

We are pleased to present this special issue on the impact of British colonialism on indigenous peoples from Ireland to Canada. We are also especially grateful for the work done by Sean Byrne, our guest editor for this issue and the author of this introductory article, to compile this collection of articles.

THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:
DESTRUCTIVE OUTCOMES, HEALING AND RECONCILIATORY
POTENTIALS

Sean Byrne

The process of colonialism that emerged in Europe from the sixteenth century onward witnessed the expansion of empires around the world. Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, British, Belgian, German, and Italian colonial models played out differently in their colonies. Resources and cheap labor were extracted as the Indigenous people internalized their oppression. During the decolonization process new independent nations emerged who are still trying to process and deal with the past. In the aftermath of group trauma stemming from colonization, how can Indigenous communities process the trauma, heal, and reconcile with non-Indigenous people? This is a critical issue and we hope that this special issue can begin that conversation within Peace and Conflict Studies.

During the late 1980s, the Canadian peace movement with a focus on the abolition of war and militarism articulated the importance of consciousness raising to mobilize the Canadian population by putting together a concrete program so that it could take root in local neighborhoods.¹ Lately there has been a shift in focus from research on the anti-war movement to empowering

Indigenous communities, welcoming immigrants, addressing patriarchy as a core ingredient of violence, and exploring the impact of poverty and homelessness on local communities.² This is in line with the evolution of critical and emancipatory peacebuilding that brings the local in, and centres on resilience and social justice.³ Part of this shift in Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) research and praxis is to critically examine the roots of colonialism and how it has impacted Indigenous communities in Canada. This special issue explores the nature of the colonial model in Canada, how it evolved in Ireland, and was transplanted to the overseas colonies.

COLONIALISM AND CONFLICT

The United Nations resolution that created the International Year of the World's Indigenous People in 1993 called for new partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people because the control of the earth for resource exploitation has seriously damaged the land and Indigenous peoples' cultures, traditions, and way of life.⁴ Indigenous people are "caretakers of the earth" who live in harmony with nature and, as Alexander Ewen noted, "live under original laws, are an endangered species and may soon, like the rain forests disappear. Along with the assault on our peoples, our governments are colonized, our lands occupied and stolen, our religious freedoms denied, and our treaties broken."⁵

The colonial expansion, rivalry, and competition of the European Empires in the nineteenth century to control and dominate new colonial territories spawned World War I, World War II, and the Cold War.⁶ Cultural imperialism belittled the cultural traditions and values of Indigenous peoples.⁷ Cultural imperialism is an ideology that "justifies the subjugation and exploitation of other peoples by unilaterally defining them and their cultures as primitive or barbaric."⁸ Ethnocentrism molded the policies of the colonizer, emerged robust as an aftereffect of them, and went largely unrecognized and hidden for a long time in part because "colonialism was, in fact, often motivated by an accepted, if misplaced, sense of duty or mission."⁹

The structural capabilities of the colonial power allowed it to penetrate and exploit those in the periphery; the gap between the haves and the have-nots increased as the power asymmetry magnified relationships between the colonizer and the colonized. "The essence of the exploitation argument... is that poverty and wealth are two sides of the same coin, that we are rich

because they are poor, and they are poor because we are rich; and the essence of the structural argument, the idea of bringing structural thinking into the analysis of exploitation, is that the structure generates this inequality.”¹⁰

We are embedded in the social structure so that in liberal society, as Johan Galtung notes, “individuals are allocated to their class by ascription (birth), but they perform and can be selected and moved upwards. In this society, the goal is to succeed.”¹¹ In communal society, there is no mobility. “The goal is solidarity with others, not competition and dominance.”¹² In the wake of great violence by globalization, Western notions of seeing, being, and acting on the world are not in congruence with Indigenous peoples’ paradigms that values and protects Mother Earth.¹³ In contrast, the Western model of development has sought control and dominion over land as the environmental impact of resource wars and environmental degradation threaten global security.¹⁴

Violence can be direct, cultural, and structural.¹⁵ This special issue explores the “heteropatriarchal colonial system”¹⁶ developed in Canada and Ireland that used “relational relativity,”¹⁷ discriminatory ethnocentric laws and an educational system, religion and nationalism, gendered division of labor and decision-making processes, and treaties to divide local people and to control their lands and livelihoods, causing them great pain and intergenerational trauma transmission. Indigenous people who resisted nonviolently and violently brought about a reaction from the colonizer and a movement toward change¹⁸ and reconciliation through a truth commission in Canada and a peace agreement in Northern Ireland.

It is important for PACS academics to understand the destructive and traumatic impact of colonialism on Indigenous groups that exist long after peace agreements are signed. The challenge is to recognize how viable solutions and peacebuilding and reconciliation processes must be built from within and must include deconstructing and dealing with the direct and indirect violence resulting from colonization.¹⁹ As well as structural changes and ensuring that social justice is at the core of all policies, the use of the creative arts, drama, music and sports as well as narrative and story-based transformative methods can be useful in assisting Indigenous communities to heal from the violence of the past.²⁰

HEALING, RECONCILIATION, AND PEACEBUILDING

Brian Rice is a member of the Mohawk Nation, one of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. He recognizes that Indigenous peoples' culturally based methodologies can help heal the land and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.²¹ For example, he notes that in the midst of European invasion and colonial competition between England and France in North America, the Iroquois clan system with the clan mothers as ultimate decision makers, and the thousand years of the great law of peace still survived and thrives to this day as the purest form of democracy, compassion, peacebuilding, and reconciliation among the six nations of the Iroquois and their neighbours.²²

In Indigenous societies human beings are part of a "complex web of ever-modifying relationships."²³ All life is part of an interdependent sacred whole and a large network of relationships where balance and ethical behaviour are omnipresent.²⁴ Indigenous peoples' connections to the landscape are embedded in knowledge and an Indigenous worldview that is connected to ceremonies, languages, medicines, and stories best represented in the medicine wheel's four interrelated quadrants of air, earth, fire, and water.²⁵ Consequently, local and Indigenous peoples' epistemologies need to be factored into locally based research in contrast to positivist abstract quantitative methods that can be manipulated according to the needs of global actors.²⁶ Ethnographic local studies have the potential to give voice to those typically on the margins and integrate their epistemologies into mainstream thinking.²⁷

This is why William Eckhardt calls on humanity to create a fully developed "science of values" in which compassion and equality are central to the creation of an equal, free, authentic, inclusive and just society. Compassion is "composed of a radical faith in human nature, altruistic values, cognitive creativity, justice defined as equality, behavior aimed at actualizing all of these values, and a social structure compatible with and congenial to their actualization."²⁸ Consequently, Thich Nhat Hanh asks each person to recognize the suffering endured by others and to be one's true self in order to look at and see ourselves in the other if we are to truly work for peace and reconciliation.²⁹

In addition, Theodore Lentz notes that it is necessary to create a "science of peace" so that people's passion for peace can be harnessed and that the grassroots can come together to look for solutions. He articulated that,

“honest decisions to contribute can be made anywhere, anytime, and by anyone with concern and social imagination.”³⁰ He believed that it is important to create a “humatriotism” or a “loyalty to the people of all nations” that transcends all other loyalties and necessitates networks of intercommunication, imagination, empathy, and creativity to forge local and global peace as well as peace with our environment.³¹

This loyalty to humanity based on ethics of compassion, equality, freedom, love, and self-awareness, combining affective and cognitive behavioral patterns, can assist in building coexistence, a universal humanhood, a culture of peace, and peace-mindedness.³² As Hannah Newcombe reminds us, “we need to realize that the ‘powerless’ have considerable power already both of competence and of non-compliance. We should listen to their teaching and not just be prepared to teach them.”³³ It is important to broaden the base of world peace by nurturing relationships with love and compassion in the spirit of a genuine and authentic dialogue.³⁴ “There will always exist in this world forces that try to sever human bonds and divide people from each other. But no conflict, no strife, is ever insurmountable. We must let the force of goodness inherent in human beings contain the force of evil which is divisiveness. Dialogue in the real sense of the term should serve as a kind of thread that ties together people of goodness in the bond of such solidarity.”³⁵

CONCLUSIONS

Johan Galtung notes that researchers should use people’s tangible and intangible needs as an ethical guideline for doing and designing social science research. Researchers must beware of “the use of social science for purposes that are clearly in the interest of not only social and economic imperialism, but also political and military imperialism.”³⁶ This is why Mahatma Gandhi argued that imperialism has to end, and that “freedom won through nonviolence will be the inauguration of a new order in the world.”³⁷

Finally, Daisaku Ikeda, Rene Simard and Guy Bourgeault argue that creating social justice necessitates that communities must enter into an authentic dialogue with each other. They noted that, “It is first necessary to accept membership in our home place and recognize the specific culture or unique way of thinking and behaving that we have inherited. Then we must enter into dialogue and debate with others, share with them, and...try to remake the whole world.”³⁸

Non-Indigenous people must work together with Indigenous people in Canada to resolve conflicts that have maintained deep roots in a wider history of colonialism and repair relationships based on the idea of mutual interdependence and interconnection. Consequently, the exploration of specific local Indigenous reconciliation processes may prove useful in that journey of healing. Moreover, the people on both islands—Ireland and Great Britain—on the periphery of Western Europe must also reach out and reconcile with each other to address the traumatic history of the past and move into a better future based on mutual understanding, trust, and the building of equal relationships.

This special issue on the nature of colonialism within PACS seeks to commence a much needed discussion in terms of middle range theory building and reflexive praxis so that academics take note of the destructive forces of colonialism, as well as the opportunities that now exist for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work together, especially in the education realm, to constructively deal with the past, forge deep reconciliation, and build a just peace for all.³⁹

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