RED PEDAGOGY

The Un-Methodology

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Ever since I received the invitation to write this chapter, I've been thinking (read: obsessing) about methodology, asking everyone I know how they define it and trying to determine whether I do it or not. Ironically, through these discussions, I discovered that the social engagement of ideas is my method. Specifically, I learned that my research is about ideas in motion. That is, ideas as they come alive within and through people(s), communities, events, texts, practices, policies, institutions, artistic expression, ceremonies, and rituals. I engage them "in motion" through a process of active and close observation wherein I live with, try on, and wrestle with ideas in a manner akin to Geertz's (1988) notion of "deep hanging out" but without the distinction between participant-observer. Instead, the gaze is always shifting inward, outward, and throughout the spaces-in-between, with the idea itself holding ground as the independent variable. As I engage this process, I survey viewpoints on the genealogy of ideas, their representation and potential power to speak across boundaries, borders, and margins, and filter the gathered data through an indigenous perspective. When I say "indigenous perspective," what I mean is my perspective as an indigenous scholar. And when I say "my perspective," I mean from a consciousness shaped not only by my own experiences but also those of my peoples and ancestors. It is through this process that Red pedagogy—my indigenous methodology—emerged.

Introduction

When I think of indigenous methodologies, I think of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) classic text Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. This landmark publication defined the field of indigenous methodology, charting the path for those still navigating the deeply troubled waters of academic research. The historically turbulent relationship stems from centuries of use and abuse at the hands of Whitestream prospector (read: academics), mining the dark bodies of indigenous peoples—either out of self-interest or self-hatred. Smith

AUTHORS' NOTE: Portions of this chapter come from my text, Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought (Grande, 2004).
a nation at war and at risk, we must consider how emerging conceptions of citizenship, sovereignty, and democracy will affect the (re)formation of our national identity, particularly among young people in schools. As Mitchell (2001) notes, "The production of democracy, the practice of education, and the constitution of the nation-state" have always been interminably bound together. The imperative before us as citizens is to engage a process of unthinking our colonial roots and rethinking democracy. For teachers and students, this means that we must be willing to act as agents of transgression, posing critical questions and engaging dangerous discourse. Such is the basis of Red pedagogy. In particular, Red pedagogy offers the following seven precepts as a way of thinking our way around and through the challenges facing American education in the 21st century and our mutual need to define decolonizing pedagogies:

1. **Red pedagogy is primarily a pedagogical project.** In this context, pedagogy is understood as being inherently political, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual.

2. **Red pedagogy is fundamentally rooted in indigenous knowledge and praxis.** It is particularly interested in knowledge that furthers understanding and analysis of the forces of colonization.

3. **Red pedagogy is informed by critical theories of education.** A Red pedagogy searches for ways it can both deepen and be deepened by engagement with critical and revolutionary theories and praxis.

4. **Red pedagogy promotes an education for decolonization.** Within Red pedagogy, the root metaphors of decolonization are articulated as equity, emancipation, sovereignty, and balance. In this sense, an education for decolonization makes no claim to political neutrality but rather engages a method of analysis and social inquiry that troubles the capitalist-imperialist aims of unfeathered competition, accumulation, and exploitation.

5. **Red pedagogy is a project that interrogates both democracy and indigenous sovereignty.** In this context, sovereignty is broadly defined as "a people's right to rebuild its demand to exist and present its gifts to the world... an adamant refusal to dissociate culture, identity, and power from the land" (Lyons, 2000).

6. **Red pedagogy actively cultivates praxis of collective agency.** That is, Red pedagogy aims to build transcultural and transnational solidarities among indigenous peoples and others committed to reimagining a sovereign space free of imperialist, colonialist, and capitalist exploitation.

7. **Red pedagogy is grounded in hope.** This is, however, not the future-centered hope of the Western imagination but rather a hope that lives in contingency with the past—one that trusts the beliefs and understandings of our ancestors, the power of traditional knowledge, and the possibilities of new understandings.

In the end, a Red pedagogy is about engaging the development of "community-based power" in the interest of "a responsible political, economic, and spiritual society." That is, the power to live out "active presences and survivances rather than an illusionary democracy." Vizenor's (1993) notion of survivance signifies a state of being beyond "survival, endurance, or a mere response to colonization" and of moving toward "an active presence... and active repudiation of dominance, tragedy and victimry." In these post-Katrina times, I find the notion of survivance—particularly as it relates to colonized peoples—to be poignant and powerful. It speaks to our collective need to decolonize, to push back against empire, and to reclaim what it means to be a people of sovereign mind and body. The peoples of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans serve as a reminder to all of use that just as the specter of colonialism continues to haunt the collective soul of America, so too does the more hopeful spirit of indigeneity.

### Notes

1. Adapting from the feminist notion of "malestream," Claude Denis (1997) defines "Whitestar" as the idea that while American society is not "White" in sociodemographic terms, it remains principally and