BLAME AVOIDANCE AND WORLDVIEWS: EXPLAINING THE RECURRENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DISASTERS WITHIN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

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Abstract

This paper proposes that what Aboriginal communities in Canada have faced since colonisation are a series of socio-cultural disasters, and discusses reasons for the recurrence of disasters within Aboriginal communities. Using Toft and Reynolds' (2005) theory of active and isomorphic learning, as well as Hood’s (2002; 2011) theory of blame, this paper suggests that both blame avoidance and the perpetuation of world-view adherences on behalf of the Canadian government are responsible for the continuation of calamitous events within Aboriginal communities across Canada. Both the Indian Residential School (IRS) system and contemporary findings on missing and murdered Aboriginal women are discussed at length within this paper.

Résumé


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Introduction

Polybius, with his concept of *Anacyclosis* where “(...) the natural course or order in which constitutions change, are transformed, and return again to their original stage” (Trompf, 1979, p. 5), was the first to suggest that history may repeat itself (Trompf 1979, p. 15). Yet, the concept of historic recurrence has not been left unchallenged, having progressivism as its main contender. Baum (1978) and Edelstein (1967) argue that although progressivist ideas date as far back as the work of Xenophanes, it was the writings of the Age of Enlightenment that received praise for their notion of progress, dynamic change and human control (pp. 67-70). It is in this light that:

... risk analysis might be regarded as not only a product of enlightenment thinking, but also the means to deliver the ultimate enlightenment fantasy: the idea that successive generations will learn more about the world, and so become more able to manipulate it for human gain and contentment. (Horlick-Jones 2013, p. 1)

It is through this lens of educational opportunities and progressive learning that Toft and Reynolds (2005) operationalize their perspective on risk, crisis, and disaster management. They argue that disasters share similar morphological features and that if conscious efforts to understand these similarities take place “... it may be possible to design procedures and structures that assist organisational learning and reduce further loss” (p. 65). They consider this as a part of the ‘active learning’ process,” ... knowing about something and then taking remedial action to rectify the deficiencies that have been uncovered” (Toft and Reynolds, p. 66). Yet, given that disasters create opportunities for active learning, why do they repeat?

This paper will argue that repeated disasters are not the result of fatalistic historic recurrence, but rather the outcome of human factors that hinder the process of active learning. It will do so by exploring the detrimental role of blame-avoidance and conflicting world-views in reaching the key benchmarks of Toft and Reynolds’ p. 67) *Steps to active foresight* model.

This paper will examine the above question by considering firstly what is meant by ‘disaster’, ‘active learning’, ‘isomorphism’, ‘safety culture’, ‘blame and responsibility’, and ‘world-views’. Having examined these concepts, a case study on recurring socio-cultural disasters within Aboriginal communities in Canada will be outlined. Then, using Christopher Hood’ (2011a) *Architectonics of Blame Avoidance* as a theoretical backbone, blame-avoidance will be considered as an important factor that hinders application of learnt lessons in Canadian law, result-

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ing in the recurrence of disastrous situations for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Finally, this paper will investigate the role that diverging world-views has played in weakening opportunities for active learning.

Conceptual framework

In order to address the above question effectively, a conceptual framework must be outlined. Firstly, as the aforementioned question implicates the notion of ‘disaster’, it warrants a clarification. Contemporary disaster research has widened its scope to study disasters as a human phenomenon (Beck 1992; Tuner and Pidgeon 1997; Perrow 1999), either as the product of human activities or as the human inability to safeguard its surroundings from possible risks. Yet, what is common throughout disaster literature is the notion that they occur suddenly. Some academics are at odds in this regard: “Quarantelli emphasises neither an event nor a physical place or time as relevant to disasters” (Perry 2007, p. 10). Disasters, then, can be conceptualized as phenomenon’s that can persist over long durations and across vast geographies. Given the nature of the chosen case study, reviewing calamitous long-period events that have arguably had disastrous consequences on Aboriginal communities across Canada, it is deemed that Quarantelli’s view of disaster is the most suitable.

‘Active learning’ is the notion that organisations, through learning from past events, actively implement changes to organisational structure, culture and policies in order to overcome the injurious factors that led to disastrous consequences. In Toft and Reynolds’ (2005) words, it is “... knowing about something and then taking remedial action to rectify the deficiencies that have been uncovered” (p. 66). ‘Organisational isomorphism’, claimed by Toft and Reynolds (2005, p. 68) as one of eight pivotal processes contributing to organisational learning, lies in the notion of ‘isomorphism’, where “... accidents do appear to have similar features at some level of analysis” (p. 72). They argue that these isomorphic features in organisational failures, if identified systematically, can be used to gain insight on patterns of causation and as indicators to draw universally applicable lessons (p. 66). Active learning occurs once these lessons have been integrated within organisational ‘safety culture’, described as “... those sets of norms, roles, beliefs, attitudes and social and technical practices within an organisation which are concerned with minimising the exposure of individuals to conditions considered to be dangerous” (Toft and Reynolds p. 26).

‘Responsibility’ can be seen in two senses: (1) responsibility for and (2) responsibility to. Being responsible ‘for something’ means having an obligation to act in a given situation. When being responsible ‘for something’, it means that a situation (or outcome) is the result of an indi-
individual or organizational decision. Studied extensively by Christopher Hood (2002; 2011a; 2011b), being responsible for a positive outcome is considered as 'credit' and being responsible for negative outcomes is considered as 'blame'. The play between responsibility and blame will be further examined in later parts of this paper.

The final concept to be clarified is that of 'world-views', which "... involves how people perceive their relationship to the world, including their values, beliefs, and assumptions" (Clauss-Ehlers 2006, p. 29) and is based on "... a cultured set of signs for orienting behaviour ..." (Neville 2009, p. 234). World-views are, essentially, the way culture has influenced the way we see the world.

Case study: Repeated socio-cultural disasters in Aboriginal communities

The history of relations between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada is largely defined by legal structures. Examples such as the Royal Proclamation 1763, the Québec Act 1774, and the Constitution Act 1982 Section 35 are part of the continued "... struggle with a history of legislation and policy designed to terminate Aboriginal culture and social distinctiveness in order to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into colonial life and values" (Indigenous Foundations, n.d.). Yet, the most prominent policy currently defining relations between the Canadian government and Aboriginal groups is the Indian Act of 1876. Albeit having been amended over the course of Canada’s history, it still remains largely unchanged from its original structure (Montpetit 2011). Yet, in the case of land case of land rights, instances of resistance – confrontations such as those in Oka (1990), Ipperwash (1995), Sun Peaks (2001) and Caledonia (2006) (The Economist 2006) – highlight the dysfunctional nature of the Indian Act.

The repetition of the above stated confrontations is a physical manifestation that these groups are dissatisfied with some of the legal provisions offered by the Canadian state. In the context of disasters, Dynes (1998) explains that if occasions of community efforts to preserve socio-cultural norms were "... to continue and perhaps recur, it would be quite likely that such occasions would be defined as disasters" (p. 114). This conception that recurring socio-cultural disruption and mobilization are potential identifiers of repeated disasters is critical to the scope of this paper.

Within this context, and building onto the previously stated position that disasters are not bound by time and place, a focus on two
contemporary issues will be used to illustrate failed active learning by the Canadian state. The first will focus on the traumatic legacy of the Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The second will focus on the recent information revealing high numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, its widely claimed causal relation to the IRS system (see Nagy 2012; Green 2012), and how the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement failed to consider deep-rooted issues that have persistently impacted Aboriginal communities across Canada. It will be argued here that the play between the two makes a strong case for failed active learning on the part of the Government of Canada, resulting in the recurrence of socio-cultural disasters.

To begin, an outline of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system is necessary. Lasting from early 1870’s to the 1990’s, the IRS system was a joint venture between the Canadian federal government and various religious organisations that “... aimed at ‘killing the Indian in the child’ and assimilating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children into white settler society” (Nagy and Sehdev 2012 p., 67). Attendance to residential schools became compulsory through the Indian Act, often having children “... forcibly or cohesively removed from their parents and communities” (Charles and DeGagné 2013, p. 346). The federal government hoped that through “... christianizing, civilizing, and then re-socializing ... these children, and subsequent generations, would contribute economically to a modernizing Canada” (Elias et al. 2012, p. 1561). The schools themselves were well below acceptable standards and “it is now widely acknowledged that psychological, physical and sexual abuse was widespread throughout the schools” (Woods 2013, p. 174). The impact on the wider Aboriginal community was apparent as well:

Many residential school children experienced a loss of culture, language, traditional values, family bonding, life and parenting skills, self-respect, and the respect for others. Their parents, in turn, lost their roles as caregivers, nurturers, teachers, and family decision-makers. (Elias et al. 2012, p. 1561)

Where it is estimated that 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit attended these schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, n.d., a), the cultural impact of the IRS system was significant.

In the 1950’s, the federal government decided to start shutting down the schools, yet this was only fully accomplished in 1993 (Charles and DeGagné 2013, p. 346). In 1996, a report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) dedicated a chapter to residential schools, recommending that a public inquiry be conducted (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996, vol. 1, pt. 2, ch. 10, sec. 5, rec. 1.10.1). However, a public inquiry never materialised. On September 19th 2007, ten years after RCAP’s report and multiple attempts to determine approach-
es to resolution, the Indian Residential Schools Settlements Agreement (IRSSA) was established (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2014). This agreement comprised of five measures, including funding for healing organisations, the Common Experience Payment (CEP) and Independent Assessment Process (IAP) programs to deal with applicant claims and monetary compensation, as well as the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2014). The objectives set out through the IRSSA were ambitious, but Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit left Aboriginal groups hopeful that reconciliatory efforts were being taken seriously:

The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. We are sorry. In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. (Harper 2008)

However, feelings of optimism dwindled for many Aboriginal groups, and objectives set out by the IRSSA were left unaddressed. At a 2010 United Nations press conference, Justice Murray Sinclair (chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) indicated that of 150,000 applications, 24,000 were not approved for compensations, and that most who were eligible did not receive the proper amounts outlined in the CEP (United Nations 2010). Funding to important healing and outreach organisations was cut; such was the case for the community-based Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHIF), resulting in its closure (Spear 2014, p. 232). The TRC also suffered from funding issues, a concern that occupied large portions of its 2012 Interim Report recommendations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2012, 28-29). Furthermore, a report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples criticized the Canadian governments efforts as “... insufficient” (Anaya 2014, p. 1). In short, the IRSSA did not settle critical problems that have perpetually plagued Aboriginal communities.

Other groups, such as Amnesty International Canada (n.d.) and their No More Stolen Sisters campaign, have focused on unsolved discrimination against Aboriginal women and the overrepresentation of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. In 2014, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) released a report indicating that from 1980 to 2012 there were 1,017 murdered and 164 missing Aboriginal women (Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2014, p. 3). Having been argued as an issue related to the cross-generational effects of the Indian Residential School system (Nagy 2012, p. 364; Green 2012, p. 141; Kennedy 2014),
current statistics on missing and murdered Aboriginal women indicate that active learning has not resulted from the IRSSA process. This has undeniably resulted in yet another socio-cultural disaster demanding, to recall Dynes (1998), mobilization across Aboriginal communities.

The following two sections will study, through the lens of risk, crisis and disaster management, the above case study on Indian Residential Schools and the IRSSA process, and will suggest reasons why active learning has been hindered, leading to yet another calamity in Aboriginal communities.

Blame and responsibility

Toft and Reynolds’ (p. 67-69) *Steps to active foresight model* outlines a chronological template which assumes that if steps are successfully achieved, active foresight (therefore active learning) will be achieved. However, they recognize that certain factors may hinder the process of active learning (67). This section will look at events and attitudinal responses surrounding the period where abuses in residential schools became widely recognised and documented, and will argue that blame and responsibility factors hindered on the process of active learning.

Governmental responsibility for the damage brought upon by the IRS system is not easy to assess. Prime Minister Harper’s apology to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit could be seen as an honourable, courageous, and honest statement that asserts governmental responsibility for the ills of the IRS system. Yet, where Hood (2011) explains that blame-avoidance “... can be concentrated on reducing perceptions of harm or on reducing perceptions of responsibility (or both)” (Hood 2011a, p. 71), some doubt must be cast on such public apologies. Some have called Harper’s apology as an act of rhetoric (Chrisjohn and Wasacase 2009, p. 220), and as “... essentially an attempt to write out such wrongs from the hegemonic version of the nation’s history, suggesting that they never happened in the first place” (Somani 2011, p. 13). Criticism of the Truth and Reconciliation is equally noteworthy to the subject of blame-avoidance, where it has been argued as permitting “... an enabling of settler denial and reconciliation as closure on the past” (Nagy 2012, p. 363) based on “a fixation upon resolution that is not only premature but problematic in its correlation with forgetting” [emphasis in original text] (Martin 2009, p.49) that arguably “reinforced the perception that human rights violations are a thing of the past” (Theissen 2008, p. 214). It is from such staunch criticism that this paper progresses toward a deeper analysis of potential blame-avoidance strategies used by the Canadian government.

In Hood’ (2011a, pp. 72-73) *Architectonics of Blame Avoidance*, he shows that blame is avoided by three strategies, all of which were seem-
ingly evident in the case of IRS reconciliatory efforts. The first of these are 'agency strategies', which are the "... selection of institutional arrangements to minimize or avoid blame" (Hood 2002, p. 17) through "... creative allocation of formal responsibility, competency, or jurisdiction among different units and individuals" (Hood 2011b, p. 67). The most prevalent instance where agency strategies were used lies in the parameters set out in the Common Experience Payment (CEP) program, where schools not jointly run by federal bodies were excluded from the official school list (Reimer et al. 2010, p. 5). Through this measure, many applicants were denied eligibility due to jurisdictional parameters. Justice Murray Sinclair stated this as the primary cause for Aboriginals being excluded from federal compensatory programs (United Nations 2010). This can also have been part of a 'policy strategy', being the adoption of 'least-blame' policies, "... by avoiding cases or problems with a high blame risk" (Hood 2011b, p. 90). In legal terms, the charge of 'guilty' assumes responsibility and often has a monetary component. This was the case for the Canadian government from the 1990's to the passing of the Indian Residential School Settlement Act (IRSSA), where $110 million had been spent on compensatory class action rulings in favour of past IRS students (Stanton 2011, p. 4). It is then that the IRSSA, with its CEP, IAP, and TRC components, were proposed as a means to reduce federal costs on IRS survivors: "the TRC was not created out of a wave of concern by Canadians for IRS survivors but, rather, was agreed to by their government's legal advisers in order to settle costly class-action lawsuits" (Stanton 2012, p. 88). The IRSSA can then, conceivably, have been developed as a 'least-blame' (thus 'least-costly') policy strategy.

'Presentational strategies' are the work of highly trained public relations professionals, or spin doctors, which are tasked to shape "... media debate and public perceptions" (Hood, 2b; p.19). "Central to presentational strategy is framing, rhetorical and spin-doctoring activity" (Hood 2011a, 73) which is in line with criticism of Harper's official apology:

What Indigenous peoples and Canadians-at-large have been subjected to in the entire run-up to the apology for residential schools and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been rhetoric, a concerted effort to manipulate our perception and understanding of what is happening. Formally, rhetoric is persuasive, ... a form of discourse similar to political campaigning, advertising, spin-doctoring, and other situations where the sizzle is more important than the (possibly non-existent) steak. [emphasis in original text] (Chrisjohn and Wasacase 2009, p. 220)

Presentational strategies were further evident when the federal gov-
ernment persistently neglected to disclose documents from St. Anne’s residential school, adopting a ‘non-engagement’ (empty chair) (Hood 2011a, p. 74) presentational strategy. After being ordered to surrender the documents by Ontario courts, presentational strategies were used once again as “… material, including trial transcripts, witness statements to police, even certificates of conviction, was heavily redacted” (Metro News 2014). This was arguably the work of ‘framing’, which is to “selectively emphasize/evaluate certain aspects of a perceived reality” (Häggli and Kriesi 2010, p. 142).

It has been argued here that the Canadian government used blame-avoidance strategies. Although a connection with active learning may seem obscure, reviewing Toft and Reynolds’ Step to active foresight can be useful. For instance, at the onset of a disaster, emotional impact is imminent (Toft and Reynolds 2005, 67). Referring to the moment where the IRS tragedy gained momentum in the public arena, Tanaka (2009) explains:

I have often heard from many of my fellow students of being shocked that they were not taught this part of history before leaving high school. That shock is often followed by guilt and shame and often leads to denial. This guilt, shame, and denial hinder people from engaging in a dialogue with each other. (Tanaka 2009, p. 264)

In comparing Canada and South Africa’s truth and reconciliation commissions, Nagy (2012) asserts that “… there are disturbing similarities in settler and White denial in Canada and South Africa as seen in the desire to enact reconciliation so it maintains status quo” (p. 364). On this point, emotional impact may have overshadowed the possibility for change in Canadian mind-set, policy and legislation. Toft and Reynolds explain that emotional impact typically leads to changes within ‘safety philosophy’, but that such changes are based on “… the beliefs which organisational personnel have regarding the role chance played in the disaster” (Toft and Reynolds 2005, p.68). Furthermore, “safety philosophy’ will influence the ‘organisational reaction’ to the particular event” (2005, 68-69). If, however, responsibility for the detrimental impacts of the IRS system is not fully accepted, it can be argued that changes in safety philosophy will be hindered and that the organisational reaction may not properly address the needs of disaster victims. Stephen Harper’s statement at the G20 meeting in 2009 asserts that responsibility for past harms to Aboriginal communities was not fully taken on the part of the federal government. Harper announced that “we also have no history of colonialism” (The Queen’s University Journal 2009), arguably a paradox from his formal apology to Aboriginal communities one year prior and the signing of the IRSSA two years prior. This points to a lapse of responsibility or understanding of the IRS disaster, which through
Hood’s typology seemingly permeated through various governmental efforts. It also points to worldviews, more precisely a skewed perception of colonialism and what that means for Aboriginal communities. The next section will address this point and how it may have affected effective use of isomorphism.

**Worldviews and failed isomorphic learning**

In the previous section, it was argued that emotional impact generated through the public unveiling of the trauma ensued by the IRS system may have hindered the ability to build meaningful dialogue. Slovic (1999) states that there may be a connection between emotions and worldviews in that they might “... be functionally similar in that both may help us navigate quickly and efficiently through a complex, uncertain, and sometimes dangerous world” (p. 694). Complementary to how it has been argued that emotional impact may hinder effective dialogue between groups, worldviews may act in the same way:

... the ontological status of these basic beliefs within a worldview can lead to absolutist or fundamentalist attitudes among their adherents. Within an intercultural global setting, an unconditional conviction of the trueness and justness of one’s own basic convictions hampers the possibility for a genuine dialogue between cultures. (Note et al. 2009, p. 2)

Worldviews held by Aboriginals are vastly different from those held by those who have European heritage. Aboriginal worldviews are characterised by the notion of interconnectedness between human, animal and spiritual worlds, holism and emphasises “... on community over the individual” (Roy 2014, p. 118). Nagy (2012) identifies that this produced a challenge for the IRS reconciliation process, where “Eurocentric categories of “objective” and “subjective” do not fit dynamic ways of knowing” (p. 359). In identifying barriers to a paradigm shift between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, Saul (2009) indicates common ‘language’ as an important obstacle:

Reconciliation ... can only happen if people share a language that they feel to be true. What I mean by language is a way to evoke and share an understanding – The language by which Canada most commonly functions remains passively derivative of nineteenth century British and French concepts. [emphasis in original text] (Saul 2009, p.314)

An example of gaps in common language lies in the holism versus re-
ductionism paradigm. In view that reconciliatory were largely reductionist, defined as "... the methodological presumption that a complex phenomena or events can be explained by their reduction to simpler, more fundamental entities" (Routledge 2009, p.626), a holistic approach addressing broader injustices faced by Aboriginals was not utilised. The persisting issue of murdered and missing Aboriginal women and its non-inclusion in the scope of IRSSA policies is an example of the federal governments shortcomings in adopting a multi-dimensional (or holistic) approach to bridging the reconciliatory gap, as it was well acknowledged by Amnesty International Canada (2004) that this was an issue prior to the signing of the IRSSA.

Where Toft and Reynolds (2005) explain isomorphism in that "... accidents do appear to have similar features at some level of analysis" (p. 72), diverging worldviews or the inability to understand how the colonial worldview influenced Aboriginal life has limited the capacity for the Canadian government to learn isomorphically from past trauma. In explaining the inequalities faced by Aboriginal women, the 1996 ground-breaking report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples explained that women in pre-colonial Aboriginal communities "... were highly respected ... ; their thoughts and views were sought before decisions affecting the community were made", but "with the onset of colonization, the position and role of Aboriginal women were undermined by imported ideas and values that displaced and devalued them" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996, vol. 4, Ch. 2). Yet, while the federal government persistently refuses to launch a public inquiry into the disproportionate levels of murdered and missing Aboriginal women, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt recently claimed that "obviously, there's a lack of respect for women and girls on reserves, so, you know, if the guys grow up believing that women have no rights, that's how they are treated" (Maher 2015). To return to isomorphism, Valcourt's statement illuminates a failure to identify similar features between past colonial projects that destabilized Aboriginal worldviews and current ills faced by Aboriginal women. In view of Toft and Reynolds' Steps to Active foresight (2005, p. 67), where isomorphism leads to hindsight, it is argued here that hindsight on past events has not been fully accessible due to worldview barriers, and that this has resulted in passive learning and recurrence of socio-cultural disasters in Aboriginal communities.


In early June of 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of

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Canada (2015) released *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. This landmark report, making ninety-four recommendations for action (CBC News 2015a), was revealed during the TRC’s closing events held in Ottawa. Here, Justice Murray Sinclair publicly announced that the impact that Indian Residential School system had upon Aboriginal communities could be “... best be described as ‘cultural genocide’” (CBC News 2015a), described in the report as “... the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015, 1). Since then, political officials such as Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne (The Canadian Press 2015), Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall (CBC News 2015b) and Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard (CBC News 2015c) have committed to action in regards to the recommendations set out by the TRC. Yet, as the Conservative-led government has stood by its reconciliation efforts whilst under pressure from the TRC (Watters 2015a) and opposition parties (Watter 2015b), having Canada as a signatory of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the implementation of the recommendations set forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have yet to have materialized. However, there is renewed hope within the contents of the TRC’s report summary, as it offers abundant new opportunities for learning and action, of which many within the political field have acknowledged and intent to work towards. For instance, in a House of Commons session held on the day the report was released, Justin Trudeau, leader of the Liberal Party, committed to implementing all of the TRC’s recommendations (Watter 2015b). As the October 2015 election is approaching, Aboriginal issues may be a pivotal issue within electoral platforms.

**Conclusion**

The paper outlined above discussed the interplay of several key themes, of which must be considered when reviewing the recurrence of socio-cultural disasters and the process of active learning. As previously specified, active learning occurs once lessons from past disasters have been integrated within organisational ‘safety culture’. Yet, “... there do appear to be a number of factors which will affect the amount of change that can be expected to take place in an organisation’s safety philosophy” (Toft and Reynolds 2005, 85). These factors, including “emotional impact”, “organisation’s everyday role and cultural assumptions”, “amount of responsibility it feels towards the production of the incident” and “whether or not the management attributes the disaster to internal or external factors” (2005, 85), have been discussed throughout this paper. It has been shown that these factors have been influenced by

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the interference of blame-avoidance and incongruence of worldviews.

Asserting Quarantelli’s (Perry, 2007 p.10) view that disasters are not bound by time or place, the case study of the current and past socio-cultural disasters experienced by Aboriginal communities was used to explicit how blame and worldviews act as barriers to active learning. Although opportunities for active learning have been argued as plenty, such have not been considered effectively, resulting in a recurrence of socio-cultural disasters.

It is concluded here that as it has been asserted that “traditional Indigenous gender roles and their relations have been profoundly disrupted by colonialism and the residential experience” (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2010, 30), the government of Canada must take responsibility for being a contributory power that has bred such a social climate and that long-held colonial worldviews must be compromised to meet the needs of Aboriginal women, their communities and future generations to come. As the 2015 election is approaching, Aboriginal communities will see once again if the Canadian government is prepared to accept blame and set aside world-view assumptions in order to open the way for reconciliation through meaningful action.

**Notes**


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