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The Policy Implications of Revitalizing Traditional Aboriginal Religions

Marc Fonda

Introduction

“What is the policy importance for revitalizing traditional Aboriginal Religions?” some might ask. Since there is not a great deal of research available on the impacts of revitalizing traditional Aboriginal religions in Canada or elsewhere, much of the discussion that follows will be based on an argument by analogy regarding the impacts of revitalizing traditional Aboriginal languages. My hope is that the policy importance of revitalizing both traditional languages and, by analogy, religions will become obvious in the process. But first let us look at some numbers regarding the religions in which Canada’s Aboriginal people claim to participate. We start with the Canadian census.

Confusing Numbers

The 2001 census was the last occasion on which the religion question was asked; the next instance will be in 2011. Of the 1,359,010 respondents self-identifying as Aboriginal in 2001, only 27,745 (or 2%) claimed Aboriginal spirituality. In contrast, 577,975 (42.5%) Aboriginal persons claimed to be Catholic, 384,185 (22.1%) claimed one or another version of Protestantism, and 299,685 (28.2%) indicated that they participate in no religion.¹ When we consider the numbers for persons living on-reserve, we find a similar picture: of the 321,855 Aboriginal persons living on-reserve in 2001, 14,455 (4.5%) claimed Aboriginal spirituality. The vast majority of Aboriginal respondents on-reserve claimed Catholicism (142,785 or 44.2%); the bulk of the remaining individuals selected one or another form of Protestantism (102,130 or 31.7%), or no religion (51,730 or 16.1%).

The relative dearth of Aboriginal respondents to the 2001 census claiming Aboriginal spirituality was surprising. It does not coincide with anecdotal evidence. For this reason, I decided to look further—to the Regional Health Survey (RHS) run by the Assembly of First Nations in 2002–2003 and to the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres’ 2001 report, “Tenuous Connections.” These two surveys asked questions regarding religion or spirituality for their own purposes, but still can be useful in measuring how many persons are involved in traditional Aboriginal religions.

The RHS is concerned mainly with the health status of Aboriginal persons. It surveyed 22,602 Aboriginal individuals living in 238 First Nations communities across Canada, with the exclusion of Nunavut.² In part, the RHS reports on a series of questions designed to examine the relationship between traditional language use; participation in traditional cultural activities, including medicines, wellness, and healing; religion (i.e., Christianity) and traditional Aboriginal spirituality; and health outcomes.

The RHS indicates that 80.6% of total respondents say traditional cultural events are important—many of which may be considered religious in nature. With regard to the specific questions regarding religions, we find that 76.4% of respondents consider traditional spirituality and 70.3% consider religion(s), such as Christianity, important in their lives. This suggests that many Aboriginal persons value both Christian and traditional Aboriginal religions.³ They may also practice both, but RHS does not ask this question and the census does not allow for multiple responses. Interestingly, “[o]f those that indicated that cultural events were important, almost all (90.8%) said that traditional spirituality was important to them” (RHS 2005, 35). The RHS concludes that just over 76.4% (17,267) of its respondents found traditional Aboriginal spirituality important.

What the RHS does not specifically report on is how many of its respondents are actively engaged in traditional Aboriginal “spiritual” activities. Methodologically, we should not assume that the number who “value” Aboriginal spiritual traditions is equal to the number of respondents actively engaging in traditional religious practices. For this reason, it may be reasonably conservative to assume that at least half of the 17,267 RHS respondents who find traditional Aboriginal religions important actively engage in such activities regularly. This leaves us with 36.5% of the respondents or 8,634 persons. Even so, the RHS reports that, proportionally, more Aboriginal persons participate in traditional spiritual activities than the census does. That is, the numbers drawn from the RHS and census respondents are 36.5% and 4.5%, respectively. This represents a factor of eight, which is a very significant discrepancy.

This difference is verified by Anderson’s (2002) “Tenuous Connections” report, completed for the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC). This survey was explicitly about Aboriginal youth sexual practices and outcomes of that activity; however, some questions within the survey have relevance to traditional culture and religion.⁴ This survey is decidedly smaller than either the RHS or the census in terms of number of respondents, their age, and geographical scope.⁵ Regardless of these differences, the “Tenuous Connections” report can still shed some light on the situation.

Participants were queried as to whether they followed Native, Christian, or other spiritual traditions: 43% identified with Native spiritual traditions, 28% with no tradition, “13% identified exclusively as Christian, and 11% said they followed both Native and Christian spiritual ways” (OFIFC 2002, 48). Moreover, more respondents in southern Ontario claimed to practice Native spirituality than

in northern Ontario (66% versus 45%, and 47% in central/rural Ontario), while “Christianity rated evenly across all three regions” (OFIFC 2002, 48). One-third of rural and northern respondents claimed no spiritual path, as opposed to one-fifth in the south.

This brief description of the OFIFC survey seems, to some extent at least, to verify the findings of RHS: the proportion of persons engaged in traditional Aboriginal spiritual activities is considerably higher than those numbers reported in the 2001 census. Based on this admittedly small sample we can say that at least 43% of the respondents are influenced by traditional spirituality. This result is close to my conservatively assumed 36% of the RHS respondents. The questions that remain are: a) is this participation rate sufficient to ensure cultural and community well-being, and b) can greater participation in traditional religions, like languages, help improve well-being?

Benefits of Revitalizing Languages: An Argument from Analogy

In what follows, I explore the positive well-being impacts that revitalizing traditional Aboriginal languages can bring. I use language revitalization as a proxy for what might happen if traditional religions were also revitalized. These are the reasons for doing so:

1. There’s considerably more research available on the impacts of language revitalization as opposed to religious revitalization (RHS 2005, 33);
2. Language, culture, and religion are inextricably intertwined; and
3. It could be said that involvement in traditional ceremonies is antecedent to learning one’s traditional language.⁶

Religions constitute one of the main drivers of any culture. As such, they are deeply implicated in establishing and maintaining a culture’s world view, *raison d’être*, and identity. Language is one tool that people use to convey these deep meanings, sometimes in very subtle and untranslatable manners. Religion and language work together to maintain a culture and an individual’s sense of continuity, of being in time and place. One might add that language and religion are not separated in the Aboriginal world view.⁷ Furthermore, some researchers note that religion and language are deeply interrelated; that the former cannot truly be separated from the latter. The Foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nations, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures notes that language, culture, and spiritual values are not only inseparable but also key to the collective sense of identity and nationhood of Aboriginal peoples (Canadian Heritage 2005, 2–3). No religious tradition can express itself effectively and with precision without the use of language; religions explore the edges of language and relate persons to the physical and spiritual community as a whole (Butler 1993; Crystal 1966, 1978; Kristeva 1984; Sawyer and Simpson 2001).

There are many who argue that there are benefits to revitalizing traditional Aboriginal languages. David Crystal takes issue with claims that a diversity of languages is of limited benefit to business and productivity. He notes that this argument is frequently countered with evidence from the business world itself, where knowing a second language is considered a competitive advantage. Indigenous languages may not appear to be advantageous in business; however, from the viewpoint of human capital theory, languages are the resources that people can draw upon to increase their relative potential productivity. Local languages help to promote local cohesion and workforce self-confidence; and people are willing to pay large sums of money to promote their identities and language promotion is one of the best ways of doing so (Crystal 2000, 27–31).

Muhlhauser and Samania (2004) note that the economic discourse on linguistic diversity is relatively underdeveloped; and, that the major problem with economic studies of minority languages is their lack of sophistication. Languages are different from other commodities in the economic sense: when more people use a language, it becomes more useful to other people and more valuable, all other things being equal. In contrast, commodities such as transportation systems become more costly and less efficient (and therefore less valuable) when they are used by more people. Thus, in terms of languages, value is related to use and not to rarity.

When it comes to linguistic diversity in Australia and elsewhere, the application of laissez-faire economic policies is seen as a form of crude linguistic Darwinism:

Laissez-faire policies are appropriate in situations where self-regulating systems are involved ... Once a language ecology or a market has become distorted policies are required. Given the interdependency between culture, biodiversity, and language, such policies need to be more than conventional language policies. They need to address the question of how the greatest amount of private and public benefits can be achieved by strengthening the linguistic ecology of Indigenous Australia. (Muhlhauser and Samania 2004, 33)

Language preservation and economic development are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are complementary aspects of the same problem; however, computing these benefits remains a challenging and imprecise task (Muhlhauser and Samania 2004, 34–36). But just because something is difficult to do and takes time does not mean it should not be done, especially when the results can lead to economic, as well as health and well-being, benefits.

Further examples of the benefits of revitalized indigenous languages, many of which can help to reduce costs, include:

1. If diversity is a prerequisite for successful evolution, then the preservation of languages and the related cultures is essential (Crystal 2000, 32);
2. Science needs to draw from a diversity of languages in order to make proper generalizations (Muhlhauser and Samania 2004, 24);

3. When languages die there are serious losses of inherited knowledge and opportunities for the cross-fertilization of thought (Crystal 2000, 32–35; Muhlhauer and Samania 2004, 24);
4. Cultural distinctiveness is transmitted by language (Crystal 2000, 36–39; Muhlhauer and Samania 2004, 24); languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge and each is a unique interpretation and encapsulation of human existence (Crystal 2000, 44–48);
5. Traditional knowledge can reduce costs in identifying new pharmaceuticals and can diversify food stuffs (Muhlhauer and Samania 2004, 24);
6. Many Aboriginal languages are adapted in response to specific environments and can help in terms of local water management, agricultural practices, and weather predictions (Muhlhauer and Samania 2004, 24); and
7. Multilingual persons use a larger part of their brain, which can raise IQ by as much as 10% and reduce the risk of brain degenerative diseases (Muhlhauer and Samania 2004, 19).

Further well-being benefits are outlined by Shelly Tulloch (2008) who looked at the impact on Inuit youth (re)learning their native tongue. Her main point is that “language brings and binds community members together. Without it, some Inuit feel disconnected; they miss acceptance and the opportunity to participate fully in their community” (73). The Inuit language is a tool for self-expression and for bonding with family and community; it aids cooperation and advancement. Moreover, “[b]reakdowns in language competence are linked to interruptions in the social network,” and the reverse is also true—increased language competence can result in increased opportunities for community engagement (74).

The ability to interact in the Inuit language allows one to show respect, conform to community norms, and demonstrate pride in belonging. It enables one to learn from older Inuit in order to acquire traditional skills and learn about culture and history. Learning their language is not a luxury for Inuit youth, Tulloch informs us, “any more than communicating with one’s parents and grandparents, knowing where one comes from, and being able to gain the kind of education one values (i.e., knowledge of traditional practices and perspectives)” (Tulloch 2008, 75).

We know that in Canada, as elsewhere, indigenous peoples’ languages are at risk. For instance, the RHS tells us that 41% of First Nations communities in Canada had local languages that were either endangered or critical (2005, 34). Norris informs us that according to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a language is found to be endangered when less than 30% of children in a community learn that language as their mother tongue. The 2001 census showed that only 15% of Aboriginal children in Canada under the age of five learned an indigenous mother tongue. The continuity index of Aboriginal languages in Canada dropped from 76 to 61 over the 20-year period ending in 2001 (Norris 2006, 199).⁸

Furthermore, the 2001 census found that the percentage of all Aboriginal people in Canada able to hold a conversation in an Aboriginal language decreased to 25% and, in the same period, the percentage claiming an Aboriginal mother tongue fell to 13% (Norris 2006, 198), while in the off-reserve population it fell to 6%.⁹ These numbers are at the national level, not the community level. At the community level, the 2001 census, as reported by Norris (2006, 205ff), shows a general drop in levels of mother tongue speakers, but also showed an increasing number of individuals learning an Aboriginal language as a second language, often in the context of community revitalization strategies. Nonetheless, Norris concludes that “it remains critical to increase the number of first language speakers, and to restore transmission of that language from one generation to another” (Norris 2006, 220) to ensure the viability and continuity of the languages and cultures in question. One might add, that since language learning may follow participation in traditional Aboriginal religious activities, the revitalization of traditional religions may aid in developing the necessary base of language speakers. This will enhance opportunities for intergenerational transmission, potentially allowing for the development of more mother tongue speakers.

“Language death” in many First Nations communities is symptomatic of other ills. Aboriginal communities suffered seriously as a result of colonization, which has been well-documented (RCAP 1996).¹⁰ Aboriginal beliefs and traditional ceremonial practices were criminalized or trivialized; they suffered the full force of government policies and public opinion that worked to assimilate or eliminate these cultures. As a result, whole communities and nations lost sufficient continuity to support traditional cultural activities and practices. Moreover, many Aboriginal communities lost their sense of their past and their future. When this happens, life becomes cheap and suicide becomes a viable option. Not surprisingly, Canada’s First Nations (especially First Nations youth) are said to have what is “perhaps the highest rate of suicide of any culturally identifiable group in the world” (Kirmayer 1994, referenced in Chandler and Proulx 2006b).

Psychologist Michael Chandler’s research gives us a picture of what happens to a community when its sense of continuity is disrupted. Chandler conducted empirical research on youth regarding how they perceived themselves as beings in time.

Chandler’s theory is that without a sense of personal continuity, “our identities are automatically breached, and our stories nonsensical” (Chandler and Proulx 2006a, 6). People who have become “unstuck in time,” as it were, have a sense of futurelessness and find themselves in a situation worse than death. In such cases, suicide becomes a viable option (Chandler and Proulx 2006a, 6). Of the over 200 interviewees, 90 of which were Aboriginal, all with the exception of those that were actively suicidal (n=45) were quick to insist that despite often dramatic personal changes, they and others deserve to be counted as one-and-the-same individual.

While there was some cultural difference between mainstream youth and Aboriginal youth (cf., Chandler and Proulx 2006a, 12), this sense of ontology as persistence in time was common to all non-suicidal respondents. Chandler finds that personal persistence in time is a necessary condition. Moreover, any notion of selfhood that does not provide a diachronic sense of continuity would have no functional value in any human social order. Thus, any society that fails to make provisions to permit the identification and re-identification of persons across time would simply fail to function. The conclusion is that continuity is a personal necessity (Chandler and Lalonde 1998, 6), and the communities in which people live are a main source of this continuity.

Chandler and Lalonde (1998, 10) make the following point:

If simple job or marital instability is enough to heighten one's risk to suicide (Maris 1981; Sakinofsky and Roberts 1985), then what are the prospects for self-harm when one's whole culture is officially condemned, one's religion criminalized, one's language is forbidden, and one's right to rear and educate one's children suspended?

For Chandler, "measures of both self- and cultural continuity are not only closely interlaced, and share a common community of form, but are mutually constitutive of one another" (Chandler and Proulx 2006b, 2).

Chandler and colleagues argue that if things are to exist they must do so in time. They must exist long enough to be identified at one time and then re-identified at a later time. Both individuals and cultures "not only have histories and futures but [are] also mutually constituted by them, not only as a way of insuring that they endure, but for their very coming into being," and if individuals and cultures were not in a perpetual state of becoming what they will be, united with a sense of persistence, then notions of self and culture would be nonsensical (Chandler and Proulx 2006b, 6; Chandler and Lalonde 1998, 4, 6). The working hypothesis is that the instance of suicide should vary as a function of the degree to which indigenous communities have practices and procedures in place that work to preserve a measure of cultural continuity in the face of the dramatic cultural changes occurring in the wake of colonization (Chandler and Proulx 2006a, 16; 2006b, 8).

Aboriginal youth suicide rates in British Columbia are astounding at first glance. But look a little harder and the picture becomes less obvious. Chandler calls these suicide statistics an actuarial fiction, and here's why: 90% of all Aboriginal youth suicides take place in 15% of the bands, and more than half of the province's bands did not experience a suicide in the 14 years that Chandler's research in this area was active (Chandler and Proulx 2006a, 16). Secondly, suicide is such a rare event in general that it is risky to claim that it is representative of the potential actions of a larger population.

Regardless of these two criticisms, what is important is that Chandler found that those First Nations communities that have proven successful in preserving ties to their past and achieving a measure of local control over their own present

and future civic lives are characterized by significantly lower youth suicide rates. Those bands that have not achieved similar measures designed to maintain cultural continuity “typically suffer youth suicide rates many hundreds of times higher than the national average” (Chandler and Proulx 2006a, 16).

As a result of this observation, Chandler and his team looked for proxies to mark cultural continuity and used suicide rate as the indicator of the relative cultural well-being of British Columbian First Nations communities. These six markers include (Chandler and Proulx 2006a, 2006b; Chandler and Lalonde 1998):

1. Some degree of self-government;
2. Some control over the delivery of health care;
3. Some control over the delivery of education;
4. Some control over the delivery of policing and fire services;
5. Some programs or facilities to maintain or transmit cultural resources; and
6. Being in process of litigating for Aboriginal title of traditional lands.

Chandler and Lalonde (2004, 8f) included two additional measures: women involved in local government and child protection programs. At this time, as before, the results suggested that the higher the number of these indicators found in a specific community, the lower the rate of youth suicide. Moreover, if all eight factors are present the suicide rate is zero.¹¹

Later, in 2007, Chandler added traditional language knowledge to the mix. He did so because indigenous languages contribute to the viability of the broader culture to which they give voice; and there was empirical support for the hypothesized link between language and cultural loss and the deterioration of community well-being. His results showed that those bands that scored greater than 50% on the language knowledge index had fewer suicides than those who scored lower than 50% on the language knowledge index. In fact, those bands with higher levels of language knowledge averaged 13 suicides per 100,000, which is well below the national average for youth in general. Those bands with lower language knowledge had suicide rates six times the average (i.e., 96.5 per 100,000). When combined with the eight indicators identified by Chandler and colleagues, it was found that language along with any one cultural continuity indicator reduced the suicide rate significantly in all instances (Hallett, Chandler, and Lalonde 2007, 6–7).

Discussion

None of Chandler’s eight proxies are specific to religion, but one addresses efforts to preserve traditional culture, which is not necessarily separate from religion in the Aboriginal world view. Still, there’s no way of knowing at this time what the impacts of traditional spirituality or Christian religions have on First Nations well-being without empirical investigation specific to this question. However, we

can theorize that since Chandler's indicators are all about affording greater self-reliance and determination (said to augment well-being), the presence of activities designed to help revitalize traditional Aboriginal religions should not only aid self-determination, but also should help to improve community well-being.

We have seen that revitalizing traditional languages has impacts on community continuity and well-being. When language is tied to other proxies, indicators such as youth suicide improve. If we accept that language and religion are inextricably intertwined, we can hypothesize that just as they can augment community well-being, they can also improve cultural well-being. If a culture is healthy, then the community and the individuals located therein are also more likely to be healthy. As Crystal puts it:

[Language] is the chief mechanism of their [a people's or a culture's] rituals; it is the means of conveying ancient myths and legends, and their beliefs about the spirit world, to new generations; it is a way of expressing their network of social relationships; and it provides an ongoing commentary on their interaction with the landscape. (2000, 48f)

The RHS (2005, 35) provides some supporting evidence to this supposition: respondents that viewed traditional cultural events as important were also more likely to perceive community progress in such areas as:

- The renewal of First Nations spirituality, traditional ceremonial activities, and traditional approaches to healing;
- Renewed relationships with the land;
- An increase in the use of First Nations languages; and
- Greater cultural awareness in schools.

These are all activities that have some relationship to traditional Aboriginal religions and can provide net benefits to Aboriginal well-being. "The apparent strength of culture ... suggests resilience and offers hope" (RHS 2005, 36–39).

While it has been argued that there are no authentic traditional languages (and religions) per se—they have changed as a result of contact and changes in social and natural ecologies (Muhlhauser and Samania 2004, 21)—there are benefits in revitalizing traditional languages that also apply to religions, providing motivation for integration into traditional societies and social healing. Revitalizing traditional Aboriginal religions should act as another means by which individuals and cultures can (re)locate themselves in time, finding meaningfulness in personal and cultural continuity and increasing cultural well-being. Increased cultural well-being should result in augmented individual and community well-being. This will, in theory, help to improve outcomes in such areas as education and labour force participation, which should lead to higher income levels, better health, and many of the secondary effects that accompany such changes.

This is not to say that there are no significant challenges involved in revitalizing traditional Aboriginal religions. In some cases, for instance, First Nations may have to "resurrect" a traditional religious system that was entirely lost through

the ravages of colonization. Such work would have to rely on the oral history that is still available, if any; academic text from fields such as anthropology and archaeology, religious studies and history, including art history; the writings of early missionaries; religious practices found in other First Nations; and so on. This might prove incredibly challenging depending on how “authentic” a band wants their reconstituted religion to be; how they might engage band members, etc. It can also be simplified drastically by recognizing that any culture that lacks fluidity is at risk. In order for a language and, indeed, a culture to be viable it needs to be able to change with the times and environments that surround it. What I am suggesting is not an Aboriginal version of biblical literalism, but a religious culture that not only honours the pathways of the ancestors but also is living, changeable, and responds to current needs.

The reach of religion’s influence is much longer and more subtle than most people are willing to admit. Religions are the basis of any culture’s world view; religion forms the ways we see the world, from our place in the universe to our relations with our various families. It can be the glue that holds a society together; it can also be the agent of war and division. It is everywhere and affects everything, no matter how secularized the society. In fact, the word “religion” itself references community continuity. The Middle English “*religioun*” and Old French “*religion*” come from the Latin “*relig(are)*”—meaning “to tie, fasten”—and “*ion*”—a suffix connoting “action.” It is also related to the word “*rely*.” Thus “religion” can be seen to mean actions (on which one can rely) that tie people to their communities.

As most of us are aware, revitalizing traditional Aboriginal religions has not been a policy priority for colonial or post-colonial governments. Reasons for this are complex, but do include the belief that modern societies are secularized and that traditional religions are primitive or even satanic (Schneider 1958; www.religioustolerance.org 2005). However, one could argue that government policies are still influenced by the Christian world view and that specific past policies addressing Aboriginal peoples in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand supported Christian missionary objectives.¹²

The RHS (2005) sides with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in recommending language protection in the form of “urgent remedial action,” using “multiple mutually reinforcing strategies” (39); policies supporting the revitalization of traditional Aboriginal religions and ceremonial activities, I would argue, fit this bill. As the RHS puts it, “from a First Nations perspective, language and culture *mean* health” (40).

We have seen above that religion and language are deeply interrelated. We have also seen the positive impacts that language knowledge can have on youth suicide in First Nations communities. Furthermore, the RHS shows that those respondents finding value in traditional activities, including religion, are more likely to perceive community progress in different areas, some of which are related to the proxies offered by Chandler’s work on suicide. What this suggests is an exciting

opportunity to develop a series of cultural well-being measures that can complement the Community Well-being Index (see White, Beavon, and Spence 2008) developed at the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs' Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate (SRAD).

Using four simple measures—educational attainment, income levels, labour force participation, and housing—with data from the Canadian census, the labour force survey, and other data tools, the SRAD team¹³ was able to develop an average community profile for all Canadian communities and then compare this theoretical, average community to all Aboriginal communities that participated in the census. But measures of income, education, housing, and labour force participation can only provide a partial picture related more closely to economic well-being than to cultural well-being. This is what a cultural well-being index would address. The issue is developing measurable indicators and proxies, as well as ensuring comparability. This entails a lot of work, but some of it is already done: the census asks the religion and language question, RHS does the same and asks questions related to cultural activities and health outcomes, both mental and physical.

In closing, I would remind us of an observation made above: in terms of languages and religions, value is related to use. If they are not used, their value is of limited impact and they will be lost. Moreover, knowing one's language and religion offers a sense of belonging, a vision of being part of a history and establishing a future. And, finally, not only are religion and language interrelated, but both can help improve the well-being of the communities that practice them.¹⁴

Endnotes

- 1 A note of caution is necessary here. Many Aboriginal communities do not participate in the Canadian census, resulting in less than reliable numbers regarding Aboriginal individuals in Canada. In fact, in 2001 the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's Indian Registry reported some 610,101 First Nations individuals in Canada, as per definitions instituted by the Indian Act. And some 57.5% (or 396,685) were reported as living in First Nations communities or on Crown land. The remainder were living outside of First Nations lands, generally in rural or urban settings. Not only does the Indian Registry report greater numbers of Aboriginal persons living on-reserve, it also reports a lower number of persons identified as Aboriginal than does the Canadian census. Explanations for this latter discrepancy can be found in differences between institutionalized, governmental definitions of Aboriginality (and the rights pertaining to these) as per the Indian Act, and persons who self-identify as Aboriginal on the census (Clatworthy and Norris 2007; Clatworthy, Norris, and Guimond 2007).
- 2 The RHS included some Inuit communities, whereas in the census the numbers of persons living on-reserve does not include Inuit communities: but the total Aboriginal population numbers will include Inuit respondents, as well as other persons self-identifying as Aboriginal.
- 3 There are many Aboriginal Christians in Manitoba who dance powwow because they believe that it is not religious but cultural. This is a distinction based on their Christian teaching that is not made by Traditionalists (Personal communication with Dr. Mark F. Ruml, October 21, 2008).
- 4 For instance, one of the guiding questions of the survey is as follows: "Are the youth influenced by Native traditional knowledge and ethics, or are there other spiritual ethics that influence their approach to sex and parenting?" (OFIFC, 2002: 13, 48)
- 5 The "Tenuous Connections" survey queried 340 participants in Ontario—255 were youth interviews, 33 were focus group participants, and 52 were additional interviews with parents, front-line workers, and elders; 62% were female and 38% male. (OFIFC 2002: 11–17)
- 6 "I have seen many students and community members get interested in learning their language after becoming involved in [religious] ceremonies. In Manitoba, it seems that involvement in ceremonies is an antecedent to learning one's language" (Personal communication with Dr. Mark F. Ruml, September 2008).
- 7 Personal communication with Dr. Mark F. Ruml, October 21, 2008.
- 8 The continuity index of a language measures current home use relative to first-language speakers, based on the ratio of the number of people who speak the language at home for every ten persons who speak that language as their mother tongue (Norris 2006, 198).
- 9 RHS cites two Statistics Canada studies here: 2001 Census: analysis series—Aboriginal peoples of Canada: A demographic profile, accessed by the RHS authors on September 30, 2005, at <www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/abor/pdf/96F0030XIE2001007.pdf> and Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001—Initial Findings: Well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal population, accessed by the RHS authors on October 13, 2005, at <www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-589-XIE/language.htm#lang_strength>.
- 10 A comprehensive bibliography related to the impacts of residential schools can be found at <www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/native-residential/020012-1000-e.html>.
- 11 It needs being pointed out that not all of these markers address cultural continuity directly; rather some seem more closely related to self-determination.
- 12 See for example the Canadian Encyclopedia <www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0011547>; McGrath and Stevenson, "Gender, Race, and Policy: Aboriginal Women and the State in Canada and Australia," in *Labour/Le Travail* 38 (Fall 1996), *Labour History* 71 (November 1996) 37–53, <www.iltjournal.ca/index.php/ilt/article/viewFile/5046/5915>; "Paternalism and protection policy" <www.skwirk.com.au/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1124/paternalism-and-protection-policy/nsw/paternalism-and-protection-policy/changing-rights-and-freedoms-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience>; Roberts, *First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples: Exploring Their Past, Present, and Future*, Emond Montgomery Publication, 2006; Davey, *Genesis or Genocide? The Aboriginal Assimilation Policy*, Provocative Pamphlets No. 101. Melbourne: Federal Literature Committee of Churches of Christ in Australia, 1963.

- 13 Editor's note: The work on comparable communities and the well-being index also included the team at The University of Western Ontario: Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium (Int).
- 14 Editor's note: The idea that cohesion and well-being are influenced by religious and cultural traditions has been looked at in White et al, 2003. In the model put forward in chapter one, they look at the role of social capital in creating and influencing cohesion. This model supports some of Fonda's arguments.

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