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy in our communities. How then can we simply put the blinders on again and continue through life as active reproducers of that ignorance or agents of its reproduction.

This is how Western society works and by now we can see the parallels within the vision that Indian leaders and governments have adopted, and the true origins of these goals. However, we still need to discuss how these institutional constructs play out within Indian communities. There is difficulty, because the identities and cultures of individual community members are not homogenous. Individuals within each of our communities are at different levels of decolonization, cultural revitalization, education and religious beliefs. Although, there are characteristics of our societies that we can critically analyze and draw conclusions about, with a focus on whether or not these aspects are harming or benefitting our identities and community.

### **Rez Society**

*I have been working here many years. One day I decided to ask for a raise and I was told that, "Well, if you want a raise, then we can no longer afford you, so you will be laid-off." So, I didn't ask again.*

*"Guess what? All I got was a five-cent raise this year. Man, why would they even bother giving it to me at all?"*

*One day I wanted to know why I did not make as much money as the employees who were non-Native, I was told "We don't need to pay you as much because you pay tax and the non-Indian employees have to pay tax so we pay them more."*

In the previous section we outlined how ignorance plays a vital role in the defining of goals and how those goals are concerned mainly with the means, which have been centered within capitalism. The above comments are from actual community members of the Osoyoos Indian Band. It is my hope, in this section, to begin understanding how these comments have been created. I will focus on the space of the reserve and draw conclusions about the incorporation of white values and identities. It is these values and identities that we need to understand, if they have been created out of ignorance, and if so, should we continue incorporating them in our decision making. Mainly, I would like to analyze why and how this peculiar space that has been created, called our Indian reserves, where comments like the ones provided above can become not only accepted but seem so natural and everyday.

### **Space**

First, some background on how the Indian reserve was created. The boundary and area called a reserve has had a profound impact on Indians, as a geographical space it was created for the sole purpose of

subjugation and assimilation. More specifically, the reserves were created to cut Indians off from their lands, way of life and subsistence. As Harris (2002:283) comments:

*[V]irtually from the time the reserves were laid out, neither they nor pre-settler economies, such as remained, nor the two combined, could provide reliable livelihoods for most Native people in most parts of the province [of BC].*

Today, to slow the subjugation and assimilation process and to make attempts at some limited form of self-sufficiency, Indians solicit investment. Typically, investors lease lands within a reserve and erect various businesses. The main benefit to the community is a fixed lease payment from the investor and jobs<sup>3</sup> offered to the Indian residents. I must first note that it is nearly impossible for Indians to invest in any capital themselves. There are many barriers such as limited collateral, initial start-up funds, limited infrastructure and often, remote locations.

I would like to focus on some of the underlying assumptions that policy makers held during the creation of the reserves. What is of particular interest here is the conscious belief that in restricting the Indians economy through a limited access to land, this would facilitate assimilation. The goal was to limit the land area in such a way that would eventually force Indians into the general economy of white society. During the Confederation years, 1871-6, Harris (2002:88) explains that historically the province of BC's Indian land policy was formed through the following explicit assumption:

*Indians should mingle with non-Indians in the workplace. It was important to get Indians into the workforce, not to give them land that they would not use, or that, if they became small farmers, would deflect them from wage labour, discourage mingling, and delay the progress of civilization among them.*

I understand that the need for some income generated within the reserves, however, we still need to keep intact our way of life and value systems. If the assumption were to force Indians into workplaces in order for assimilation, then theoretically, we would be facilitating our own assimilation if we were to simply bring any and existing spaces of work onto our reserves. This theoretical situation is one that I hope to spur more discussion, because as Indians we have to be clear in what type of workplaces we allow and support in our communities. As Alfred (2005:222) comments after talking with Ray Halbritter on the issue of Indian gaming:

*For elders rooted in Onkwehonwe (Original People) philosophies, the lessons of the traditional teachings is that we must be cautious and guard against the error of going beyond being practical to being pragmatic, which happens when we separate the principles by which we govern our lives and our communities from their Onkwehonwe*

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<sup>3</sup> There is the possibility of taxation, according to the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 'the power for enacting First Nation property tax by-laws is contained in the *Indian Act* and the *First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act*. Other First Nation tax powers are set out either in generic, enabling legislation, such as the *First Nation Goods and Services Tax Act*, or in comprehensive lands claims and self-government agreements' (2007, p. 1 or 7)

*philosophical roots and begin to move toward an ethic of efficacy based on calculations of interest and power (222).*

There is a very immediate sense of urgency within Indian communities that we have to develop our own economies. It is recognized that if we do not develop our own economies we will be forever dependent on the Canadian government for funding. However, what is not understood is how we go about it or even, if the way we are currently operating our economies is in the right path. As Alfred points out above, we really need to consider how and where our traditional teachings can inform our economic practices. If not, we will be a community without principles, only focused on the means to achieve some power through the limited economies of our own. However, we need to determine what this self-sufficiency is, the actual definition of the term that we are striving for. Is it self-sufficiency of our economies, cultures, way of life, political sphere, foods, etc.? In order to understand the situation, we have to focus on our Indigenous graduates because it is these graduates that are our best indicators. Indigenous graduates that are the ones, who enter a foreign education system, learn foreign concepts and theories and should be able to apply such education to a foreign world and, in doing so, achieve some measure of success. More specifically, if Indigenous graduates, who play white societies game by their rules and make it through, then they should be the ones who are accepted especially within our own communities. If not, then we really need to rethink the direction we are heading in and the institutional constructs we have created.

### **Identity**

As studies have shown education is key to success for Indians, and I would assume non-Indians as well (Beavon et al 2006). What is of concern here is what happens after you become educated. Often, educated Indians are doomed to leave the reserve or never return from urban centers. There are important underlying questions surrounding existing economic development and the barriers to educated individuals. I believe that it is not enough to erect a business on reserve and then place community members in employment positions, without fixing the structural and institutional inequalities facing Indians on an everyday individual level. As Shome (1999:109) states ‘Whiteness needs to be studied through the interlocking axes of power, spatial location and history’.

I hope that by focusing on the structural and institutional inequalities we will begin to build truly meaningful economies. Again, as it is important to bring into the discussion a discourse analysis, I will begin here first and words and messages of leadership and the language used from the outside to describe them. In terms of critical discourse analysis, Marsten (2004:46) stated the concern is with:

*[A] form of inquiry that is focused on discourse and agents connected to social struggles, critical discourse analysis assists in exploring the role of identities and representations in the organization of social and political life. But more than that critical discourse analysis highlights the way in which subject positions and social relations are contingent, appropriated and resisted.*

Whiteness as a form of analysis is brought back into the discussion. As Shome (1999:108) describes whiteness is ‘not just about bodies and skin color, but rather more about the discursive practices, that, because of colonialism and neocolonialism, privilege and sustain the global dominance of white



imperial subjects and Eurocentric worldviews.’ It is not specific people that are agents of white privilege and global dominance but the discursive practices.

When looking at the problems within Indian communities, we can begin by identifying the discursive practices that resonate within white supremacy. For instance, some words from Chief Clarence Louie (2006):

*Indian Time doesn't cut it. My first rule for success is: Show up on time.*

*My No. 2 rule for success is, follow Rule No. 1.*

Chief Clarence Louie's main focus is on economic development, and is very well known in Canada in that regard. However, economics, when focusing purely on business and finance, is a particularly hostile arena for Indians, because the ideologies and material components of white supremacy get crystallized within business and corporate structures. Therefore, in order for Louie as an Indian to be successful in this arena, it is imperative that he distances himself from the stereotypical Indian. When we look at corporations, especially when we focus on resource corporations, it becomes clear that there is a need for inequality and domination in order to succeed. This was the original intent within the defining of reserve boundaries, to free up traditional territories for resource extraction and land ownership. Further, the origins of such stereotypes are rooted in an ideology based on white supremacy, one that needs to be legitimized before there can be a definition of a *good*-Indian. This becomes clear when we remember other Indian stereotypes within the business world, as Indians are commonly viewed as drunks, lazy, always missing days, never on time and so on. However, if we spring forward, what happens in ten years if we all become *good*-Indians, as gauged by white business? That is, if we were always on time, hard working, not *lazy* and showed up every day, would that bring about the success that Louie is talking about above? What about the material inequalities that are present would they still persist?

These are the types of questions that need to be clarified. To me, simply showing up on time or even assuming all the qualities valued within business is an extremely over-simplistic analysis of the direction our communities should be heading in. I believe we would still be placed within these racially categorized identities because the identities we carry go beyond the individual. These identities are more structural and ingrained at a societal level. We have to remember that as Indians we are still operating within white supremacy, only now in situations willingly, as our values become aligned with corporate Canada. Furthermore, I believe this approach alone will never benefit our communities because on an individual level, when Indians demonstrate every value within corporate Canada, they will never be entirely successful because success within these institutions is not based on merit but that of inequality and white supremacy.

This is a common misconception, that success is based on individual merit, which is calculated by how many ideal corporate characteristics can be recognized within an individual, such as being on time. However, in terms of merit found within Indians, it is not that simple as showing up on time. This situation is similar to the work that Lewis had done on gender-blindness within the workplace. Lewis (2006:453) found that female entrepreneurs were actively colluding to the gendered nature of entrepreneurship. Also, they were even concealing its presence and refusing to accept a:

*[S]elf-conscious understanding of themselves as gendered actors ... Such gender-blindness, while appearing to be progressive, conceals women's continued disadvantage, neutralizing gendered experiences which privilege the masculine.*

Lewis (2006) had criticized many studies on gender relations within the workplace for assuming gender-neutral entrepreneurship and interpreted gender as a variable, which may or may not impact women's success. Lewis (2006:454) comments that:

*[G]ender should be understood in relation to structures, institutional and cultural practices and discourses, not simply as something which emanates from certain individual beings. From this perspective gender is treated as an analytic category in its own right, as opposed to simply being another variable.*

I believe that such a conscious analytical categorization is relevant to discussions of Indians within the workplace. An analysis of being *Indianned* needs to be incorporated because there is a conscious shift from the individual to a broader institutional and cultural scope because, as with gender, workplaces are not race-neutral. Here I would like to remind everyone of the archaic identity of Indian I am referring to, which is categorized as simple, primitive and backward. Lewis (2006) had also recognized a paradox and this was seen in the very existence of gender-blindness. Researchers were faced with women who do not actually believe they are gendered actors and also wanted to behave as if gender was no longer an issue and no longer mattered. This happens internally within Indians as well; as there are many who choose blindness to the racial categorizations and structures they are placed within. Further, they choose to carry on daily lives as if being Indian had no bearing on their success or failure. However, I would also like to point out that blindness is critically important to the reproduction of inequalities.

Getting back to Louie's rule for success, there is a clear upholding of the principle of merit. Within the belief of merit, there is a common perception that organizations and institutions are objective and unbiased and that if individuals *show up on time* they will succeed. However, as Lewis (2005: 458) points out:

The emphasis placed on merit, and the suggestion that prospects have never been better for women have contributed to the emergence of a gender-blind ideology which claims that gender is no longer important. A central element of this ideology is the presumption of a gender-neutral social context. Gender-blindness, like colour-blindness, is a variant on the traditional of liberal individualism which exonerates the advantaged from any blame for current inequalities while also blaming the disadvantaged, either implicitly or explicitly, for their own condition. Acceptance that gender is no longer an issue might be the price women are willing to pay to gain access to the mainstream executive culture. In doing this, women also appear to be trying to avoid being marked and symbolically constructed as *the other*. By maintaining a silence about the masculinist paradigm in which entrepreneurship is embedded and understanding their experience of entrepreneurship as the ability to abide by *universal* standards of good business, some women are trying to avoid being identified as different from the masculine norm. Within such context the belief those women who have *made it* (or

think they can make it) in the *neutral* (masculine) system and those women who have not, or do not appear to abide by the system's demands.

Lewis suggests that there is some similarity between gender-blindness and color-blindness, an assertion that I would agree with. This can be seen in the research that she had conducted on female entrepreneurs. There are obvious parallels that can be drawn from this work, as such; I believe it is important to delve into her research a bit further before we draw those parallels.

Lewis (2006) was focused on the gender issues within entrepreneurship and the inequality, disadvantage, control and identity female entrepreneurs faced within the male dominated structures and institutions. Within the research there was a constant trend, where the women who were clearly operating within a gendered system were unwilling to acknowledge themselves as gendered actors. However, willingness or unwillingness to acknowledge the gendered nature of entrepreneurship had little bearing on the overall daily inequalities and identity female entrepreneurs faced. As Lewis (2006:462-3) summarizes:

Despite a commitment to a gender-neutral stance there was a clear awareness among the women involved in the entrepreneurial network that their business behaviour was constantly open to evaluation and that all efforts should be made to ensure that the right impression was given. ... Though individuals might choose not to enact a 'gender display', presenting themselves as much as possible in a gender-neutral way, they cannot prevent others from seeing them and treating them as either gendered male or female ... individuals do not have a choice about being recognized as gendered or about which gender they want to be identified with. ... Thus women (whether they like it or not) are part of, and are shaped by, a gender existence which, in the context of this study, impacts on their business experience.

The example Lewis (2006) provides is an online business forum specifically for female entrepreneurs that were created. Within that forum female entrepreneurs were asked to share knowledge and experiences. However, problems arose when one respondent asked for input on wedding plans. One email response to that specific topic read:

*This is meant to be a forum for women in business (and how to help each other become successful) and it would be nice to keep it that way ... Please can we stick to business related issues only (Lewis 2006:461).*

This is important because it points out the active policing of identity that individuals were subject to. Also, through much of the responses provided, there was no recognition of the structures that caused female entrepreneurs to be gendered in the first place, only this type of policing of identities. As Lewis (2006:465) points out:

*There is a clear awareness among the members that highlighting or discussing issues that can be categorized as gender concerns (or women's concerns) is likely to lead to a general questioning of women's business competence. In particular there is a recognition that the unintended consequences of participating in a discussion forum where gendered (perceived non-business) issues are introduced is that every*

*individual (not just those who display this behaviour) is at risk of not being recognized as a bona fide entrepreneur.*

What is significant here is the policing of identities by these women are clearly focused on not wanting to be singled out and seen as *the other*. Lewis (2006:456) recognized that the normative standard female entrepreneurs were judged by was that of an invisible masculine norm and their ‘behaviour is judged as differing from the normative standard of serious, professional business, women experience *othering* as the non-male and are marked out.’ What is significant is *all* of the behaviour of female entrepreneurs is judged, both the professional and personal lives, this is clearly not the case with male entrepreneurs, who may want to discuss golf on a similar online forum. Also, in not wanting to be marked as *the other* female entrepreneurs distance themselves by those that do not adhere to the masculine norm. As Lewis (2006:465) adds:

*Those individuals who try to keep gender out of the discussion forum also seek to establish an us and them, differentiating themselves through their comments from those they deem to be demonstrating inappropriate gendered behaviour.*

However, this distancing is done at a behavioural level and focused on the individual female entrepreneurs. This implies that gender issues are not structural but are an individual variable. Lewis (2006:460) points out that female entrepreneurs ‘tend to perceive the business world as neutral and gender as an issue they may have to manage, just as they may have to manage other aspects of their business experience.’

Here is where we can return back to Indians because often it is Indians who believe that race is an individual construct and something that can be managed by working hard and showing up on time. However, as Andersen (2003:33) states ‘we do not need to *see* race to have race-specific outcomes. As many have demonstrated, race-blind policies can reproduce privilege.’ There are a couple of issues that need to be discussed here; first, there is the active policing of *the other* and second, the implications of viewing Indianness as something that can be managed.

### ***Policing Indianness***

Chief Clarence Louie (MacGregor 2006) comments ‘[p]eople often say to me, how you doin? Geez — I’m working with Indians — what do you think?’ In order to determine what identity is being actively policed here we need to define what a *good-Indian* is, however, this can often only be done through an analysis of what a *good-Indian* is not. As we have seen in the example Lewis (2006) provides of the female entrepreneurs, there is anger and conflict when another female tries to incorporate discussion topics, such as marriage, that are traditionally only reserved for females bodies. These are seen as too *girly* to discuss for any women wanting to be taken serious as an entrepreneur. It is worth pointing out that Indian businessmen are actors within the same institutions and structures as female entrepreneurs and are themselves, held to the *universal* white male standard. This is important because if we recognize that there is a normative white male standard, then we quickly understand that Indian entrepreneurs and Indian owned businesses will revolt against any identity that locates them away from this standard. Basically, out of fears of being subsequently positioned as *the other*. Again, as with female entrepreneurs, the goal of Indian entrepreneurs and businesses is to appear serious, or good-

Indians. I am treating the individual Indian entrepreneur and Indian business as the same because they both carry the same issues found in identity, race and whiteness.

In order to understand what a good-Indian is I will be relying on images and discourse within the media. The media is specifically important because as Hall (2002:90) comments:

*In modern societies, the different media are especially important sites for the production, reproduction, and transformation of ideologies. ... What they produce is, precisely, representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work. And, amongst other kinds of ideological labour, the media construct for us a definition of what race is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the problems of race is understood to be.*

Therefore, it may be helpful to outline how a good-Indian is defined within media representations. The Osoyoos Indian Band is looked on collectively as good-Indians within mainstream media and this image is regularly upheld. In *Rich Nation* (2006) the following narrative introduction is provided by reporter Kevin Newman:

*Across Canada there is a new class of business people, forging a path of prosperity, from a painful past, they own hotels, golf courses and wineries, high-end luxury, all on native reserves. The status Indian is taking on a whole new meaning. And across the reserve wealthy and reserve are no longer contradictions. ... The land here is harsh and unforgiving, it's considered a desert, one of the driest places in Canada, no easy land to make a living from. Yet it's hillsides are covered by lush vineyards, plump grapes and some of the finest wineries in the world. At the south end of Osoyoos Lake, on the East shore, you will find Nk'mip.*

The message quickly becomes clear, that in order for Indians to have any hopes of prosperity they need to become business people, which is here synonymous with good-Indians. Equally clear, is the reappearing identity of the primitive and backward Indian, which is termed the status Indian who is doomed to poverty. In the first fifteen seconds of the news report we are provided, and I would add reminded, of this dichotomy. The good-Indian is provided with terms as *new* and *prosperity* while the status Indian is aligned with the past and primitive. In terms of aesthetics, from a community perspective, it is very amusing that the editors of the story were even able to find any harsh land. Just when the phrase, 'the land here is harsh and unforgiving' was heard the camera focuses in on a returning desert trail horse ride. However, if the camera were to zoom out any wider the audience would immediately see a forested hillside in the background and lakefront in the foreground. Of course, all such editing to reinforce their notion of a barren land. I would have to question whether the editors contemplated using such visual representation of the *status Indian* to reinforce their position and the dichotomy they interpret.

Within othering there is always a separation of an ‘us and them’. As with the female entrepreneurs example, there are distinctions of what does and does not constitute a good-Indian. However, when we switch the discussion from gender to race, it becomes clear where our initial focus should be directed at: Culture. To me, Indians view and approach to culture becomes the defining split within identities. This is present with the overemphasis on following a business culture within Indian organizations. Also, it becomes essential that our race is checked at the door, for external validity and recognition. This is a clear message within media that presents Indian businesses as bankrupt, internally corrupt and subject to internal nepotism, mismanagement and Indian Time.

Therefore, we need to evaluate how good-Indians view culture. Within *Rich Nation* (2006) there is an exchange between the narrator Kevin Newman and Clarence Louie:

*Narrator: “Spend a few minutes with him (Chief Clarence Louie) and you’ll quickly realize he is a no nonsense executive, happy to smash stereotypes.*

*Louie: “Don’t talk to me about philosophy, I don’t want to hear that you know, you fly with the eagles or run with the deer or swim with the salmon. I want to see how many jobs you have created. I want to see that, those guidelines, of, the per-capita income of our people.*

To the general public this may seem as an innocent declaration; that we need to move past culture and onto issues of economics. What is appalling from an insider and community member’s perspective is the purely stereotypical representations of our Syilx culture. I say Syilx because Clarence Louie is also Syilx. Although, nowhere in our spiritual or cultural Syilx gatherings and ceremonies do our elders and spiritual leaders talk of ‘swimming with the salmon’ or ‘running with the deer’. This cultural representation is so far bastardized and Disney’esc that it doesn’t warrant any more discussion or need to be refuted. Mainly, because it is a non-existing cultural understanding that should not be recognized, let alone debated.

That being said, I believe there is an important underlying purpose and objective of the comment. The overall point is to galvanize the ‘us and them’ dichotomy, in a way that positions Clarence Louie as one of the good-Indians. The strategy used is not to distance from an authentic cultural representation, but to gain distance from a manufactured stereotype existent only within white society. Therefore, to be truly effective, it is the general public that is the intended audience in this remark. However, the unfortunate nature of this comment is the general public’s stereotypes must first be recognized and then distanced from. I must stress that it really is only, the general public that can recognize this language as authentic. This is resonant of what Hall (2004) termed manufactured reality and quickly becomes the crutch that *the others* are left with. The general public is left with the notion that if Indians do not first concern themselves with creating jobs, then they must be spending their time philosophizing about ‘flying with the eagles.’ To be good Indians and recognized as a bona fide businessman, we are required to eliminate our cultural identities, even if they have been falsely manufactured in the first place.

However, culture is not the only focal point, as language also comes under attack. What is even more frightening from a community perspective is this message is being relayed to our children. This can be seen in the news report *Aboriginal Issues: Chief Clarence Louie* (2007). Within this scene Chief

Clarence Louie is viewed talking to a group of Osoyoos Indian Band elementary school children. This is all taking place at the reserve run school as Daryl MacIntyre narrates in the background:

MacIntyre (narrative intro): As an activist himself, Band Chief Clarence Louie knows language is important, but in the 21st Century he thinks there are other lessons every band member should also learn, and learn early.

*Louie (asking the room full of children): Can anyone put up their hand and let me know where they would like to work when they get older.*

*Kid #1: I would like to work where my dad is.*

*Kid #2: I want to be a dentist*

*Kid #3: A massage therapist*

*MacIntyre (background narration): Generations of racism and welfare have crippled First Nations, says Louie, and he says the only cure is hard work.*

*Kids #4: Forestry Worker*

*Louie (to the class): You gotta know your math to work in forestry, you gotta study your math really good, do you know how to count money? It's important to learn how to count money.*

*Louie: It's important to learn how to count money cause money pays for everything*

Here, we are given the message that in order to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Indians will have to put language revitalization aside and focus on money. This message is relayed in the first opening remarks, where it is recognized that language is important. However, right after that recognition, the narrator dismisses that importance, to draw attention to lessons that white society feel are truly needed. In the end, the message is clear, as Indians we need to focus on money before language and culture. This message becomes even more effective because we are seen telling this to our children: in essence, we know language is important but forgo that recognition, and focus on counting money. Similarly to female entrepreneurs and *girly* topics, Indian businessmen must actively avoid culture and language as well.

### ***Managing Indianness***

If it is imperative that to become a good-Indian we need to put aside our culture and language, then what needs to be explored next is how to manage that identity on a daily basis. To apply the female entrepreneur example again, it needs to be determined how Indianness *variables* should be managed for success and to what extent. The premise being that all business people and businesses are viewed and treated equally. Further, if there is an Indian businessman, there are certain stereotypes associated within their identity, however, those stereotypes simply need to be overcome and managed to achieve success. Of course, to allow such a discussion, we have to accept the position that Indianness is a variable, an assertion that we should all by now recognize as false.

However, to begin and add substance to the discussion, we can return back to some examples from the Osoyoos Indian Band. As Findlay (2006) writes ‘with so much poverty in so many First Nations communities across the country, one Chief offers Native Canadians some pretty blunt advice, simply

work harder.’ Also, when speaking of aboriginal business owners, Chief Clarence Louie (MacGregor 2006) ‘wants to see *business manners* develop: showing up on time, working extra hours. The business lunch, he says, should be drive through, and then right back at it.’

However, in order to fully explain this perspective, that Indians simply need to work harder or develop business manners, we need to refer back to the notions of white supremacy and color-blindness. Mills (2007:28) comments on the work of Woody Doane and suggests:

*Color-blind ideology plays an important role in the maintenance of white-hegemony ... because whites tend not to see themselves in racial terms and not to recognize the existence of the advantages that whites enjoy in American society, this promotes a worldview that emphasizes individualistic explanations for social and economic achievement, as if the individualism of white privilege was a universal attribute. Whites also exhibit a general inability to perceive the persistence of discrimination. In the context of color-blind racial ideology, whites are more likely to see the opportunity structure as open and institutions as impartial or objective in their functioning ... this combination supports an interpretative framework in which whites’ explanations for inequality focus upon cultural characteristics (e.g., motivation, values) of subordinate groups. ... Politically, this blaming of subordinate groups for their lower economic position serves to neutralize demands for antidiscrimination initiatives or for a redistribution of resources.*

As we have seen throughout this paper, the source of these inequalities and racialization within the classifications of an Indian go deeper than the individual. These sources are far broader and happen at an institutional, structural and ideological level. Explanations of individual’s successes are very limited when focused on the actual individual. Also, and more importantly here, those individuals’ successes can only go so far within a system hostile to their identities and what they represent. This can be seen in the very representation of Chief Clarence Louie. His persona is never relieved from being marked as *the other* and always described as Chief, native or other Indian markers such as 21<sup>st</sup> Century (McIntyre 2007) or status Indian (Newman 2006). It appears that Chief Clarence Louie can never be just a businessman, very similar to the phrase *female* always being applied to mark women entrepreneurs (Lewis 2006:400).

Also, what is even more restrictive is the advice that Chief Clarence Louie provides is always confined and applicable only to Indians. Again, to recap the media representations provided earlier, what is significant are the descriptions: ‘He thinks there are other lessons every band member should also learn, and learn early’ (McIntyre 2007); ‘Chief Clarence Louie could be mistaken for a Fraser Institute pundit’ (Findley 2006) and ‘one Chief offers Native Canadians some pretty blunt advice’ (McIntyre 2007). There is a structural model developing. The *real* white privileged male business owners are at the center, Indians at the periphery and some Indian businessmen are the intermediary. However, knowledge flows in only one direction, from the white male businessmen, to the Indian intermediary and then to the reserve and Indians. The white male businessmen’s position is guarded by the above



markings and otherings and, more clearly, in the containment of the Indian's knowledge to one sector of society. The good-Indian is recognized, but only to the extent that what they have to offer socially only applies to other Indians. Essentially, the white male businessman is able to maintain his position as *the* expert to all, while the Indian businessman is limited to a sub- expert position.

There is a distinct message to white society: Look at what good-Indians can do for (only) their people, but remember, their success and knowledge is only applicable to the reserves and other Indians, if you want to know how to succeed we (white privileged male businessman) are the only real experts. Also, it should be noted that this sub-expert status is granted only after adhering to the appropriate flow of knowledge and positioning their identity as a good-Indian. Overall, there are certain characteristics, identities and knowledges that the good-Indian must appropriate and assume on a daily basis. Further, it quickly becomes clear that the source and evaluators of such identities and knowledge are white privileged male businessmen. What is equally restricting and very effective identity policing is; good-Indian status must be continuously maintained and will be endlessly evaluated.

Here is where management of Indianness becomes important because good-Indians are granted this sub-expert status only under certain conditions. The principle criterion is the need to follow and incorporate the knowledge of white privileged male businessmen, which informs societies institutions, structures and ideologies. The other is to maintain a certain identity, which of course is again modeled after white male businessmen. This includes forgoing cultural and language principles and identities, in order to maintain that identity and status quo. Therefore, in order to achieve any standing within white supremacy capitalist paternalist structures good-Indians are given access and standing only by assuming certain identities and adhering to the roles dictated by society, which is the sub-expert or it's back to Indian again.

Also, this good-Indian identity is not static and is reevaluated over time. This can be seen in the Indian leadership approach to natural resources and the relationship with Aboriginal Title. Previously, during the early 1990's after Oka there was no space for Indians to assert their Aboriginal Title jurisdiction without being marked as Indians, with terms such as militants and terrorists. However, today it is okay for good-Indians to participate in soft protests, such as information sharing roadblocks, as long as no white people are inconvenienced with infrastructure blockages happening on highways, bridges or railways. Also, there has been space created in assertions of Aboriginal Title as well. Good-Indians are allowed to claim Aboriginal Title to natural resources, only if they are willing to forgo such claims so that benefit sharing agreements and partnerships can be formed with industry and government. Therefore, if Indians are willing to provide business and industry with the certainty they require to extract resources unhindered, they will be marked as good-Indians and subsequently described as progressive and innovative. It becomes clear that it is this business certainty that is above all other needs. Again, we see that natural flow of knowledge that must be maintained. If Indians are willing to accept business and industries perspective and approach to the lands and resources, they become good-Indians. Also, if those good-Indians were to insert any culture or Indigenous knowledge, such as connection to the land or reciprocity and respect, they would be stripped of their good-Indian status. However, that insertion is permitted for aesthetic purposes, such as holding a ceremony or prayer before the signing of a mining agreement or oil extraction permit.

This is related to the work of Furumoto (2002:428) who had found that:

*[S]uch phrases of almost the same but not quite/not white suggests a reading of assimilation policies as a process of partial reform. In assimilation discourse – in which, ironically, the assertion of cultural (white) supremacy depends on the difference it purportedly seeks to eradicate – the ambivalence in the strategy of mimicry lies in the distance between colonial officials' emphatic pronouncements of their endeavors to civilize Indians, and their anxious reiterations of the difference, the otherness, of Indians.*

This observation lies within basic identity theory, where in order for someone to be white, there has to be someone who is not white, in this case Indians. This is important for all of our communities because if the overall purpose is to realign our values from within white supremacy, such as jobs and money or business certainty for resource extraction, we need to be conscious of the origin of such values and the implicit direction we are directed in.

In order to fully understand this situation we need to include a discussion of the material aspects and benefits from our position as Indians. As Lewis (2004:625) explains:

*Studies ... must pay attention to the relationship between ideological and material components of race. The history of US racialization demonstrates that the formation and evolution of white as a racial category (the formation and evolution of race itself) is inherently about struggles over resources. Throughout the history of racialization, material (economic, social and political resources) and ideological elements of race have been inextricably linked; particularly in any examination of whiteness it is critical then the two not be discussed in isolation from one another.*

It becomes clear that racial identity should not be focused merely on the individual and that it should include the formation of social groups organized around material interests with their roots in social structure (Anderson, as cited in Lewis 2004). The process of racialization has been focused around domination. This racialization has been tied to the defining of *self*, not in isolation but through the symbolic construction of *the other* and, more importantly, through the actual domination of others (Lewis 2004). This is an important point because the *other* is created, and maintained, to bring about domination, which in turn, is needed to allow and perpetuate material inequalities. Lewis (2004:630) adds:

*These ideas of cultural superiority were put into action in the defending of civilization against the savages and in the taking over of the land, lives, and resources of these others. Thus, race has both ideological and material components – components that are inextricable both practically and analytically.*

## Reserve Space

In terms of Indian reserves being too small, there is another significant drawback, which is the type of economic development that Indians can actually enter into. The main problem is the Indian Act and within that piece of legislation the land development restrictions and bureaucracy. Within such restrictive development potential overall Indians can never realized any kind of real ownership or substantial benefit<sup>4</sup>. That, of course, is my own inference and is relative and situational and would still be considered up for debate. However, I would like to repeat, that I have concerned my analysis with the Osoyoos Indian Band and the actual community benefit realized, and whether or not our community is better off, is being debated. Mainly, there is no consistency with actual benefits realized by individuals and families; overall there are different definitions of *better off* and different viewpoints and attachments to the land. Also, the current administration will always defend the position that the community is better off because it was their vision that has been realized. The point of this section is not to weigh in on this debate, as the purpose here is to provide a bit more background to the spacial meaning of our reserves and outline some of the restrictions within development as a whole, which have had a direct impact on what developments currently exist. Here I try to lay the groundwork for the following section, how Indigenous graduates fit within what is currently available.

The Indian Act is far too restrictive and bureaucratic in all areas, including development of lands. As Chief Clarence Louie (n.d.) explains:

*The Indian Act is not business friendly, leases take too long, there is too much bureaucracy, businessmen who deal with the Osoyoos Indian Band ... they couldn't believe how slow Indian Affairs is, the amount of regulatory and total BS (crap) the Indian Act land, leasing rules and policies, how they are so outdated and archaic.*

This is a very common criticism of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Indian Affairs) and within such a restrictive and bureaucratic climate business investors are turned off from our reserves.

An additional problem within development on reserve lands is the lease payments. These payments will always be too low, as our lands, because they are reserve will continuously be devalued. First, some context as this undervaluing recently happened within the Osoyoos Indian Band. There was a proposed residential development that was intended to be located on Tuc-el-nuit lake across the road from Nk'mip Canyon Golf Course. In terms of land in general, this was prime real estate; lakefront property, very near an elementary school and across the road from a golf course. However, because the land was on reserve, it was appraised at a very low value. This was pointed out in a community press release:

*The problem begins with the valuation of the land provided by real estate appraisers. Real estate appraisers have no mechanism to adequately value reserve lands. I say this because the \$850,000 value,*

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<sup>4</sup> However, there is the gaming model, which some First Nations have been able to implement and receive some gains from. Although, there is considerable debate surrounding gaming, mainly if the actual economic gains achieved at the community and individual level outweigh all the social problems that coincide with gaming, such as crime, addictions, family violence, child neglect.

*placed on the 15 unit 99 year lease development located on the OIB reserve land, is far too low. Granted, the valuation is limited to an analysis of the prepaid rent value on the 99 year lease and, after Musqueam Indian Band v. Glass in 2000, business developers and appraisers have no idea how to value reserve lands. This has been an ongoing issue and problem, not only in BC but for all of Canada. However, it appears a lot has changed in the market since 2000 and the value quoted for the OIB reserve land is not the true "market rent". (Baptiste, 2007).*

What is significant from a community perspective is the overall benefit. If the monthly lease amount is based on the appraisal amount and not the market rent then obviously it's too low. Therefore, if we are provided with very small lease revenues, then the only other selling point to proposed developments is jobs. Here is the direct link to Indigenous graduates because the type and number of jobs available will draw them back to the community.

Having to solicit investors onto reserves lands truly limits the possibilities of meaningful employment opportunities. Often, the Band is at the mercy of whom ever is willing to face the bureaucratic red tape of the Indian Act. Although, there is the attraction of low lease payments as opposed to having to purchase fee simple land off-reserve. I believe that low lease payments are not enough and would add that, it is not only the land that is being sold as a benefit to investors, it is also the people. During *Aboriginal Issues* (2007), Daryl MacIntyre, when observing an Aboriginal economic development conference in Vancouver, explains the opportunities Indians enjoy:

*[A]fter all, this room is bursting with business opportunities, native populations are soaring, their land holdings are huge and as claims get settled, they have access to billions in cash.*

First, I don't think there is an Indian alive on any reserve that would attest that our reserve lands are huge. Reserve lands are often the last land developed, which may give the impression that they are large, however, that clearly is not the case in the perspective of Indians. However, the opportunity that I will deal with here is native population, which is soaring. A rising populations means more job opportunities are need. In this regard, Helin (2006:241) proclaims urban aboriginals are important because:

*They likely hold the long-term key to the successful economic integration of Aboriginal people in rural communities into mainstream society. They hold such a key because they are comparatively more advanced in education, as a group they have much more experience in the larger world, and are more familiar with how an ordinary functioning economy works.*

The language here is very revealing in terms of the identity of reserve Indians. If Helin is describing urban aboriginals, then the identity of reserve Indians would be seen to be the reverse; where Indians are not advanced in education, are not aware of the *larger world* and do not operate in an ordinary

economy. This is clear in another description Helin (Libin 2008) provides on the growth of aboriginal populations:

*[M]ost aboriginal people are poor. The birth rates amongst the poor populations of the world are almost universally higher than the wealthy population. Essentially, what that is saying is that your biggest population activity is taking place in the poorest population, in the least-educated group of people.*

It is surprising that Helin would revitalize such archaic anthropological beliefs and stereotypes; that poor people have more kids because they are uneducated. Nevertheless, later on in the article, one of the formulas that Helin (Libin 2008) explains will get Indians into a better situation is:

*[I]mproving the education and training of young aboriginals so they can take advantage, to the same extent as their non-native peers, of Canada's ample economic opportunities and a First-World quality of life, rather than the Third-World existence to which so many would otherwise be doomed.*

It is clear that there is a widespread perception within white society and media that Indians are uneducated. However, I will deal in the next section what happens when Indians do get educated, I will focus here on a very important description. That is, the Indian reserves as Third-World zones. It is often portrayed in the media that our reserves are prone to Third world conditions. I believe that it is this belief and ideology that has framed the current development on reserves. Reserves are treated as a typical Third world country and Indians are consequently viewed as a cheap source of labour; as industry, investors and society all perceive Indians as uneducated, and therefore low-skilled. This becomes an ideal situation for industry investors as they walk into an environment with not only cheap land but cheap labour as well. This can be seen in Statistics Canada calculation 'that more than half of native kids are living in poverty; three-quarters drop out of school before completing Grade 12' (Libin 2008). With an employability identity like this, it is hard to conceive that investors are heading to the reserves with the inclination to offer premium wages.

This perception of our reserves as a Third-World existence can explain the experiences provided to introduce this section, such as giving individuals five cent raises. I am certain that investors come to our reserves believing they are doing us an immense favour, by offering us just enough wages to provide a very modest living. Because, in their eyes, people in poverty will be grateful for anything they can get. Personally, I have seen this type of wage regulation, as I was told when negotiating my own wage:

*I know that you have a degree, but the highest paid employee here is making \$12 an hour and if we pay you more than \$12 an hour, then everyone will want more. However, we will pay you \$13 an hour ... but don't tell anyone.*

Much of the reasoning behind such low wages is directed at the income tax break that Indians receive when working on reserve. Indians do not pay income tax; therefore, Indians do not need to be given appropriate wages. However, I would have to ask, apparently a very controversial question within Rez

businesses; why not pay people what they are worth, regardless of the personal income tax break? Not paying income tax shouldn't be an issue, as the businesses if owned or partnered with Bands, do not pay tax on overhead costs or materials. However, as we will see in the next question, there are more issues underlying the income tax reason provided, as it is more to do with identities and appropriation of values within white supremacy.

### **Indigenous Graduates**

Clearly, the structures, institutions and ideologies that are in place on our reserves will impact the individual Indigenous<sup>5</sup> graduates significantly. There are several problems facing Indigenous graduates when they attempt to return back to their home communities. In the previous section, I have outlined how the businesses imported onto the reserves are usually manual labour positions, given the parallel perception of Indians reserves as Third-World and Indians as uneducated. However, there are other significant issues. These problems are what I hope to analyze in this section, as many leaders will attest it is important to have your graduate students return to the community, however, that is not always possible.

The importance of having Indigenous graduates return home is explained by Chief Clarence Louie (2006) when commented in an interview:

*[U]nder the current system, reserves are losing their best and brightest people to the cities because there are no on-reserve opportunities for them. This continually weakens both the reserve and the Nation. Further, Louie cautions that the biggest employer shouldn't be the Band office, but that the Band should create real business opportunities.*

Even though, there are fears of a community brain drain there are still leaders who feel threatened by educated community members. Speaking of barriers to Aboriginal economic development Helin (2006:194) notes:

*Another problem with indigenous communities is that they pay lip service to utilizing their own educated people, but many go out of their way to avoid this. This would make sense to outsiders, but in the context of the dysfunctional attitudes that exist in many communities, educated community members often are viewed as a threat. Sometimes, ethically challenged community leaders are uneasy about having their operations exposed to (and perhaps subsequently exposed by) educated community members who may not agree with how budgets are being managed or not managed, or how resources are wasted.*

I would have to agree that it is very plausible that Indigenous graduates are viewed as a threat, especially to leadership that has been in power for a long time and has little or no formal education. It could be a very threatening situation to have young Indigenous graduates return home wanting to take

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<sup>5</sup> I have chosen to apply the term indigenous here because I intend to show a disconnect between identity and space that has been created within our reserves and the individuals who are coming back to our communities with degrees.

on key roles within the community. Not being the only authority on community issues creates a power shift within decision-making and the sharing of power gets progressively harder, the more years leadership has been operating unhindered and unquestioned. However, I would have to add, from leadership's perspective, maybe they feel there is nothing else that they are qualified to do. If they have little or no education, what else is left, other than a community role? Although here we have reduced our analysis to the individual level, where some leaders may squeeze out individual Indigenous graduates. The focus here is not whether current leadership will or will not resist Indigenous graduates returns, the focus is on the institutional constructs that allow such reasoning.

The other explanation Helin offers is that *ethically challenged* leadership does not want to be exposed. However, as with the previous explanation, this stance again has reduced our analysis to individual leadership. Also, accepting such an explanation would mean we have to recognize and affirm the Indian governance stereotypes within media and white society. Stereotypes that view Indian governance as corrupt, inept or self-serving, which is what we are trying to get away from here. I would have to point out that it is the *dysfunctional attitudes* that should be the focus because this terminology implies something that is underlying, structural and institutional<sup>6</sup>.

In terms of the Osoyoos Indian Band, even though Chief Clarence Louie provides the above declaration, Findlay (2006) offers a different observation:

*[S]urprisingly, there's not a single member of a First Nation on the OIBDC's board of directors because, Louie says, business isn't about race – it's about expertise. "There's a group of natives that feels entitled, and that needs to be changed to a culture of performance," he says. "You don't hand over the keys to a multi-million-dollar business to someone who hasn't earned it. That's a recipe for bankruptcy"*.

The reasoning provided by Chief Clarence Louie for there being no Indians on the board of directors sounds a lot like merit, which has been discussed above. However, apart from the merit discussion and analysis of Lewis (2005), Gould offers a different explanation. Gould (as cited in Lewis, 2005:631) talks about another example in employers' use of stereotypes about black laziness to justify their hiring preferences:

*When whites discriminate against blacks, 'these whites (and blacks) believe that they are simply facing facts ... this belief is a natural outcome of the conjunction of a belief in egalitarian values, the beliefs that equal opportunity is available to all, and clear indications that blacks do not attain the same level of success as do whites ... (Black 'failure') is overdetermined by whites who are committed to egalitarian values of equal opportunity, who believe that blacks have equal opportunity, and who conclude from the fact that black performances*

<sup>6</sup> This is a trend within Helin's writings, often there is a good basic understanding of current situations but then no meaningful, helpful or truly beneficial solutions are proposed because his analysis is fundamentally flawed and co-opted by capitalist and individualistic and Western theories and understanding. See Baptiste, E. (2008) Review of Calvin Helin's "Dances with Dependency".

*often do not measure up to white performances that blacks are lazy and/or dumb.*

I believe that the problem is ultimately related to the individual identity as an Indian, that Indigenous graduates cannot escape when returning home. There real questions begin when there are two individuals with the same education, one is Indian and the other is a white male. The white male being perceived as having a *better* education is a structural construct. Unfortunately, this is a common occurrence. I would add here that it is a broader institutional problem because currently, on the OIBDC board of directors there is an Indian holding a position there. However, I would argue that it is because that one Indian is able to adopt and assume the good-Indian identity discussed above, which is crucial for outside corporate validity.

### ***Education***

For Indigenous graduates education is at the heart of the many-layered issues within identity and space. I will not be criticizing the education system and the inherent problems such as applicability, and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge. Many have already done an excellent job (Battiste and Henderson 2000; Smith 1999). What I will be focusing on here is identity and space, as the very identity of Indigenous graduates is defined by the education they have attained. However, exactly how that definition is interpreted is where this analysis is focused. The term *Indigenous graduate* has varied connotations and meanings, as the term is often applied differently to separate communities and spaces. It becomes problematic when the definition of the term within white society is carried over to reserve space. This is where I believe undervaluing originates, not from our own people, but from the appropriation of definitions rooted in white supremacy.

I may be helpful to expand on a common perception; that the university degrees that are attained by Indigenous graduates are not real. It is really disappointing that many spaces on and off the reserve have naturalized the belief that Indigenous graduates have taken *special* classes specifically tailored to them. I have heard this experience from a number of Indigenous graduates. Also, it goes back to the underlying assumptions of Indians as individuals. This is seen in the belief that somehow we cannot possibly be intelligent enough to complete university degrees and, therefore, have to had preferential treatment along the way. Although it is so obviously racially driven and should not be qualified with a response, I feel compelled to lay this racialized criticism to rest, because there are still some that actually believe it. No, there are no special courses, programs or tests that Indigenous graduates have taken, to enable a passing grade. Although there are some Indigenous students that have been provided flexibility within admissions, those students still had to meet the minimum prerequisites and requirements. Also, once admitted all Indigenous students are required to take the same courses and programs as every other student.

Degrees attained by Indigenous graduates are valid; however, there is still that racial stigma present. This could be the underlying reasoning behind Helin's (2007) assessment of education. Helin 'chastises education, or book learning, as inadequate and not a *real* education. Then, in the second half of the chapter, [he] does a complete reversal and cites how education is fundamental to success' (Baptiste 2008).



Here, I would also have to question what the perceived motives are behind Indigenous graduates even getting an education. Chief Clarence Louie (PSSCAP 2005) offers his explanation:

*To me, once you get beyond the fluff and all the touchy-feely words about what education is for, the educators and the philosophy of education, I believe education is about making yourself employable. ... We all want our kids to graduate so they become employable. Nobody I know goes off to get a college degree or a certified ticket as a carpenter, or whatever it may be, unless there is a job at the end of the rainbow. People go to school to become employable. That is the way I look at education; it is all about making yourself employable.*

The focus isn't as much on the individual graduating but on how that individual is or isn't able to apply that knowledge into employment. Here I would add that we are given the economic approach to education that the sole purpose is for monetary gain. That approach raises a few questions. Would that negate degrees that do not have a definite job at the end? Or, alternatively, what is the minimum amount of money that you should be making after attaining degrees, the point where a graduate degree will appear *valuable*? Also, without rehashing the arguments above, I would have to argue that regardless of the educational achievement of individual Indigenous graduates; they are still being sent into an environment that is unreceptive to them. If the structural and institutional problems within society aren't resolved it is very unlikely that Indigenous graduates will realize any recognition or benefits. Thus, we need to expand our gaze to include structural issues and rethink such an analysis while being mindful of the white supremacy at work. To this it would be helpful to review Hooks ideas on education. Hooks (n.d.) had taught at both Yale and a university in Harlem. The students at Yale were predominantly white moneyed students, while at Harlem they were from the black working class. She describes that within the students there is a:

*[S]ense of agency and brilliance, different from Yale and Harlem, students coming from Yale are open to embracing that future, (which) has more to do with a sense of entitlement of having a future, many students that are in Harlem, who have families, don't have that entitlement or imagination into a future of agency, as such many professors don't try to give the gift of critical thinking, in a patronizing way, education is saying that all these people need is basic tools of survival, basic survival tools, their degree so that they could get a job and not in fact that we enhance their lives in the same way that we enhanced our lives by engaging them in a critical process.*

For Hooks even though there was equal intelligence in both her students at Yale and Harlem, there was a different sense of imagination or entitlement. At Yale, they felt they were owed the world. However, in Harlem, even though they were just as brilliant, the students used education as a survival tool and felt it would get them a better job than the ones they presently held. This is critical because it points to a huge shortfall in education. If students in Yale believe they are owed the world, I would have to assume

it is because they will actually get it, because of their position within society, identity, money, status, etc. This is because society's institutions are set up in this way.

There are parallels here to Indians, who have also become systematically marginalized. However, we must remember the origins of Indian education, the residential schools. It was at the residential schools that the idea of educating Indians in a way that makes them employable first originated. Apart from assimilation and rampant abuse that happened, a key purpose of the residential schools was to prepare Indians for employment within society through rigorous training. As the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) indicates:

*The classroom work of the teachers and students was to be guided by the standard provincial curriculum. To this was added equally important training in practical skills. The department held firm to Davin's industrial model, convinced that no system of Indian training is right that does not endeavor to develop all the abilities, remove prejudice against labour, and give courage to compete with the rest of the world. The Indian problem exists owing to the fact that the Indian is untrained to take his place in the world. Once teach him to do this, and the solution is had. In every school, therefore, the children were to receive instruction in a range of subjects, including, for the boys, agriculture, carpentry, shoemaking, blacksmithing, tinsmithing and printing and, for the girls, sewing, shirt making, knitting, cooking, laundry, dairying, ironing and general household duties.*

To talk to some of the residential school survivors in my own family it become clear that residential schools were preparing Indians for their perceived place in society. Much of the *training* was typically directed at preparations for low wage menial positions in white society. Further, there was very little academic education and teaching and much of the education stopped at an elementary level. I believe that this outlook on Indian education is still present today and it is this outlook that is behind the conflicting viewpoints and difficulty that Helin has in defining education. There is a clear polarity within what Helin (2007) calls a real education and book learning and how education is still fundamental for success. I believe that this distinction is related to the comments on employability above. Also, it is often applied to Indigenous graduates who graduate without a *real* education depending on how employable they are.

However, I would have to question where Indigenous graduates are being employed into. Within Helin's writings he 'urges Bands to welcome oil sands development, diamond mines, pipeline projects, mining, hydro dams and coal bed methane' (Baptiste 2008). Noticeably, these industries do not respect Indigenous values, incorporate Indigenous knowledge, are hostile to Aboriginal rights and title and have no concept of sustainability. It becomes clear that Indigenous graduates are being asked to enter a job market that requires them to assume good-Indian identities, for employability. If not, then their education can be discarded as not *real* and only book learning. The perception of book learning is just another marker that Indians have to deal with, and as we have seen with other markers, it can be removed and reapplied with relative ease. Lastly, I think in order to fully understand this situation we

need to review an all too common concept within Rez society, a term used to mark our reserve space as *the other*; the real world.

### ***Real World***

The defining of the real world, known as white society, has had a very big impact on the way Indians view their own society. Growing up on the reserve I was constantly subject to comments like: ‘what happens when you get into the real world’ or ‘you have to go out into the real world to get an education.’ This has a profound effect on how Indians view their own social space because if white society is the real world, what does that make reserves and our communities? For example, if we review the message it would suggest that the only real education is that of the Western world and not Indigenous knowledge. However, here we are just scaling up our analysis from the individual to the community level. What we are doing at a community level is putting white middle class society at the center, which becomes the real. Again, Indians reserves become structurally marginalized and can then be seen as unreal. If we return to an example that Lewis (2006:462) provides. This is a response from a female entrepreneur that is revolting to another female entrepreneur introducing a *girly* topic to the all female business online forum:

*[W]e are creating an artificial environment which then puts women in a situation where they get out into the real world, they get into a group of venture capitalists who frankly are a very scary group of people to have to face and you are completely unprepared for it because you've been talking about girly talk and frilly dresses and nail polish. I mean for God's sake what are we doing? ... Just get real, the sooner we learn to deal with real situations, the better prepared we are. We are not better prepared if we go into a situation that's artificial and that makes us think it's all easy and then we slam up against a brick wall when we go out into the real world and realize that actually venture capitalists want their pound of flesh and they're going to make you sweat.*

In terms of this message from inside another marginalized community, the Rez society, we can draw from a few examples. In one interview Chief Clarence Louie (MacGregor 2006) proclaims ‘quit your sniffing. Join the real world — go to school or get a job. Get off of welfare. Get off your butt.’ This societal interpretation is again provided in another interview by Chief Clarence Louie (PSSCAP 2005) who states:

*The best advice I always give First Nations people is I do not care if you are Tiger Woods — the best golfer in the world — the best hockey player, or Donald Trump, you have to have an adviser. We have six advisers to our corporation. Again, they all come from the real business world, they have all made lots of money, they have all created a lot of jobs, and they give us advice on everything we do with our nine band-owned businesses.*

I had this discussion with another community member once, which was centered on the ability for Indigenous graduates to return to the reserve. Her (pers comm 2008) analysis was, she knew other Indigenous graduates and those graduates were ‘comfortable in their own skin and could fit in anywhere.’ I believe that therein lies the key, that as Indigenous graduates we are required to *fit in*, but what are we fitting into. This has been discussed above, but I believe here there is a more important distinction and that is where have we come from?

There is a definite movement within educational institutions as a whole to recognize Indigenous knowledge. It is becoming recognized that there is another knowledge system present in the world, based on Indigenous Peoples knowledge systems. For example, Indigenous knowledge is: Questioning the very foundations of science based knowledge, which separates religion, ethics, morals, law and politics, all for objectivity (Cajete 2000; Little Bear 2000); calling for incorporation of Indigenous methodology in research (Chrisjohn et al 2006; Smith 1999); urged to form the sole foundation of Indigenous education (RRCAP 1996); touted as the key to sustainability (UNESCO n.d.), etc. Unfortunately, the recognition of Indigenous knowledge has not trickled down to Rez society. Instead, many Indigenous graduates are being asked to forgo everything they have learned about respecting and incorporating Indigenous knowledge in order to *fit in*. I believe this notion is behind the perspective that Chief Clarence Louie has taken above on the *philosophy of education*. In the everyday life of Rez society, returning Indigenous graduates knowledge is still a philosophy, we have not decolonized our own spaces enough to begin validating, respecting and incorporating our own knowledge; at a structural and institutional level, because those very structures and institutions are based on a foreign knowledge, modeled after foreign constructs and validated by white supremacy capitalist patriarchy criteria and evaluators.

## Conclusion

Perhaps the time has come for a counterproposal to those non-Indians who think gallons of white paint liberally applied would solve the so-called Indian problem. Let the Indian in turn splash buckets of brown paint on the hordes of happy but ignorant white do-gooders who clutter up the Indian landscape. In short, the time has come to tell such innocently dangerous souls, “get brown or get lost”. (Cardinal 1969:76)

In order to begin moving in the right direction as Indigenous Peoples, we have to reevaluate our reserve space and identities at the society and individual level. This reevaluation will have sufficient impacts on the value and ideologies we incorporate and adopt. Currently, we are focused on situating ourselves within the white supremacy capitalist patriarchal institutional constructs of the Western world. Although, we may feel that we are moving in the right directions because of the outside validation and recognition that we are receiving, I would hesitate to caution if this direction is the correct path. More specifically, the West and white society validates only what it can recognize, that is, it will only recognize a mirror image and structures that it can understand. Also, it has already been shown that at best we can mimic the structures on institutions, but we will never be viewed as one in the same or equal.

If we do not reevaluate our current structures and institutions, we will never be able to create any meaningful space for our Indigenous graduates within our communities. This has a direct link to the

education that has been attained and the individual identity of the Indigenous person holding that education. There are two distinct views on education: Education for economic value, that it will lead to a job, and education for personal growth. Instead of viewing education as purely economic it needs to be valued as a mechanism for achieving personal growth. Hooks (n.d.) believed that education, which gives the ability to think critically is transforming, also, she thought that ‘thinking critically is at the heart of anyone transforming their life, even if you are disadvantaged materially, can find ways to transform their lives’.

I believe that what she meant is education, through the ability to think critically, allows a person to analyze their situation openly, fully and with a complete understanding of what their identity is, within the given spaces they get located within. This can be seen in the undervaluing that is felt by all Indians, regardless of education or training. For someone who has not studied the historical creation of Western ideologies, they might end at the conclusion that there is something wrong with them, as an individual. This is especially wounding if they see undervaluing within their own community. They accept that racism is alive within the Western world and cannot truly believe that we can be racist to our own people. They view this racism as dislike or incompetence on their part but often this reasoning is located at the individual level, of the person projecting such racism or the person subjected to it. Also, there can be a feeling of helplessness or naturalization of the treatment. When you can historicize Western ideology, you quickly realize that such racism is crucial to our own domination, colonization and specifically, the stealing of our lands and resources: That this Western ideology goes beyond individuals and is located at the institutional and structural level. However, there may still be the feeling of helplessness, because let’s face it, changing beliefs and operations at the societal level is a huge undertaking. Although, when you understand societies constructs as being white supremacy capitalist patriarchy and paternalism, you realize where efforts should be directed at, not at the individual but at society, both on and off the reserve. Also, this can only be done by Indigenous People, as Cardinal (1969:78) has stated:

*[T]he hard truth remains that the responsibility for the revitalization of the Indian society falls upon the shoulders of the Indian people and no one else. It is the Indian leaders, Indian organizations and the Indian people themselves who have the duty to explore new social and economic alternatives. For non-Indians truly to be effective there must be a clearer understanding of the respective area of responsibility. The Indian’s responsibility must be recognized and respected by the non-Indians, and it must not be shirked by the Indian himself.*

So, where do we begin? By now I hope that we have all realized that there needs to be changes in the broadest scale and scope possible. Also, I understand that up until this point I have only been criticizing the current structures and institutions and have offered no solutions. Therefore, I will end this essay with some thoughts on where all of our analysis should begin and where we could be going. Rightfully, I will return to our own knowledge, the Syilx worldview. We have to return to our own knowledge systems because we need to situate and historicize ourselves as a People. Without such a return, we will be unable to frame our analysis from who we truly are. As we have discovered within the white studies

discussions above, without knowing who we are, our cultures, identities, knowledge and belief systems, that can be used to ground our analysis, we run the risk of defaulting back to a white middle class privileged male center.

In essence, the knowledge Indigenous People holds is quickly disregarded. Reviewing the topic of ignorance Alcoff's (2007:54) positions his analysis in critical theory and states:

*The project of critical theory, then, is to bring to consciousness the link between the social production of knowledge and the social production of society, and thus to show that the production of knowledge is the product of conscious activity (even when it is not self-conscious about this fact) rather than activity that operates merely in the sphere of nature or that is wholly determined.*

When thinking of the concept of racism, Armstrong (2005 p. 30) first explained that there is a fundamental difference in the how, her as an Okanagan, perceived the world and human interactions. When thinking of human interaction 'in a land-based culture of self-sufficiency in the natural world, is that it must be based on cooperation.' Critical to the survival of the people is the understanding that interaction is based on respect of difference and dependence on that difference. In this way, difference is not perceived as race but something that is valued and strengthening, and enriches and informs you. Immediately, by returning to traditional Syilx understanding provided by Armstrong, you debunk white supremacy and whiteness. Debates are irrational, because you are not looking for a right or wrong individual, knowledge or structure, as you begin respecting all knowledge and difference as something that enhances the world. Also, you begin to feel compelled to revisit our structures and institutions, their goals, direction and underlying ideologies. Mainly, what is being determined and sought is if the spaces we have created are harmful or beneficial to who we are as Syilx. As Armstrong (2005:33) explains:

*What is appalling to me is the complacency that condones racism and puts up with it every day under the banner of democracy, civilization, and progress. What is appalling is that nobody thinks it is racism when a native person stands up and speaks his or her language and no one understands a single word. Who decided that my language isn't valuable?*

It is vital that, as a society, we undertake this work and this journey includes our Indigenous graduates, our spiritual leaders, our elders, our youth and our leaders. We need to re-own our spaces and identities, only then can we begin looking at issues of self-sustainability, economics, merit, knowledge and Indianness.